The RAP Up

The NURAP Newsletter

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 4 SUMMER 2010

FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Views expressed in The RAP Up are the sole opinion of the authors and unless specifically stated, do not represent institutional policy.

Networking on a Higher Level

by **Jill Bockes**

Northwestern University offers an excellent quarterly Research Administration Training Seminar, a four day course designed to inform, refresh and advance the knowledge of research administrators and staff involved in research administration. And of course, NURAP offers us a chance to network and learn from each other within our institution. For those who want to gain the opportunity to network and learn from research administrators outside the Northwestern family, two well known professional organizations exist nationally and even internationally.

Since 1959, the National Council of University Research Administrators, NCURA, has been advancing research administration "through education and professional development programs, the sharing of knowledge and experience, and by fostering a professional, collegial, and respected community" in colleges, universities and teaching hospitals.

The Society of Research Administrators International, SRA, which is "dedicated to the education and professional development of research administrators working in varied organizational settings as well as the advancement of research administration as a profession around the world" and has been helping research administrators train and network since 1967. They specialize in not only education biased research administration, but also tap into the general non-profit and commercial sectors.

Excitingly enough, NURAP will be presenting at the SRA Annual conference, held this year at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare from October 16th through the 20th. Lori Palfalvi, the NURAP President, and Steering Committee members Elizabeth Adams and Dan Rademacher will be presenting on Monday, October 18 at 3:30 p.m. The presentation will be on NURAP itself. Additionally, Alden Chang, Lori Palfalvi and Dan Rademacher will be presenting a poster at the annual conference on Tuesday afternoon.

Along with the big annual conferences that both NCURA and SRA hold, there are smaller regional meetings and training programs. Both offer introduction courses in research administration. SRA has a structured certificate program that covers Financial Management, Grantsmanship, Human Research Protections , Introduction to Research Administration and Management, Leadership, National Institutes of Health Grants, Research Integrity, Research Law, and The Practice of Research Administration and Management. NCURA offers traveling workshops in Departmental Research Administration, Financial Research Administration Workshop, Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration Workshops I and II. Both also offer extensive webinar training seminars for those who can't break away from work for training.

For those who recruit, both websites offer places to post job openings. And the networking done face to face at meetings and workshops is a valuable opportunity in itself. Both also both publish newsletters and journals which are distributed to members, and offer listings of funding opportunities on their websites. Members benefit from additional resources that aren't available to the public on the websites as well. Both require that you pay membership fees to access the "members only" areas of the web pages and to attend the training courses. For more information, visit NCURA at http://www.ncura.edu/content/ and SRA at http://www.srainternational.org/sra03/index.cfm.

From the Editor

by **Krista Galvin**

As the saying goes, nothing endures but change. NURAP is not immune to change but change can be a positive force. The NURAP Steering Committee is inducting new members who will bring new ideas and new energy to the leadership of NURAP. High energy levels will be needed to tackle the exciting programming events planned for the coming year!

As this is the last issue of the RAP Up that I will have the opportunity to work on and we have now successfully completed the newsletter's first volume, I have to take this opportunity to reflect back on how far the publication has come. What started out as a simple publication that helped introduce NURAP to its readers, the RAP Up has become a dynamic publication with numerous contributors. I am very proud that NURAP is able to offer this professional development forum for its members to showcase their writing skills. I am continually impressed by the content in the newsletter (this issue is no exception) and I know that the RAP Up will only continue to get better and better with every issue!

MEMBERSHIP VIEWS

In July, NURAP held a very successful noon event on stress management. At a recent August programming event in Evanston, we asked members how they dealt with stress.

I make a lot of to-do lists, classical music (even though I'm hard rock), and I pray.

Carmelita Rocha, Business Administrator 4, Northwestern Institute on Complex Systems (NICO)

I deal with stress by exercising and then I also try to focus on the positive and at the end of the day, I'll reflect back on my day and I'll focus on four or five things that were positive in the day.

Cyndee Timmerman, Senior Auditor, Office for Audit and Advisory Services

Hopefully with good humor.

Sheila Judge, Director of Operations and Outreach, Chemistry of Life Processes Institute

A couple of ways: I take deep breaths and we have a small group of co-workers and we take afternoon breaks to do some exercising.

Nancy Rickett, Project Coordinator 1, Kellogg School of Management

I deal with it with team work, with the support group around me. You can't do the team work individually, I find that professionally and personally, if I have my team to work with I can pretty much solve any problem or at least have colleagues to help me through.

Den Gonzalez, Department Assistant 2, Office for Sponsored Research, Evanston

Department Dossier: Just Say No?

by **Susan Morris**

As ridiculous as this slogan sounded when I was a peer-pressured teenager, it would be even more ludicrous if when a faculty member asked me to do something unallowable or an upper-up asked whether I'd completed an important task, I simply responded "Nope!". Not only would it likely be ineffective, most would consider it unprofessional and rude.

As a department administrator, my highest priorities are a) making my faculty's and colleagues' lives as easy as possible and b) keeping them out of trouble. Broadly speaking, those are one and the same – it's hard to submit proposals from jail! – but managing this balance on a daily basis sometimes means saying no. The trick is to do so as infrequently, tactfully, and reasonably as possible.

Say yes as often as you can. Not in cases where you have to say no ("Can I pay for my daughter's birthday party on this ARRA award?"), but in cases where you might prefer to say no but can manage a yes. Working a little bit late as a favor to a PI may help soften the blow the next time you tell them that you can't put together a T32 in 24 hours.

If you find you're constantly having to say no when asked whether you're responding to requests as quickly as others expect, maybe it's time to ask for some help. A good supervisor or administrator will find the resources to support you in providing excellent customer service.

Say "No, but…" There are relatively few instances when someone is completely out of luck. Someone who can't have effort on a proposal can still lend his expertise as an Other Significant Contributor. Maybe the professor's daughter would like a guided tour of her mom's lab and a picnic on the Lakefill for her birthday party! Your solution probably won't be perfect, but in some cases it can be pretty darn good.

If a professor asks you for a favor you can't grant or a question you can't answer, don't just leave them hanging; bring someone else into the conversation and make sure your faculty member is in good hands. If a colleague wants something today and it's not going to happen, let them know and provide a revised timeline so they can make other arrangements if necessary.

Say "No, because…" The best faculty, students, and staff are curious and analytical creatures by nature. We want to know *why*. Was there a genuine, exceptional reason something didn't happen (illness, power failure, alien invasion)? As long as you're confident that you exhausted all possible alternatives, providing a reasonable explanation lets other people know you weren't just ignoring them. It won't fix a missed proposal deadline, but it can preserve valuable relationships.

When it comes to telling faculty why they can't do something, cite your sources! A link to the guidelines, a judiciously selected quote from the policy, or an example of an audit disallowance or proposal rejection shows that your "No" isn't personal.

Say you're sorry. We're busy, fallible people. Things fall off our radars, or get pushed to the bottom of the task list by emergencies. A simple "I'm sorry I didn't get this to you as quickly as I wanted to" goes a long way when used sparingly.

Finally, if you know that "No" needs to be said but can't bring yourself to do it, ask someone else for help. Don't let fear or pride get in the way of doing the right thing.

Post-Award: NRSA Appointments and Terminations

by **Frank Cutting**

Whether you are a seasoned or new RA, keeping track of students funded by the NRSA program offers some challenges. Each type of NRSA support, Individual Fellowships or Institutional Training Grants, have its own method for appointing and terminating trainees. In this column we'll take a brief look at the processes behind submitting appointment and activation notices, adjusting for yearly stipend levels, and submitting termination notices. Effective communication between your department, OSR and ASRSP is essential for effective management of awards, and NRSA grants are no different. The first step is to submit the trainees Activation Notice (Individual), or Statement of Appointment (Institutional) to the NIH.

The method for handling appointments is different for these two types of awards. Let's start with Institutional Training Grants like a T32. Since ASRSP is no longer approving TGS payroll information, it is very important to send a copy of the Appointment Form (PHS2271) to your GCFA to review before you submit it to the NIH. Per NIH policy, these forms should be submitted before any stipends are paid.

For Individual Fellowships like an F31, send your completed activation notice (PHS416-5) to your GCO in OSR. They will obtain the institutional certification and submit the form to the NIH. Information about the stipend level is not included on activation notices. However, if you have any questions about what rate to pay the trainee, you should contact your GCFA or GCO for assistance.

On Appointment Forms, the stipend amount indicated will be what was awarded on the most recent NGA.

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Post Award (continued from previous page)

However, the NIH will release the yearly stipend tuition/fee level notice around January of each year, which may change the base rate for some appointments. The notice will affect awards made with that year's funds only. The Fed uses a fiscal year of October 1 through September 30. So it is possible that a trainee will start the year at one rate and get a small increase during their appointment. For example if your NGA was dated 11/1/09, when the NIH announced the FY10 rate increase (NOT-OD-10-073) on 1/13/10, every predoctoral trainee appointed with those funds would qualify for an increase. A revised NGA will be issued and you should adjust the salary accordingly at that time.

Termination Notices are handled the same regardless of the type of award. Ideally, you will work with your GCFA to review payroll information prior to filling out the form. Mid-month appointments and terminations are guaranteed to create discrepancies in the amount of stipend that a trainee receives versus what is allowed to be charged to the grant because NU and the NIH use different methods to calculate daily pay. To NU, a trainee earns X dollars per *working day* in the month, while to the NIH, a trainee earns X dollars per *calendar day*. Let's say you have a pre doc trainee at $1,765/month terminating on 9/12/10. They will earn $58.83 per day according to the NIH, but will be paid $80.23 per day per NU. That person was paid $641.84 for 8 days of work by NU. The NIH considers this as 12 days of work and would require that they be paid $705.96 by the training grant. You can work with your GCFA to resolve these discrepancies. Termination Notices will not be certified until payroll issues are resolved. Once certified, your GCFA will return the form to you so that you may send it to the NIH or upload to XTrain.

We'll continue on this topic next quarter and discuss stipend compensation versus supplementation. Also be on the lookout for a NURAP@Noon session on Administering Institutional Training Grants later on in the year.

eRA

by **David Hull**

Federal Sponsor News

The NIH has announced plans to eliminate the error correction window for proposals with due dates on or after January 25, 2011. This means that any application submitted after the 5pm local deadline will be subject to NIH's late policy and may not be reviewed. Also, any proposal submitted on time but with errors that cannot be corrected prior to the deadline will not be reviewed. While the Office for Research and OSR will communicate this change to faculty, personally telling PIs about the change and discussing it with them will be helpful for all involved.

NIH vows to work with the applicant community to make this transition as smooth as possible. For instance, they are considering a number of measures such as making the text on error messages more intuitive and user friendly. Additionally, they are looking for opportunities to downgrade Commons errors to warnings where the missing data is not vital for processing or review. Finally, NIH intends to update the application guide instructions to help avoid the most common errors in submissions.

What does this mean for us? Simply, it heightens the importance of adherence to internal proposal deadlines as stated in the Vice President for Research's memo dated 11/17/09 (http://www.research.northwestern.edu/osr/memo_VPR_propsubmission.html). Early submissions of proposal materials mean less pressure and anxiety for us all. It also means we have a greater window of opportunity to correct potential errors, and most importantly, the best chance to submit a successful application. Look for more guidance to come from NIH and OSR as we approach this key deadline.

As for NSF, they recently outlined a couple of new changes within the Grants.gov application form set. As of August 23, 2010, NSF application packages include the latest versions of the R&R Project/Performance Site Location (v.1.4) and Research & Related Other Project Information (1.3) forms. Whereas these items are not critical to the success of your application, you may notice slight changes in format in the rare event you submit a proposal to NSF where Grants.gov submission is required.

NSF also continues to stress the one page supplementary Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan requirement for each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral researchers. On April 24, 2010, NSF initiated automated compliance checking of such applications and will not review such proposals that fail to meet this requirement.

OSR Award & Proposal Data

Are you in need of urgent and accurate grant data for your department or for a specific PI(s)? Just a reminder that there are a wide variety of InfoEd reports available to faculty and departmental staff through Cognos reporting, which can be accessed through the NUPortal. These include data for Annual/Monthly reports, Cost Sharing, Current/Pending/Completed Support, Faculty Group Proposals/Awards, Office for Research Safety, Proposal/Award Sponsor Trends, as well as a large quantity of post award data from NUFinancials. Please take advantage of these helpful resources accessible to you at just a quick click of your mouse. (For more info regarding the report inventory, please see: http://www.cafe.northwestern.edu/reports/) Cognos training for reports is available via: http://www.cafe.northwestern.edu/training/ .

NURAP Star: Jamie Young

by **Alden Chang**

There are only a few things in our day to day lives that are 100% reliable. There's the certainty of having to pay taxes, the last minute grants request, and *Jamie Young*. Jamie is the Associate Director of OSR-Chicago, but is better known as the omnipresent guiding hand for research administrators on the Chicago Campus. Recently, he sat down with Alden Chang to talk about being a research administrative professional at NU.

AC: *Jamie, I've heard that you've had a long history at NU. Can you tell us how you got to your current position as the Associate Director of OSR-Chicago?*

JY: I started out as a department administrator in the department of OSR back in '96. I worked my way up the ranks and served in a data quality position for two years. I was a research administrator for about six years. Then I moved into the role of senior GCO. For the last two years, I have served in the role of Associate Director of OSR.

AC: *That sounds like an amazing progression. Do you have any advice for others who'd like to make that kind of career move?*

JY: The main thing is that I always strive to do the best I could do whatever the capacity I was in. I always strive to go above and beyond. I enjoy my job-the role we provide is fulfilling. I mean research administrators as a whole are supporting and facilitating the research enterprise at the university. So, keep that in mind as you go through your day-to-day tasks. Something else I find interesting and somewhat helpful is when you hear or read about researchers or see clips on t.v. or in the news . When you see those people and hear about the advances they're making, you're like 'hey I know that guy.'

AC: *I think that everyone involved in sponsored research at NU would agree that some of the most challenging roles on campus are the ones within the Office for Sponsored Research. There are so many responsibilities attributed to your offices. What would you say is the most challenging part of your job as Associate Director of OSR-Chicago?*

JY: Well I can tell you about the most exciting thing. Working with the staff we have here is both challenging and enjoyable.

Personally, I would say the most enjoyable thing about my job is trouble-shooting different kinds of problems or issues that faculty or staff supporting them have, and working with them to find solutions to their problems and working to the end goal because they want to get proposals out and projects funded. So working with the departments to achieve those goals, because that's really the bread and butter of our business; if grants don't come in and there's no research enterprise, we won't have jobs.

AC: *You mentioned about trouble shooting—especially with your staff here in OSR Chicago. That leads me to another question I have for you. Customer service is a critical part of research*

administration, especially for professionals on the front line, like in OSR. Your colleagues say that you personally are an example of good customer service. What do you think comprises good customer service and what can research administration professionals do to deliver world-class customer service?

JY: I think what comprises good customer service is when you're able to see things from the other person's point of view. We get a lot of last minute requests, last minute proposals, and it's understanding from the department's point of view that maybe they just got it a minute ago, or maybe the day before, and they've been up all night too, scrambling to get this done. I always try to do whatever I can do to help to get things through. I know that they're anxious, their faculty members are anxious as well, and they keep asking their administrators for updates. So I think anything we can do to help alleviate the stress is, an example of what comprises good customer service. Not getting hung up on the little things, looking at the bigger picture.

Something else to consider is not taking things personally because people will send you goofy emails, or will respond in a goofy manner that's maybe not professional. You have to take those with a grain of salt and help them. I think in the long run it really helps to build relationships. The way I look at it, it's a two-way street. I'm also going to the departments I work with and just like they expect good customer service and quick response, I also expect that of them. I think it helps if you look at it as a two-way street.

AC: *OSR is obviously a high paced, high volume, high stress kind of place. Do you have any guidance for our members when they are dealing with too much work or too many deadlines?*

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(NURAP Star, cont'd.)

JY: Some simple things that I do are making a list of things that need to get done, especially those things that absolutely have to get done. I use the task reporter in Microsoft Outlook to report things and organize them by date. It helps me to keep track of
proposals. I also do a lot of email organization.

I also think that instead of doing everything yourself, being able to build relationships with your support staff and know what you can pass off to them and trust that they'll get it done. I have a good support staff, Tina Hollins and Javier Gonzalez, who really help me a lot.

I think it's good to talk to people, if you're feeling overwhelmed and share with them. Get encouragement. And if you're too overwhelmed, ask for help. You'll never know who's available to help you out.

AC: *A lot of people will be surprised to find out that you have three sons and a daughter. I assume that you're grooming them as the future GCOs for OSR-Chicago?*

JY: Future research administrators.

AC: *That must involve a lot of juggling on your part to achieve a good work-life balance. Do you have any advice to share for others who share this kind of conflict?*

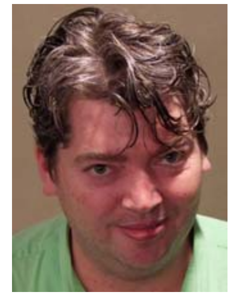
JY: Well it helps that I have a long commute. I use my commute time to decompress from work. When I get home, I don't turn on the computer until later at night. But when I get home, I take time to take an active interest in the children.

It is difficult to juggle, I have no 'me' time. I enjoy pouring energy into the lives of others, like my children. It's tough, but it's doable, though you don't get a lot of sleep.

Dear Dan:

NURAP's Advice Column

by **Dan Rademacher**



Dear Dan,

We have a new faculty member coming in a few weeks he has several grants he will be transferring.

Do you have suggestions or a Danism on how to approach this?

-Newbie

Dear Newbie,

Danism?

Wait, I do have a Danism to share and that is NU-it! Basically take all of the standard grant materials and make it NU (short of using purple ink). So their bio will have their new/NU role, facilities and resources will speak to their new/NU surroundings as well a budget reflecting NU rates this should be submitted to the funding agency along with a signed face page and/or cover letter signed by OSR.

If this is NIH please make sure the eRA Commons ID for your new faculty is tied to NU. Throughout this process work with their former institution and get an estimate of what the balance of funds that will be transferred. To facilitate I would also get a pre-spending account from OSR so that when the faculty member arrives an account is in place.

Dan

Do you have a question for Dan Rademacher about research administration or life in general? Submit them to Dan Rademacher at :

d-rademacher2@northwestern.edu

Be sure to include the words "Dear Dan" in the subject line.

Editors reserve the right to choose questions to be published in the RAP Up.

NURAP'S ONLINE RESOURCES

Check out NURAP's website:

http://research.northwestern.edu/nurap

We also have links to other on-line resources like NURAP's Yammer Group, our Linked In Group, and out Flickr Photo Page.

Sponsor News

by **Matthew Douponce**

Looking ahead to the new fiscal year, perhaps the most significant change to be aware of is the elimination of the two-day error correction window for applications to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ), and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). This change will become effective beginning with deadlines on or after January 25, 2011. The two-day error correction window was initially implemented in December 2005 as a way to facilitate the transition from paper to electronic submissions. Starting with the January 25, 2011 due date, NIH must receive an error-free application by 5 P.M. local time or it will be subject to the NIH late policy and may not be considered for review. This new policy could have a significant effect on proposals for all parties involved in the preparation, review, and submission processes and it will be even more important for OSR to receive applications in a timely manner, i.e., five days prior to the deadline for the administrative components and two days prior to the deadline for the complete application. Please note, however, that the elimination of the error correction window will not affect the two-business-day application viewing window, which allows the submitting organization to view the application once it is submitted.

Aside from the elimination of the error correction window, NIH will also be implementing a new policy on post-submission materials, which are materials that are submitted after the grant application but before the initial peer review. While NIH does accept some materials after the submission of the application, this option is only to be used in the case of an unforeseen event and is not to be relied upon as a window to submit materials past the deadline or to correct errors discovered after submission. Not all post-submission materials will be accepted, however. For example, while revised budgets and biographical sketches resulting from a change in key personnel will be accepted, updated specific aims and research strategy pages will not accepted.

To submit materials for post-submission consideration, the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) must submit approval directly to the NIH Scientific Review Officer thirty calendar days prior to the peer review meeting. While it is also acceptable for the Principal Investigator (PI) to forward the approval of the AOR, NIH will not accept communication from the PI with the AOR simply notified via a “cc”.

The National Science Foundation (NSF) is also implementing changes to their application process. Beginning with the August 23, 2010 deadline, all NSF opportunities for funding through Grants.gov will include the latest versions of Research and Related Project/Performance Site Locations and Other Project Information. The new version of the project/performance locations allows for up to 30 sites, though NSF will only accept the first one listed and all additional sites will not be included with the application. This change will also affect the DUNS ID number, as it is no longer required but is still encouraged. The Other Project Information section will now have the Human Assurance Number optional. In the older version of the form, applicants were not able to enter the Human Assurance Number unless the project was not exempt and the IRB review was not pending.

NURAP Member Recognition

- **Krista Galvin** (Materials Sciences, McC) will be leaving NU for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Congratulations to **Laura Gerety** who has moved to Obstetrics and Gynecology.
- **Seletta Nichols** (Medical Social Sciences) was nominated to the Steering Committee of NURAP.
- **Rachel Rufer** (Surgery, FSM) recently achieved fifteen years of service. Thanks for your dedication, Rachel!
- Congratulations to **Gretchen Talbot**. She will be the new Director of Research Administration at WCAS.

Newsletter Staff

Co-Managing Editor: Krista Galvin (Materials Science and Eng., McC)

Co-Managing Editor: Alden Chang (ORD)

Feature Contributors:
Lead: Jill Bockes (NUCATS, FSM)
Post-Award: Frank Cutting (ASRSP)
Sponsor News: Matthew Douponce (OSR-Chicago)
Compliance Corner: Nicholas Griffiths (Medical Social Sciences)
eRA: David Hull (OSR-Evanston)
Department Dossier: Susan Morris (Biomedical Eng., McCormick)
Dear Dan: Daniel Rademacher (Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Ctr.)

Contact the newsletter at:
alden-chang@northwestern.edu

NURAP
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION PROFESSIONALS