

SRAi Conference

Case Study: Department Research Administrator – Training in House Talent

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Organizational Background

- Health System with over 18,000 Faculty & Staff across the greater Los Angeles Area.
 - 2,500+ Research Faculty & Staff across multiple locations.
- Research with the organization has outgrown the support structure in
 - The Central Office (several positions remained open for 6+ Months)
 - Department Level Positions: multiple Departments had position open for 8+ months.
 - Temporary coverage was hard to identify.

Case before us:

* We **NEED** Department Research Administrators! And cannot find them....

- Start of 2020, even **before** the COVID-19 Pandemic reeked havoc, we knew:
 - Dept. Research Administrators (DRAs) with experience were hard to find.
- With the changes that the COVID-19 Pandemic brought, new challenges arose.
 - Many DRAs looking for fully remote work
 - Limitations to states allowed due to labor laws and tax regulations.
 - Many Faculty wanting the in person work availability

Looking within...

- **As members of leadership (Supervisor, Manager and Director) or research teams, we started to see and feel the urgency.**
 - Conversations started amongst departments in our health system.
 - Academic Affairs was the main hub of the inquiries.
 - Looking for support during LOA, vacancies and when new faculty joined smaller programs.
 - Meanwhile, Leadership was thinking of ways to keep high performers engaged.
 - Leading the charge to Promote Research Administration as a career path AND
 - Feeling out interest from those high performing administrative support staff.
 - **WIN-WIN Solution...*maybe***

Experience with the First Few

2019

- **Two (2) Support staff were mentored and introduced to focused pre-award DRA work.**
 - Over 6 months, they were individually mentored by their supervisors who had experience in pre-award processes. They had no prior experience in grant submission support.
 - They had worked with Research faculty & programs as administrative support staff
 - Varied degrees of education and backgrounds.
 - Both desired focused career path & expressed interest in learning about the DRA roles.
 - Both individuals learned well and were promoted.

The spark was lit.

2020

Change comes in waves.

- **The COVID-19 Pandemic caused everyone to re-evaluate their staffing models.**
- **We lost some staff to personal and professional moves.**
 - Leadership challenged us to evaluate the need to replace any non-essential roles.
 - Could we do things differently?

What can we change? What Can we do?

- **Training & Education is key**
 - We have plenty of staff looking for growth opportunities.
 - We had 5+ DRA positions open at any given time between 2019-2021 across the organization.
 - Not including clinical research positions.

Birth of a Training Program

2021

- We prepared a proposal to start a DRA Training Program
 - Senior Leadership understood the need and supported the effort.
 - Urged budget neutrality
 - Outreach to ancillary departments began.
 - Roadshow initiates
 - Gaining support and instructors

Fall '21

The application for the training program is launched. Management had to approve.

Steering Committee is formed to ensure objective selection of cohort members and to identify concerns.

15 spots per cohort

Over 45 applicants that first session (Spring '22)

Training Program Make up Spring of 2021

Instructors

Partners with:

- **Research Compliance (IRB & IACUC)**
- **Central Office (Pre/Contracts and Post/Accounting)**
- **Human Resources (Visa & Immigration Services)**
- **Senior Dept. Research Administrators**

Students

- **From across the organization**
- **Experienced researchers, junior administrative staff and junior central office personnel.**
- **The training was fully virtual and organized by our team in house.**

The word got out...

The 1st cohort was a success.

- **We Deferred the applicants not admitted for the first cohort.**
 - These were given preference for the 2nd cohort.
 - Before dates announced – staff (and Managers) reached out as participants shared the positive feedback
 - Ancillary Departments also reached out.
 - Legal/Technology Transfer
 - Finance/Payroll
 - Continued support from departments already involved

Success – Pause - Relaunch

3 additional Cohorts held 2022-2023

**The launch of new systems
integration in January 2024**

**- Need to Pause and allow
Departments to adapt.**

The need continues:

Inquiries from Management & Staff

Relaunch scheduled for January 2025

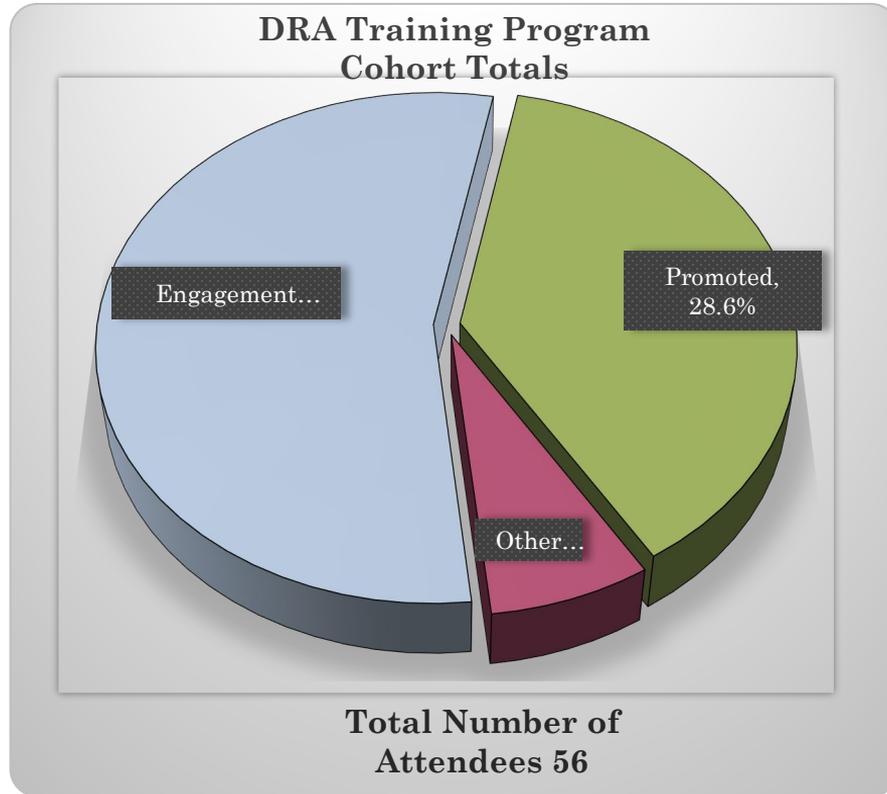
The need for structured training and development has not slowed down

Research programs continue to grow in our organization

The need for skilled DRAs parallels that growth

The need is greater than we anticipated.

Outcomes – because Researchers love data!



Total Number of Attendees over 4

cohorts: 56 (As of July 2024)

No. Promoted to DRA Roles

- **16 or 28.6%**

- **Employees expressed training helped with Job Satisfaction/Retention:**

- **23 or 39.3%**

Investing in Employees

The investment pays off.

- Allowing staff to carve out time to learn during their work-day is a satisfier and demonstrates that commitment to them
- Senior leadership allowing Experts to participate as Instructors demonstrates that commitment to investing in all.
- The reduced turn over and informed DRAs helps those ancillary departments and reinvigorates them.



Questions???

