Creating a Vibrant Learning Community at Tufts University: Lessons Learned in Developing a Training Ecosystem

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Developing a Training Ecosystem: Learning Objectives

• 1. Structure your institution’s research administration professional development programs to cultivate a vibrant learning community in a multi-modal way, while engaging the community in developing and providing programming.

• 2. Assess gaps that currently exist in your institution’s training offerings, and develop solutions to these gaps.
Key Questions for this Session

• **What** do Research Administrators at my institution need to know and what competencies do they need to succeed?
• **How** would they best learn each?
• **Who** could lead, facilitate, or provide expertise for each of these professional education offerings?
• **How** can we put these pieces together in a way that will cultivate a vibrant learning community?
How do Research Administrators Learn?

https://muppetcentral.com/_images/sesame/group_school.jpg
Take a Step Back: How Do People Learn?

- Learning = struggling
  - to figure out how to solve a problem that matters to you, and
  - to practice making your brain locate the information again (recall)
- There is a limit: “frustration”
  - Frustration = “The struggle is impossible and I give up”
- So we need to think not just about what people need to know but how they can best learn it – about the specific mode of professional education that will allow productive struggle but not frustration
A Vibrant Learning Community: A Case Study
Specific Modes of Professional Education Across Career

Explore
- Research Administration Mentoring Program (RAMP): Exploring Research Administration Track

Join
- Research Administration Mentoring Program (RAMP): RAs New to Tufts Track
- Orientation Day 0: Welcome to Research Administration
- Orientation Day 1: Welcome to Research Administration at Tufts

Grow
- Research Administration Mentoring Program (RAMP): Milestone Track (includes CRA Study Group)
- Partnering Across Research Topics (PARTs) Workshop Series – all campuses
- RA Resource Portal (online learning)
- Systems & Process Launch Labs
- RAD Day

Lead
- Research Administration Mentoring Program (RAMP) Mentor Training & Mentor Cohort
- Standing Committee on Research Administration & Development (RAD) Processes
- Talk to Us Podcast
- DELTA Committee
Background

• From no training to monthly model to an ecosystem
  • First trainings community-led, high workload.
    • Not successful across all campuses
  • Starts and stops, not immediate success
  • Full ecosystem needed support from training professional
    • RAs bring knowledge of our field, training professional brings knowledge about learning modalities
Explore

• Research Administration Mentoring Program (RAMP): Exploring Research Administration Track
  • Possible future direction: Shadow / mentoring in coordination with HR, to move other staff into RA career track
Join

• Research Administration Mentoring Program (RAMP): RAs New to Tufts Track
  • Cohort-based approach to onboarding
• Orientation Day 0: Welcome to Research Administration
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Grow

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Building an RA Training Ecosystem at Your Institution
Tools for Creating an Ecosystem

• Assessing your strengths

• Tools:
  • Identifying **What** the RA Community Needs to Know & **How** They Can Learn It
  • Solution Analysis to Address Causes (ROCCIPA)
  • Who Should Educate Whom?
Current Strengths:
What & How Research Administrators Learn at Your Institution

- If I came to your institution today, what could I learn about research administration without having to figure it out by myself?
- How would I learn this information or skillset?
- From whom would I learn it?
Tool: Identifying What the RA Community Needs to Know & How They Can Learn It

Gaps exist where you see problems made up of repetitive patterns of ineffective behaviors within a community.

Four Steps to Identify a New Learning Solution:

1. Describe who is doing what right now
2. Consider why each group does what it does
3. Address the *causes* of the behavior and describe *who* should do *what* to carry out the agreed learning solution (if any)
4. Evaluate whether the learning solution is working, and refine as needed
## Tool: Solution Analysis to Address Causes (ROCCIPA)

People are doing what they are doing due to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Opportunity</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Incentives</th>
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Solution:
Tool: Solution Analysis to Address Causes: (ROCCIPA)

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<td>PIs charge travel at the end of an award for travel to network at conferences</td>
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Solution:

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<th>Change rule</th>
<th>Remove barrier</th>
<th>✓ Educate</th>
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<th>Incentivize/hold accountable</th>
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* Provide resources | * Change process
Tool: Who Should Educate Whom?

1. Competencies I should teach & mentor
   - Things I love to do and do well
   - Things I love to do but don’t do well
   - Things I hate to do and do well
   - Things I hate to do and don’t do well

2. Competencies I should learn

3. Competencies I can teach & hand off to others

4. Incompetencies I shouldn’t exercise or teach
Putting It All Together: Structuring Professional Development Programs to Cultivate a Vibrant Learning Community

- Content: What do RAs need to know?
- Modes of professional education: How can they best learn it?
- Colleagues in the learning community: Who has the expertise and what can they do to contribute it?
“A leader is best when people barely know the leader exists; when the work is done, the aim fulfilled, they will say: ‘we did it ourselves.’”

- Lao Tzu
Questions?
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