From RA to PI: Breaking through the 4th Wall

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• Use skills gained through research administration for research
• Find available institutional resources when considering a research study
• Discover opportunities and ways to use research administration knowledge outside of the day-to-day job requirements
BACKGROUND

Through the sponsorship of the SRAI's Journal of Research Administration Fellowship program, the Research Administrator used the opportunity to create and conduct a research study and serve as a Principal Investigator.
The idea of a “fourth wall” began when theater was the primary source of entertainment. It is “the space that separates a performer or performance from an audience,” an imaginary barrier that allows the audience the chance to observe the actions on stage or, nowadays, the story in a movie or TV show. When the actors break through that fourth wall, the audience is transformed from observers to participants.
THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

• The Research Administrator (RA) as the critical “Audience” stepped into role of the Principal Investigator (PI) or the “Actor”

• Traversed same path required for faculty PIs

• Gained unique perspective as both an RA and PI
THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

• Required to strictly follow all university research procedures, policies, regulation, and protocols
• Required to obtain all necessary approvals
• Designed a research plan, research methodology, collected and analyzed data, and prepared research results for publication
• Suffered and endured frustrations, doubts, setbacks, and pressures
RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION: TRANSLATABLE SKILLS

• We are experts in complex processes and at interpreting rules, regulations, requirements, and instructions

• We are masters of compliance

• We have to constantly adapt to an ever-changing environment

• We understand and plan for revisions
RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION: TRANSLATABLE SKILLS

• We are deadline-driven and completionists

• Research Administrators have unique backgrounds and career paths

• We understand the need for cross-functional collaborations

• We are extremely patient, resourceful, and resilient
RESOURCES FOR FUTURE RESEARCHERS

• Seek out peers and experts in the field
• Find out if your institution has resources/training for staff – most are free
• Join/apply to fellowship or mentorship programs
• Seek out mentors and allies
• Network and expand your community

Self-investment is important!
RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS

• Apply for fellowship or mentoring programs

• Write an article for a peer-reviewed publication

• Write for smaller publications (e.g. SRAI Catalyst)
RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS

- Develop or create research posters for poster sessions
- Develop institutional policy and/or procedures
- Use research to advocate change
- Become the Subject Matter Expert for your institution
Questions?

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