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T 103: Building Investigator Capacity through Research Development

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Learning Objectives

- Understand and describe specific challenges to investigators at different career levels in pursuing external funding
 - Assist investigators in identifying and overcoming obstacles or problems that impede research capacity and grant readiness
 - Review examples and best practices in building principal investigator research capacity
 - Apply research development strategies to build research capacity and grant readiness for investigators at all career stages
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Your presenter: Marjorie Piechowski

- SRAI Distinguished Faculty
- SRAI Past President
- Over 35 years experience at three Midwest universities (Marquette, DePaul, UW-Milwaukee) in
 - proposal development
 - faculty workshops
 - mentoring faculty in grantsmanship, especially new faculty
 - organizing and writing large-scale, complex proposals
 - publicizing/recognizing research success
 - providing pre-award services
 - overseeing institutional research compliance
 - managing post-award oversight
 - now, independent grant development consultant for colleges, universities and research institutions in the U.S. and globally
 - Ph.D. in American Literature



Why is this topic important?

- ❧ Institutions make major investments in hiring faculty/investigators to conduct research and pursue external support for that work
- ❧ Competition for grants has intensified, especially for new investigators
- ❧ More collaborative, interdisciplinary, large-scale projects, fewer single-investigator awards
- ❧ Rapidly changing research environment for all levels of investigators
- ❧ Disconnect between institutional expectations for research growth and success
- ❧ But--many institutions do not have organized, comprehensive, institution-wide, layered services to facilitate investigator success

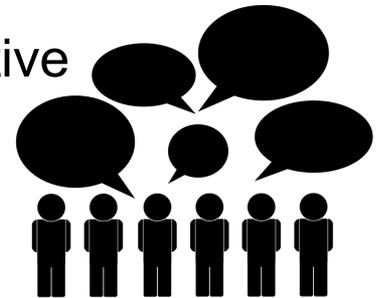
That is the focus of this session—facilitating success for investigators by applying research development strategies and support

New Investigators

- ❧ Few graduate programs provide coursework or significant training in grant development
- ❧ Graduate students may write parts of proposals (literature review) but lack knowledge of the whole grant development process
- ❧ New investigators may only know their mentor's funding

What don't they know?

- ❧ Agency structures, deadlines, proposal components, review process
- ❧ How to conduct a funding search
- ❧ How to read and understand requests for proposals, funding announcements,
- ❧ How to construct a detailed budget and budget narrative
- ❧ Available internal resources for grant development



What Is Research (Grant) Capacity?



Grant capacity: Institution's and individual's potential volume of grant activity while considering qualifications, complexity, and suitability (eligibility and infrastructure)



Grant readiness: Relative level of preparation to pursue grant activity, both for individual investigators and for institutional projects and opportunities



At any given point, institution and investigators may have the capacity, but may not have the readiness and *vice versa*



Both the institution and individual investigators can benefit from research development strategies and services

Strategic planning and advancement of research mission

Identifying and maintaining external collaborations

Identifying institutional and individual research strengths

Identifying and disseminating funding opportunities

Presenting workshops and training in proposal development

Building and fostering individual and institutional research capacity

Team building/facilitating team science

Managing/writing/editing large-scale, complex proposals and projects

Serving as project manager or evaluator for large-scale projects

Editing proposals and other academic publications

Research Development

RD professionals can help investigators in many ways:

Capacity Building ~ Research Development

How RD helps investigators to develop research capacity depends on:

- Institutional culture
 - RD support (central vs. departmental)
 - RD Staffing levels
 - Proposal Stage
 - PI experience and cooperation
 - Complexity of project
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How Research Development Can Help Build Grant Capacity for Investigators



Being aware of the personal and academic challenges is important to work effectively with new and experienced faculty/researchers



RD can serve as a referral resource for institutional



RD can participate in faculty orientation programs



RD professionals are key to strategic advancement of research mission

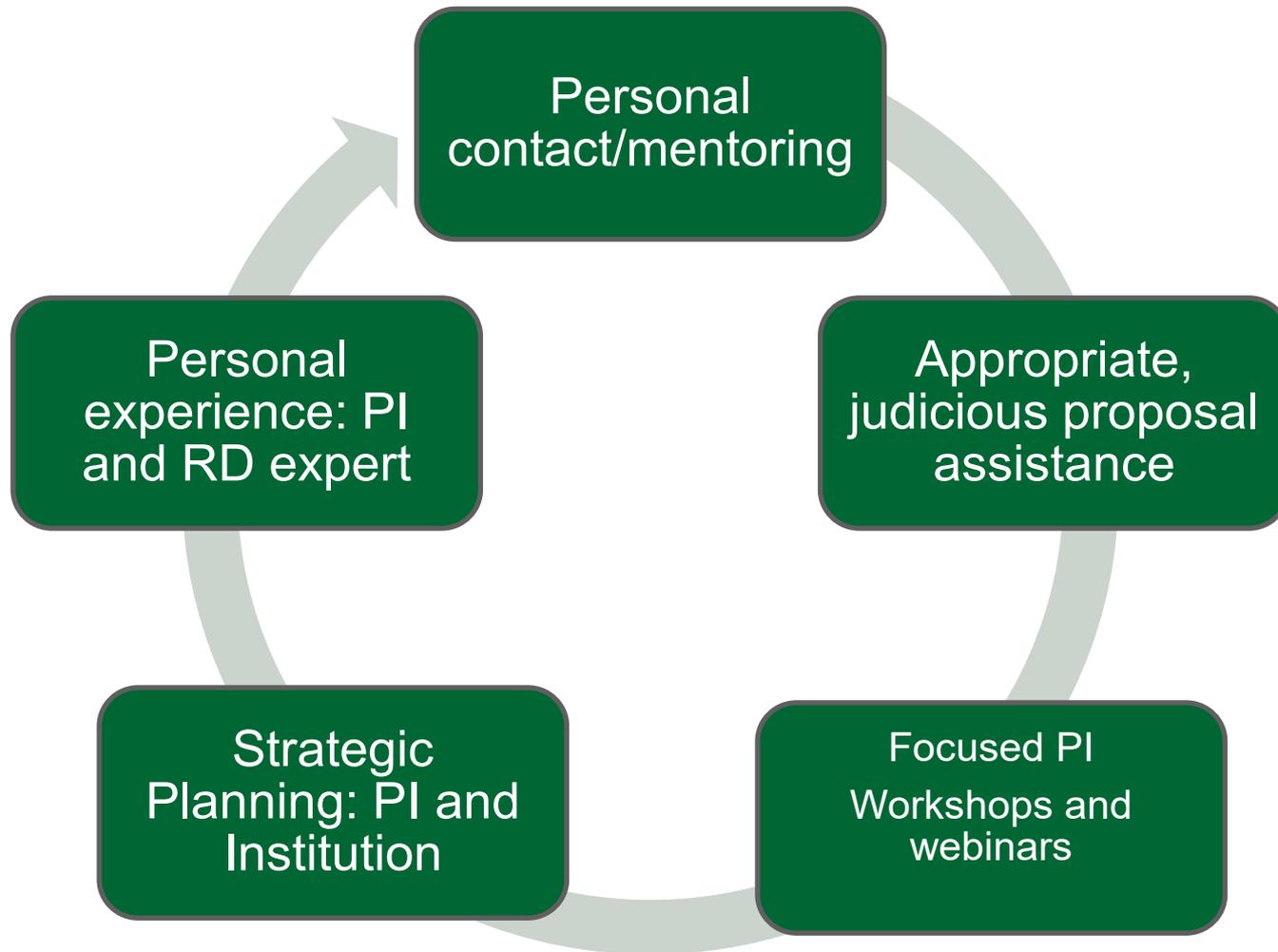


RD is key in showing what research support services faculty can enjoy to receive from day one



RD services can be a selling point for the institution when recruiting faculty

Ways of Building PI Capacity



Career Challenges for Investigators

Junior faculty/beginning researchers

- Seeking the first entry-level grant
- Establishing an independent research career
- Separating from graduate/post-doc advisor
- Setting up labs
- Preparing courses
- Learning the grant process

Mid-level, post-tenure faculty/investigators

- Looking for new areas of research
- Moving beyond individual research to collaborative or large-scale projects
- Supporting a research team (students, post-docs)
- Seeking career validation and recognition

Senior faculty/investigators

- Staying current in the field
- Breaking new research ground
- Winding down a career
- Leaving a mark/legacy on their area of research

Personal Challenges for Investigators



New/Junior Researchers: Juggling priorities: teaching vs. research, new institution, new colleagues, work-life balance



Mid-Career: burn out; post-tenure process, boredom, lack of motivation, work-life balance, financial pressures

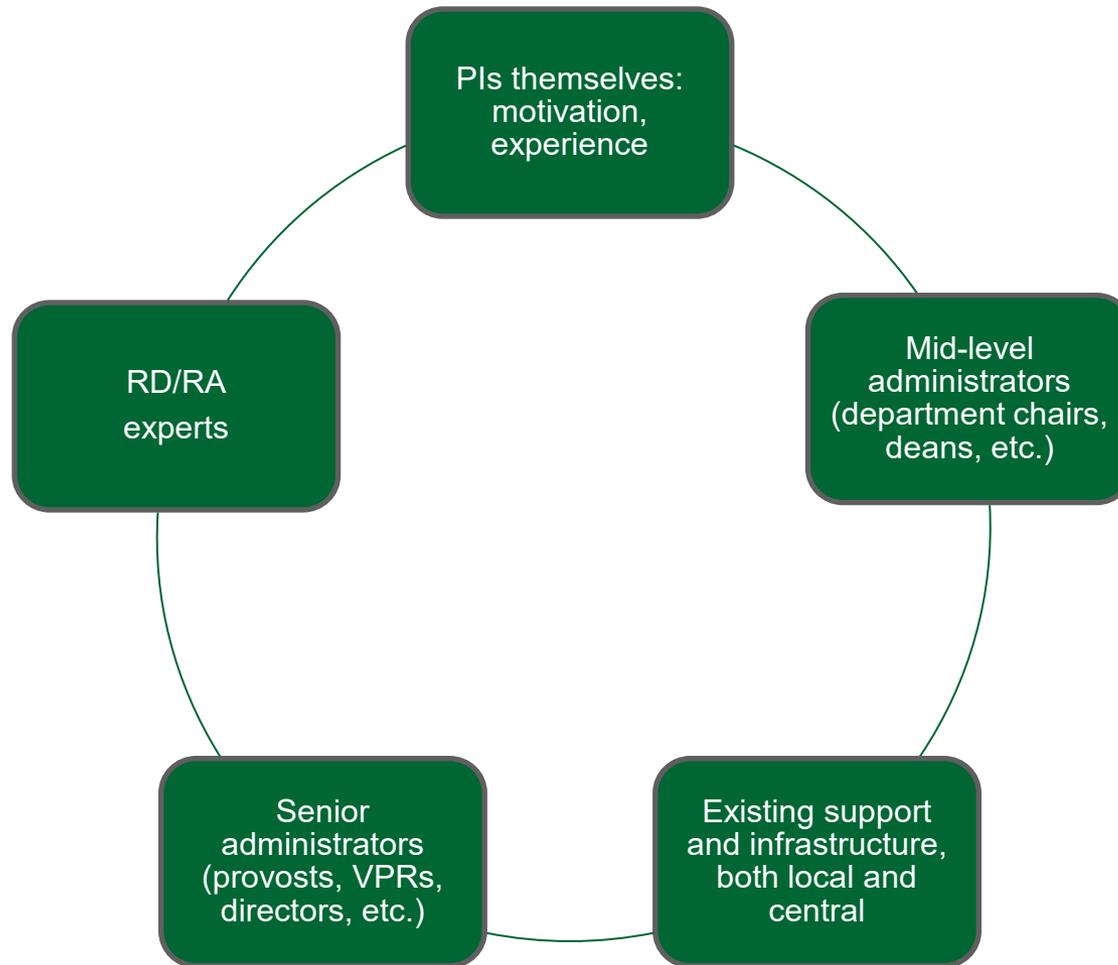


Senior-Level: “mature” research, not-current, removed from hands-on research, retired on the job, work-life-balance, health

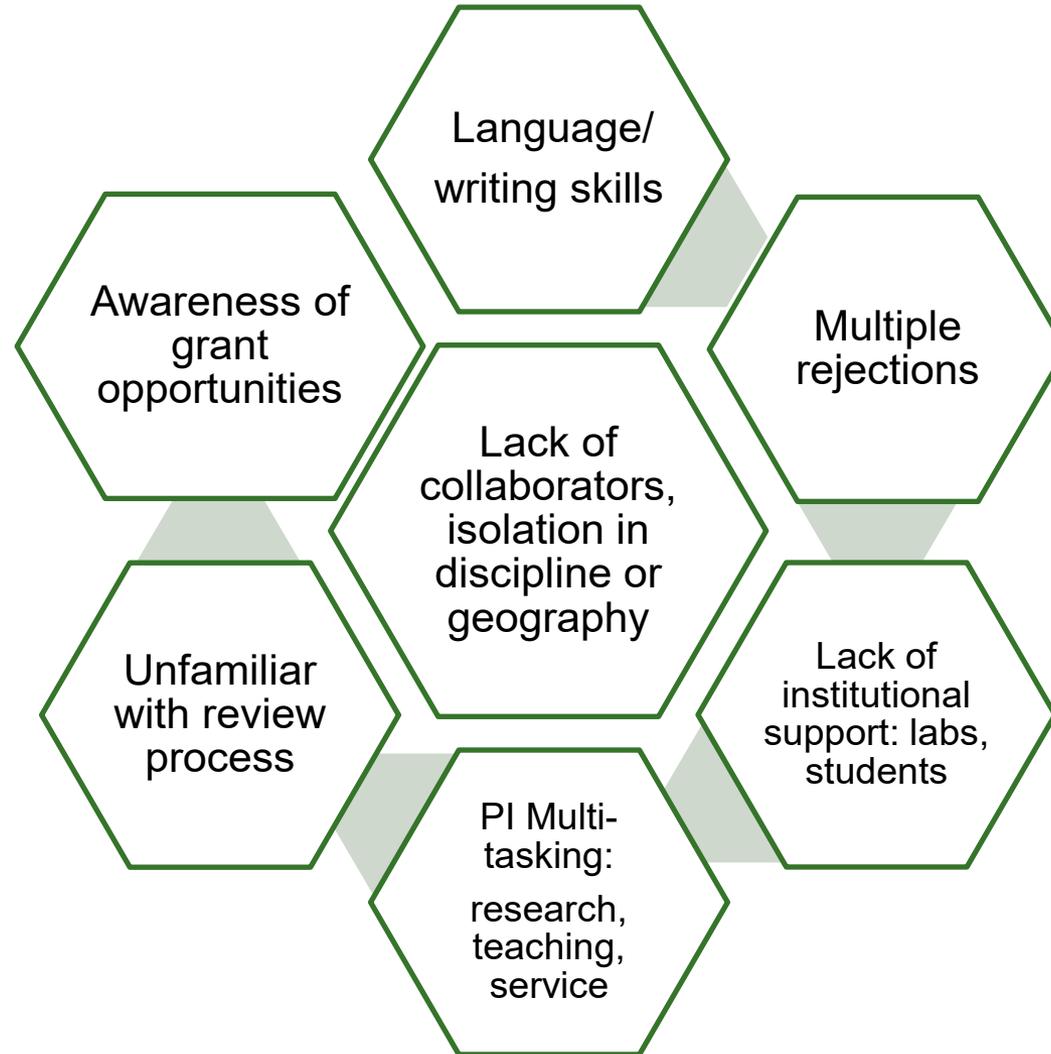


All levels: lack of – publications, mentors, resources, confidence

Where do we start?



Challenges for All PI Levels: RD can Help



RD Helping Investigators

- ❑ Conceptualizing research in “big picture” terms, not isolated projects or grant proposals
 - Developing individual strategic plan for grants
 - ❑ Identifying PI grant readiness
 - Targeting programs for early investigators
 - Understanding agency priorities and deadlines
 - ❑ Positioning for proposal success
 - Identifying/facilitating potential collaborators
 - Helping experienced researchers refocus career path
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Research Capacity

PI Skills and Abilities

- Technical
- Theoretical
- Managerial

Logistics

- Established lab, lab staff
- Equipment

Institutional Support

- Structures and processes

Grant Capacity

Grant Readiness

- Strategic Plan for Research Funding
- Align with promotion and tenure timeline and expectations
- Funding success: internal, external

Disciplinary Readiness

- Established Collaborators
 - Visibility and credibility: publications, presentations, organizations
 - Reviewer knowledge and experience
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Positioning

Successful investigators are well-positioned in:

- ❖ PI's field and the relevant literature
- ❖ Understanding potential/actual competitors for funding
- ❖ Major funding source(s)

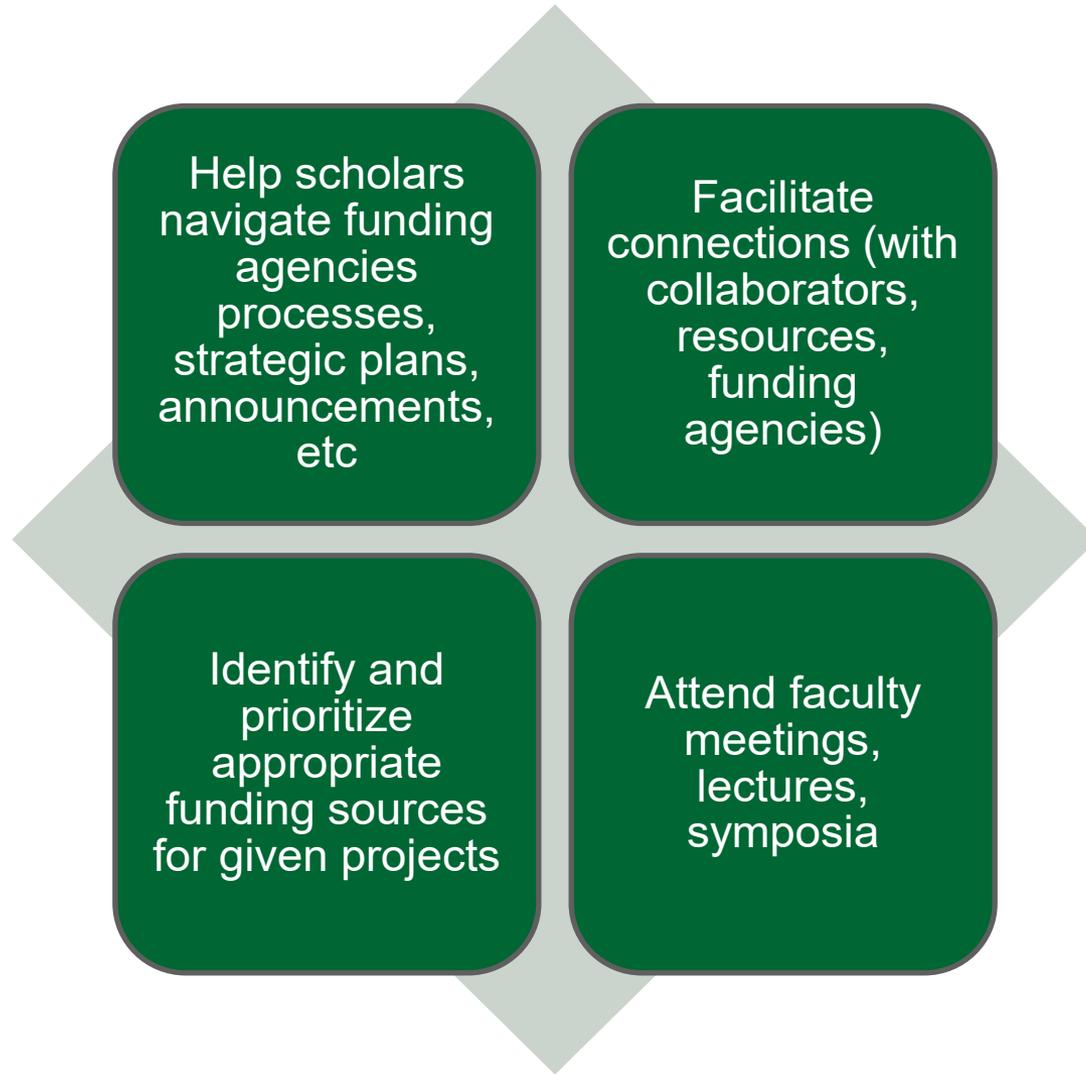
Successful proposals are well-positioned in:

- ❖ Investigator's research agenda & career goals
 - ❖ Strategic plan and priorities of potential funder
 - ❖ Strategic plan and priorities of PI's institution
 - ❖ Relevant scholarly/scientific discipline and literature
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More capacity building for research

- Help PIs understand and navigate institutional infrastructure
 - Advise about internal support they may not know about: Research Resources Chart
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More ways to build PI grant capacity



Grant capacity: Proposal Development

Serve as a central collection point and/or process manager

Provide institutional data/boilerplate

Help draft/edit non-technical proposal parts

Develop and share templates for routine non-technical sections of proposals

Stay up-to-date on agency and institutional policies, guidelines, procedures—so you can be a resource to the PI and the team

Examples in Building Investigator Capacity

- Organized group sessions, structured over time
 - Year-long or summer
 - Intense work on developing proposal draft
 - Structured review process, often with external reviewers
 - PI Academy
 - PI Boot Camp
 - Writers' Retreat
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Concluding Points

- Institutions make a huge and long-term investment to hire researchers/faculty
 - Building research and grant capacity should be an institutional priority and investment as well
 - Investigators are not experts in proposal development or funding agency structures and processes
 - ⑩ We see many more proposals than even the most experienced PI
 - ⑩ RD can offer mentoring and support for all levels of investigators
 - ⑩ Many RD best practices and strategies exist to benefit the PI and organization
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Questions? Comments?

Thank you for your participation and interest

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