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What is Research Development in the Context of Research Administration? Survey Results

Dean R. Gerstein, PhD

Director of Sponsored Research, Pomona College

May 5, 2026



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Revised Title:

The SUNDRI Data Visualizer : Progress Report on RD/RA Results (Expected Release: Summer 2026)

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Director of Sponsored Research, Pomona College

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RD/RA Support Networks at Diversified Research Institutions (SUNDRI) is a data collection effort fielded in **2025**.

SUNDRI grew from two earlier projects nurtured by the Primarily Undergraduate Institutions (**PUI**) Affinity Group of the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP):

- ***BANNERS-PUI***, a series of five workshops in **2024** on RD functions and environments at PUIs, funded by a **2023** NSF conference grant
- ***Landscape Study of RD at PUIs***, a brief **2021** survey with 120 participants and 87 completers, funded by a small grant from NORDP

The Landscape study was conceived as a pilot for an eventual larger data collection effort that might become recurrent. SUNDRI is the beginning of that larger series.

Acknowledgements

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The authors and our collaborators are intensely grateful for the professional expertise, encouragement and support of the GRANTED staff, especially:

- **Dina Stroud**, our first program officer,
- **Sarah O'Brien**, our current program officer, and
- **Alicia Knoedler**, director of the Office of Integrative Activities.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this material are those of its authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF.

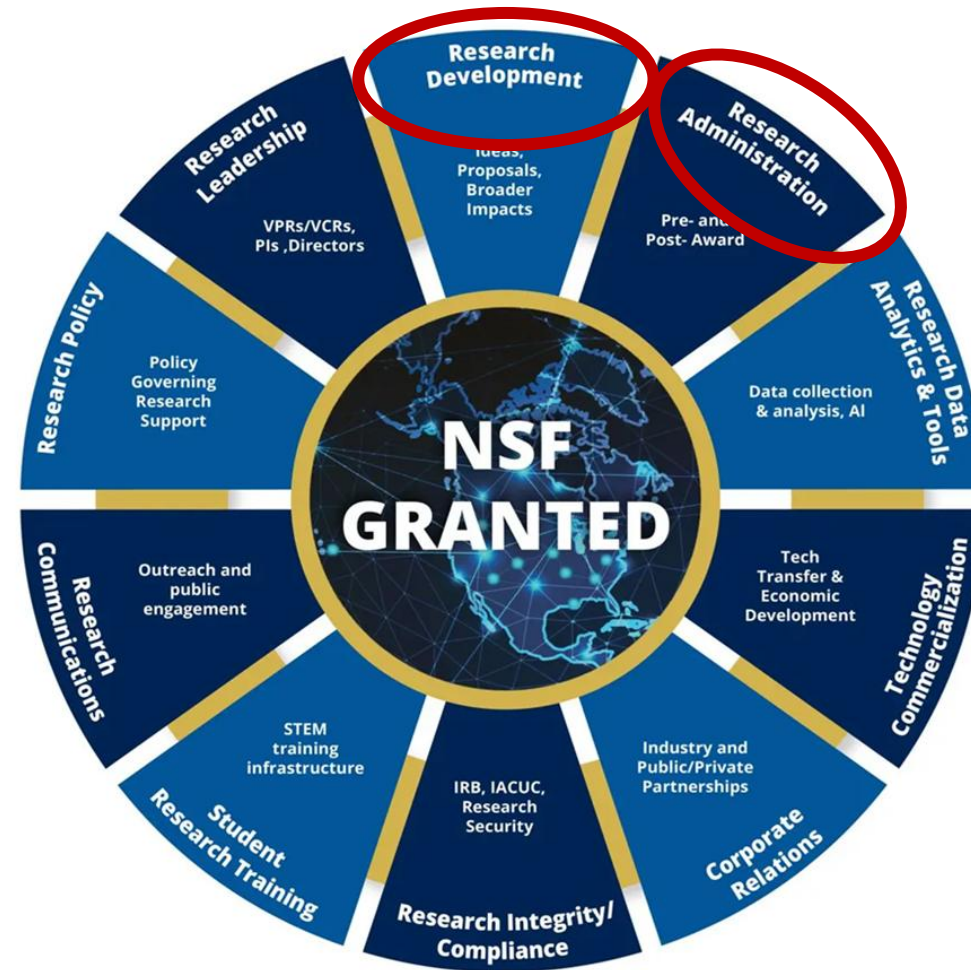
Context: RD/RA in the GRANTED Wheel

We took concepts as well as inspiration and funding from NSF. On the foundational “GRANTED Wheel”:

Research Development (RD) is at the top.

Research Administration (RA) at its right hand.

RD/RA is a shorthand for **RD in the context of RA.**



Contexts: The RD/RA Closeup



I am pleased to report here on work underway from **2024 to 2027 (est.)** on the project, **RD/RA Support Networks at Diversified Research Institutions (SUNDRI)**, representing our teammates:

- CoPIs: **Jennifer Glass** at *University of Massachusetts*, **Dartmouth Kara Luckey** at *Seattle University*, and **Joshua Pretlow** at *RTI*
- Supported by Joshua Price at *UMassD*; Chris Bennett, Ruby Johnson, Kacee Gore, Rob Killough and additional staff at *RTI*
- *SUNDRI Advisory Council (AC)*, selected for experience and affiliations across the full range of diversified academic institutions about which SUNDRI is collecting data and building data analytic tools

Advisory Council



Kara Luckey, Chair

Seattle University (WA)

Amy Chan Hilton

University of Southern Indiana

Jason Charland

University of Maine

Carolynn Julien

Fairleigh Dickinson University (NJ)

Erin Lynch

Winston-Salem State University (NC)

Dianne Nagy

South Dakota State University

Sarah Robertson

Bryn Mawr College (PA)

Aimee Kendall Roundtree

Texas State University

Barbara Endemaño Walker

University of California, Santa Barbara

Talitha Washington

Howard University (DC)

SUNDRI Objectives



SUNDRI aims to apply **rigorous social science methods** to understanding the diversified characteristics of RD/RA at institutions of higher education (IHEs), including *cognitive testing* of the survey items, *list-based stratified sampling* frame, *model-based weighting* of respondents to represent the frame of IHEs, *nonresponse bias analysis*, *analytic scale construction*, *multivariate techniques*

SUNDRI aims to enable **the RD/RA offices and personnel** at IHEs, working with IHE leadership, funding agencies and intermediaries, to better support academic contributions to *research knowledge* and the *STEM workforce pipeline*

SUNDRI aims is to develop, refine, test, analyze, and **share measures** of the depth, resource-intensity, and interpenetration of distinctive RD & RA *functions*; *assets and challenges* of the RD/RA effort; and perceived *needs and priorities* for internal and *networked support* to enhance research and research-related quality and capacity, especially at smaller entities

SUNDRI Approach at a Glance



- SUNDRI aspires to represent RD/RA aa a **national scale**
- SUNDRI's universe of concern is **more than 1,300 colleges and universities** stratified by eight ACE/Carnegie classifications, including R1s, R2s, Other Doctoral, Master's, and Baccalaureate Arts & Sciences institutions, with specific attention to institutional **size** and to **MSI** status
- SUNDRI also gives close attention to research characteristics measured by NSF's Higher Ed R&D (**HERD**) survey and Department of Ed's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (**IPEDS**)
- SUNDRI employs a **mix** of survey methods, data analysis, and visualization capabilities including an online questionnaire of offices and key personnel in RD/RA; still pending are case studies

SUNDRI Approach at a Glance



- Obtained IRB review, developed, cognitively tested, and deployed a survey **instrument** that required on average just above 30 minutes to complete
- The first section of the survey affirmed the **identity** of the respondent and institution and key RD/RA contextual information
- Institutions with no RD activity received a very **brief** version of the survey. Institutions with RD identified up to two primary RD-providing offices, and took questions on the structure and function of each RD-providing office in turn
- Within each **office loop** they identified up to 3 key personnel by title, and a **person loop** covered key training and experience information about each one
- The survey then asked further context questions about research-related characteristics of **faculty and students**

SUNDRI Instrument (pdf version)

Survey Introduction.....	2
Institutional Information Section	3
Institutional Research Development Context Section.....	5
Research Development for Institutions With No RD Offices Section	8
Research Development Office 1 Functions Section	10
Research Development Office 2 Functions Section	29
Institutional Faculty Section	33
Institutional Students Section.....	38
Survey Conclusion.....	40

SUNDRI's Original Survey Universe (2021 Classifications)



Carnegie Classification	Number of institutions
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)	80
Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs)	202
Baccalaureate arts & sciences and institutions	194
Master's medium and small institutions	259
Master's large institutions	227
Doctoral/Professional universities	140
Doctoral universities - high research activity	98
Doctoral universities - very high research activity	126
TOTAL	1,326

Stratified Universe by HERD Status



Institution Counts

STRATA (by 2021 Carnegie)

	ALL	HERD	NonHERD
HBCU	80	44	36
HSI	198	94	104
Baccalaureate arts & sciences	189	63	126
Master's medium and small	252	29	223
Master's large	226	72	154
Doctoral/professional	138	52	86
Doctoral/High Research (R2)	98	97	1
Doctoral/Very High Res (R1)	125	125	0
TOTAL	1306	576	730

Stratified Survey Completions



Completion Counts

STRATA (2021 Carnegie)	ALL	HERD	NonHERD
HBCU	16	12	4
HSI	50	34	16
Baccalaureate arts & sciences	65	38	27
Master's medium and small	39	11	28
Master's large	59	24	35
Doctoral/professional	38	20	18
Doctoral/High Research (R2)	33	33	0
Doctoral/Very High Res (R1)	43	43	0
TOTAL	343	215	128

Stratified Response Rates



STRATA (2021 Carnegie)	Response Rates		
	ALL	HERD	NonHERD
HBCU	20%	27%	11%
HSI	25%	36%	15%
Baccalaureate arts & sciences	34%	60%	21%
Master's medium and small	16%	38%	13%
Master's large	26%	33%	23%
Doctoral/professional	28%	39%	21%
Doctoral/High Research (R2)	34%	34%	-
Doctoral/Very High Res (R1)	34%	34%	-
TOTAL	26%	37%	18%

Designing the SUNDRI Data Visualizer



We always planned to make SUNDRI results available online, inspired by IPEDS data analytic tools at <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data> and “NSF by the Numbers” at <https://www.nsf.gov/about/about-nsf-by-the-numbers>

During the design phase in **2025**, the Advisory Council recommended accelerating development of this online tool to provide up-front value that might help motivate survey participation.

We created the online tool using Tableau, referred to it as “the SUNDRI Dashboard”, displayed mocked up SUNDRI survey data but real HERD and IPEDS data, enabling each institution to compare themselves against other institutions like them

We are now updating this with real SUNDRI survey data that has been cleaned and weighted to represent the universe of 1306 institutions

Building the SUNDRI DATA Visualizer



We considered four main issues for the SUNDRI Data Visualizer, namely:

- Partition the data matrix by **groups** (the row axis) that the greatest number of users would consider appropriate
- Select and organize a core subset of weighted **variables** (the column axis) for initial posting online
- Optimize user experience and intelligibility by delivering orienting information and additional details and clarifications that will pop up on a just-in-time or on-demand basis in an attractive new format (not shown here)
- Provide a special “pay-off” to each survey participant beyond what would be available to any user of the published data visualizer (not discussed here)
- Now—let’s look at some results!

DATA VISUALIZER Navigation Axis I: COMPARISON Groups



SUNDRI_tableau_dashboard_v2 by [SUNDRI](#)



Download PDF

SUNDRI Data Dashboard - General Info

Questions? <mailto:sundrihelp@rti.org>

Data sources: IPEDS CY2024, HERD FY2024

Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Doctoral, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

General Info

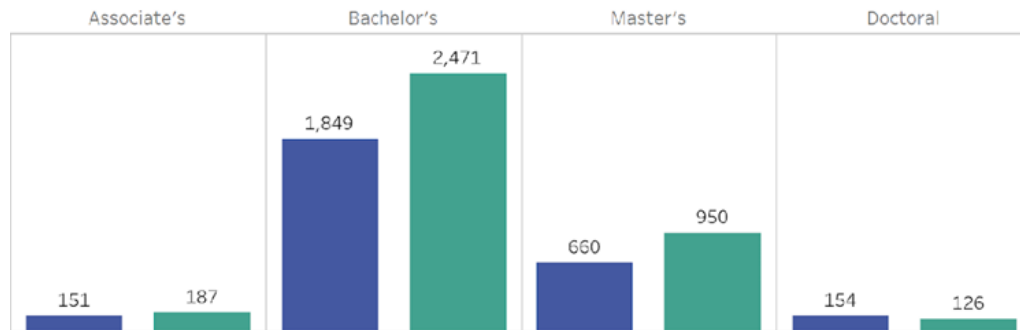
Institution/Faculty

Office Structure/Focus

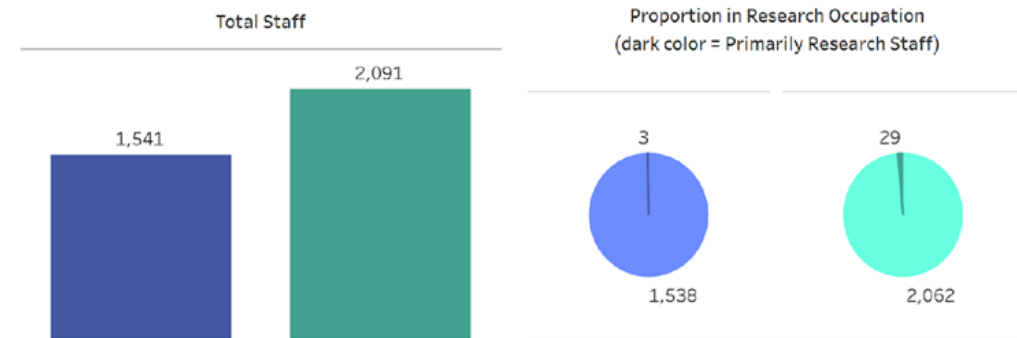
Office Staffing

Office Volume

AWARDS CONFERRED, 2023-24



FACULTY AND STAFF, FALL 2024



CORE EXPENDITURES, 2023-24



RESEARCH SPENDING BY FUNDING SOURCE*, 2024



DATA VISUALIZER COMPARISON Groups



Baccalaureate, lower R&D expenditures

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Master's small/medium, lower R&D expenditures

Master's small/medium, modest R&D expenditures

Master's large, lower R&D expenditures

Master's large, modest R&D expenditures

Doctoral, lower R&D expenditures

Doctoral, modest R&D expenditures

R2, high R&D expenditures

R1, very high R&D expenditures

R1, highest R&D expenditures

Located in EPSCOR states

Not located in EPSCOR states

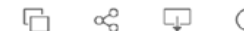
Emerging Research Institutions

Not Emerging Research Institutions

DATA VISUALIZER Navigation Axis II: Variables



SUNDRI_tableau_dashboard_v2 by SUNDRI



Download PDF

SUNDRI Data Dashboard - General Info

Questions? <mailto:sundrihelp@rti.org>

Data sources: IPEDS CY2024, HERD FY2024

Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Doctoral, modest R&D expenditures

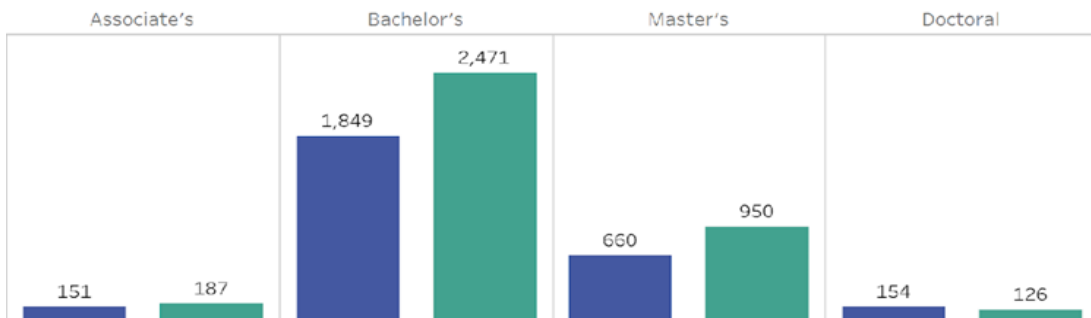
Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

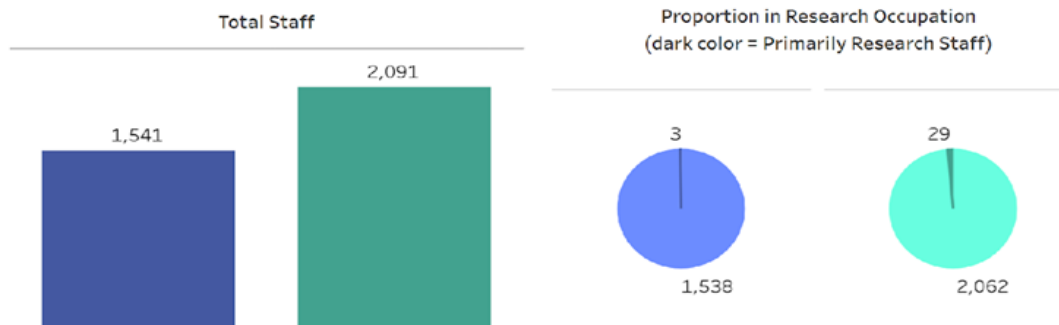
Navigate to additional views

- General Info
- Institution/Faculty**
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume

AWARDS CONFERRED, 2023-24



FACULTY AND STAFF, FALL 2024



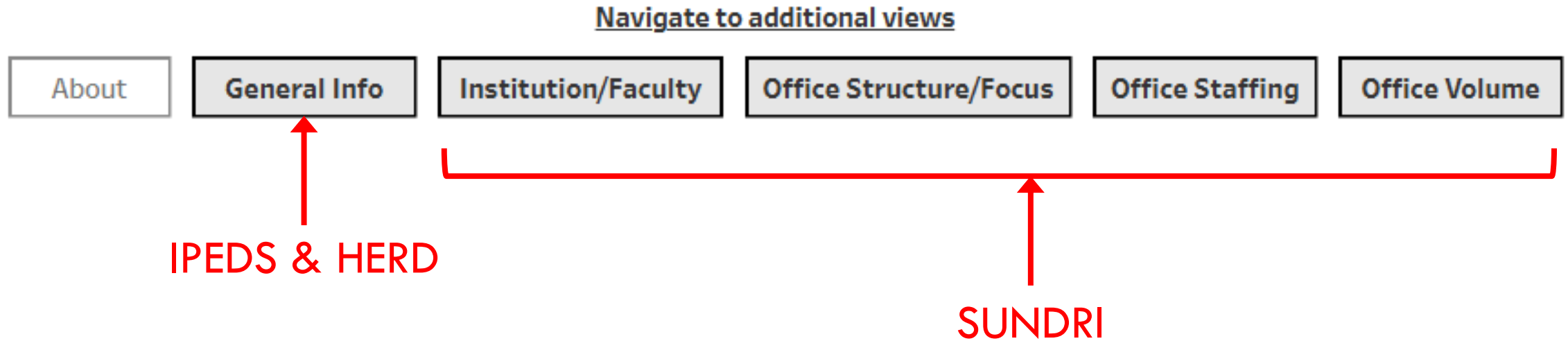
CORE EXPENDITURES, 2023-24



RESEARCH SPENDING BY FUNDING SOURCE*, 2024



DATA VISUALIZER VARIABLE CLUSTERS



General Info – EXAMPLE IPEDS VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

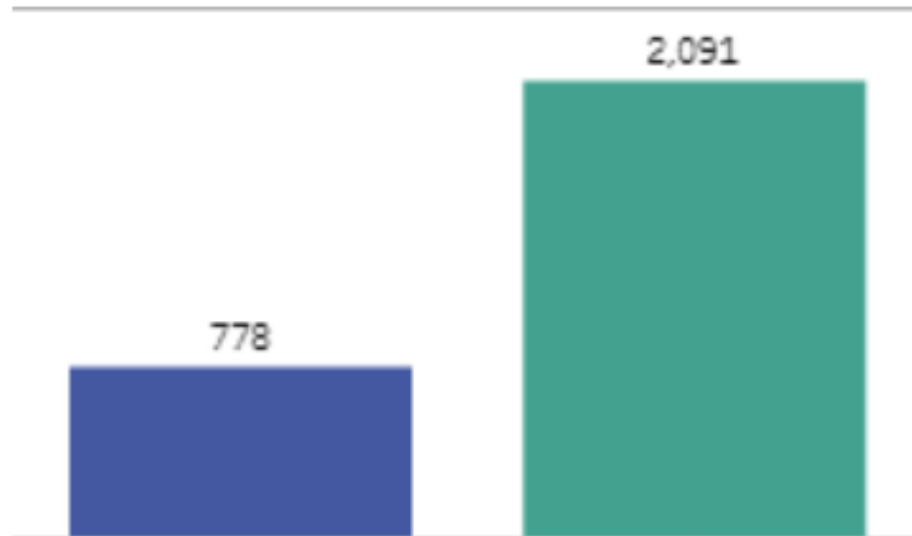
R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

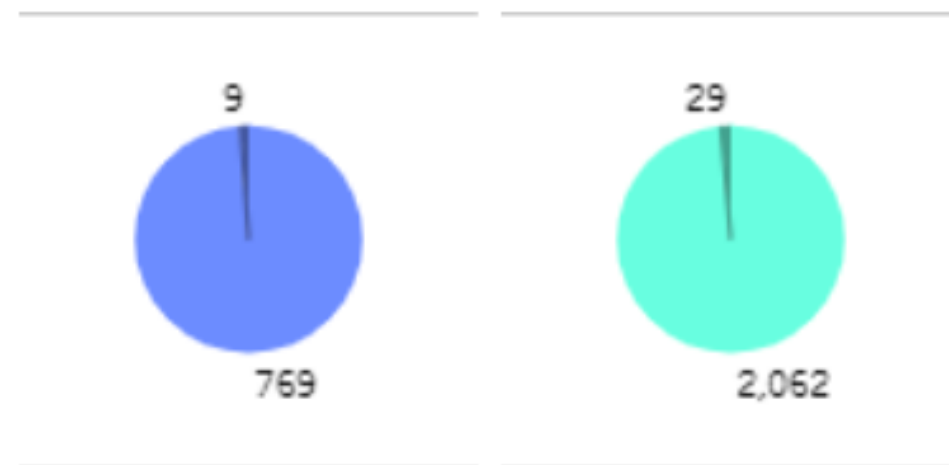
- About
- General Info**
- Institution/Faculty
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume

FACULTY AND STAFF, FALL 2024

Total Staff



Proportion in Research Occupation
(dark color = Primarily Research Staff)



General Info – EXAMPLE HERD VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

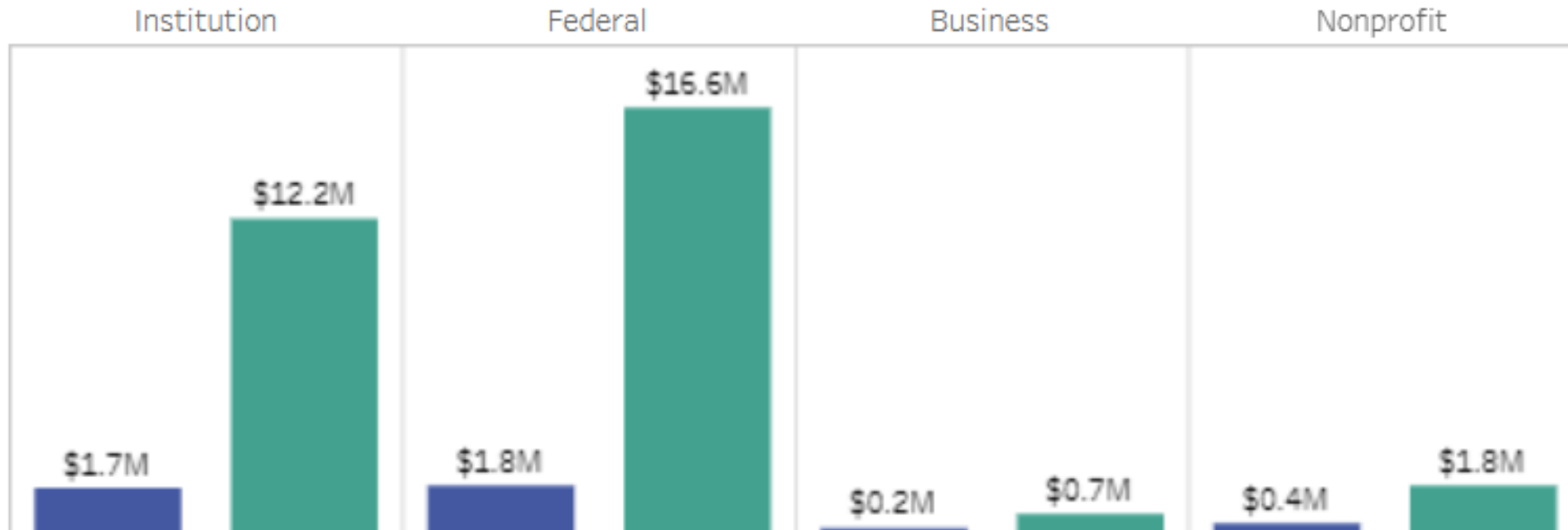
Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

Buttons for navigation: About, **General Info**, Institution/Faculty, Office Structure/Focus, Office Staffing, Office Volume. The 'General Info' button is circled in red.

RESEARCH SPENDING BY FUNDING SOURCE*, 2024



*HERD funding data not available for all institution types.

General Info – Other Variables



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

About

General Info

Institution/Faculty

Office Structure/Focus

Office Staffing

Office Volume

- Faculty & Staff – Total, Proportion in research occupation
- Research funding by funding source
- **Awards conferred**
- **Core expenditures – Total, Proportion spent on research**

Institution – EXAMPLE VARIABLES

Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

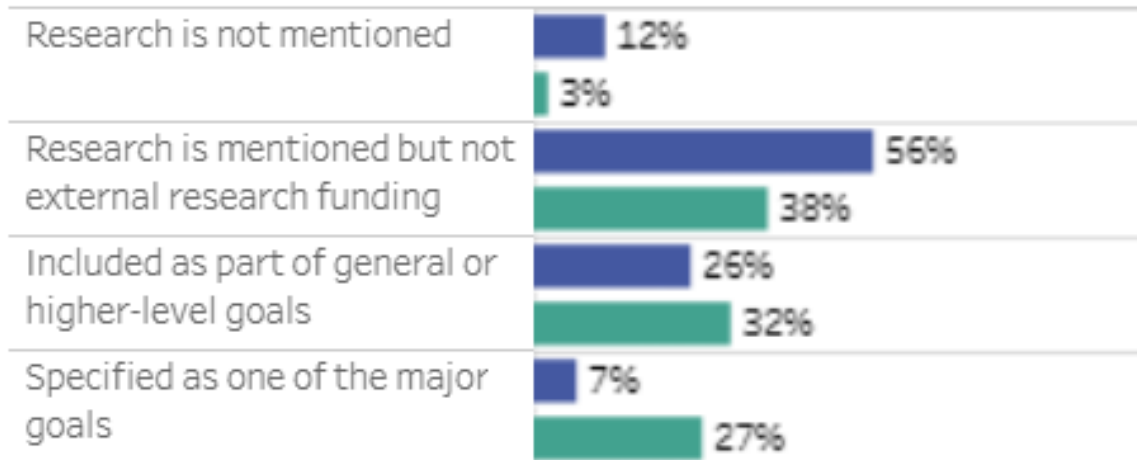
R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

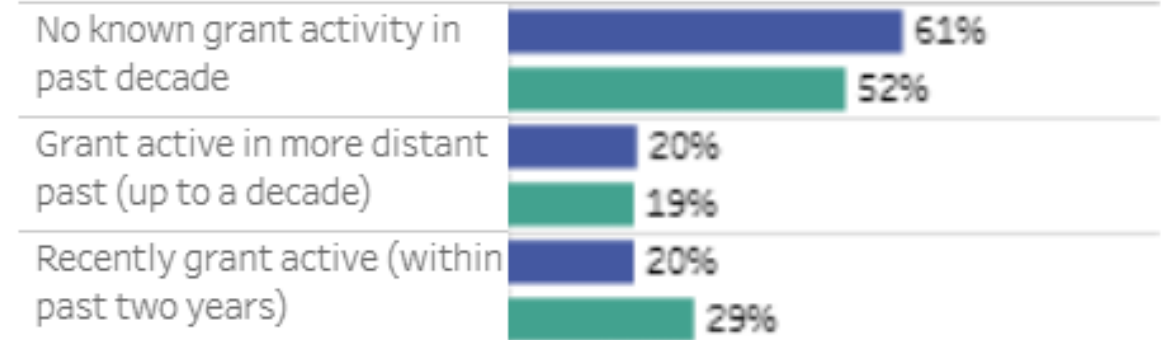
- About
- General Info
- Institution/Faculty
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume

INSTITUTION RD/RA CONTEXT

Grant-seeking documented in strategic plan



Most common grant writing experience among faculty



Faculty – EXAMPLE VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

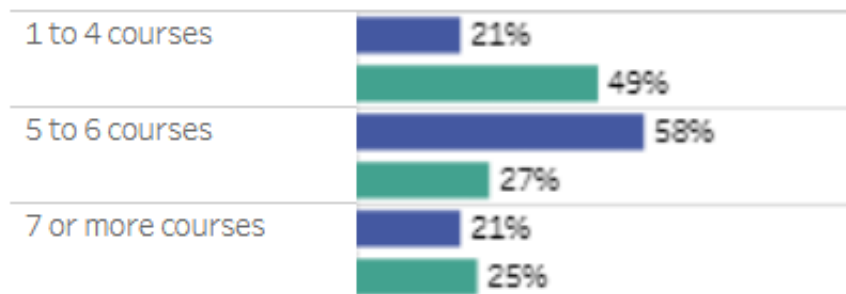
R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

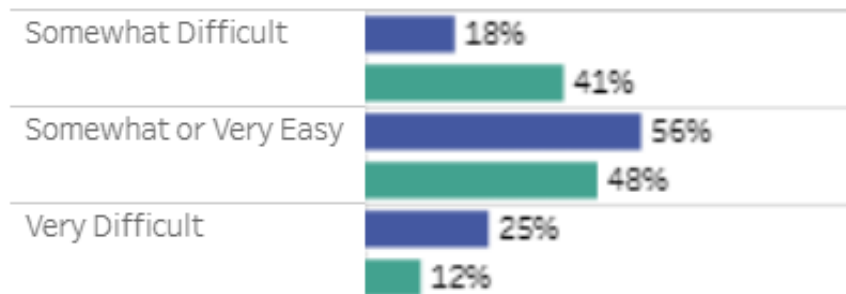
- About
- General Info
- Institution/Faculty**
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume

FACULTY EXPERIENCE

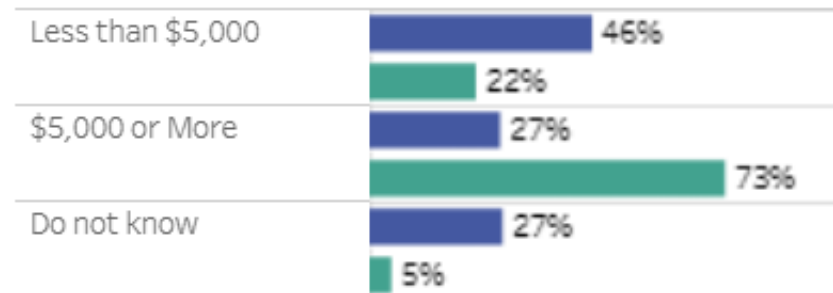
Typical faculty teaching load (courses per 12 months)



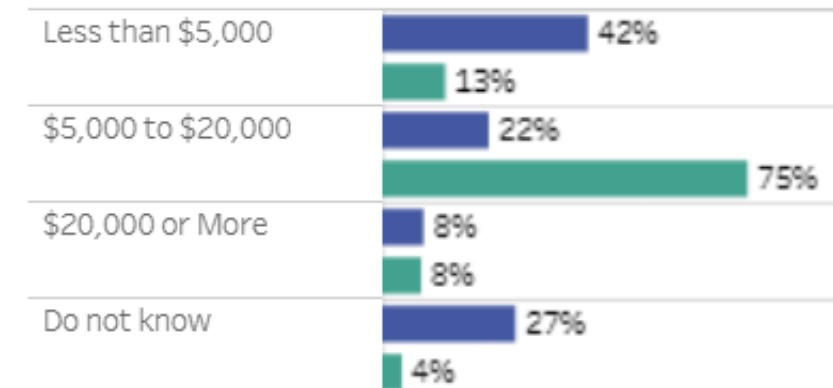
Difficulty of arranging course releases



Typical seed funding amount - CASSHE



Typical seed funding amount - STEM



Institution/FACULTY – OTHER VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

About

General Info

Institution/Faculty

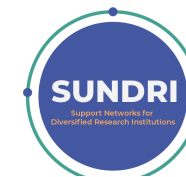
Office Structure/Focus

Office Staffing

Office Volume

- Grant-seeking documented in strategic plan
- Typical faculty teaching load
- **Mean HERD R&D expenditures**
- **Most common grant-writing experience among faculty**
- **Difficulty arranging course releases**
- **Typical seed funding amount – CASSHE, STEM**
- **Grant-seeking priority in P&T decisions – CASSHE, STEM**

Office Structure – EXAMPLE VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

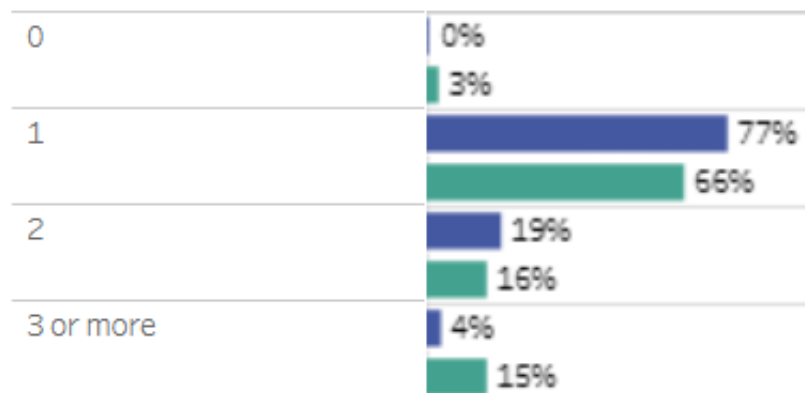
R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

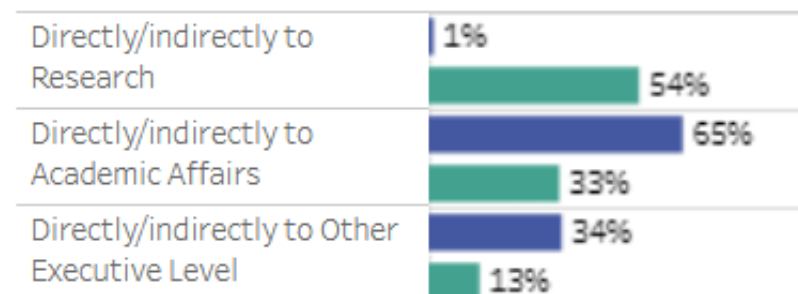
- About
- General Info
- Institution/Faculty
- Office Structure/Focus**
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume

OFFICE STRUCTURE

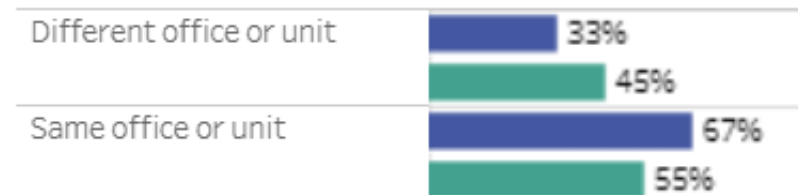
Number of offices providing RD services



Reporting level



Post-award RA location relative to Office 1



Office Structure – OTHER VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views



- Number of offices providing RD services
- Post-award RA location relative to Office 1
- Reporting level
- **Indirect cost allocation**
- **Office focus – entirely on RD, non-research related**
- **3 main activities of Office 1**
- **Strengths of Office 1**
- **Challenges of Office 1**

OFFICE STAFFING – Example VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

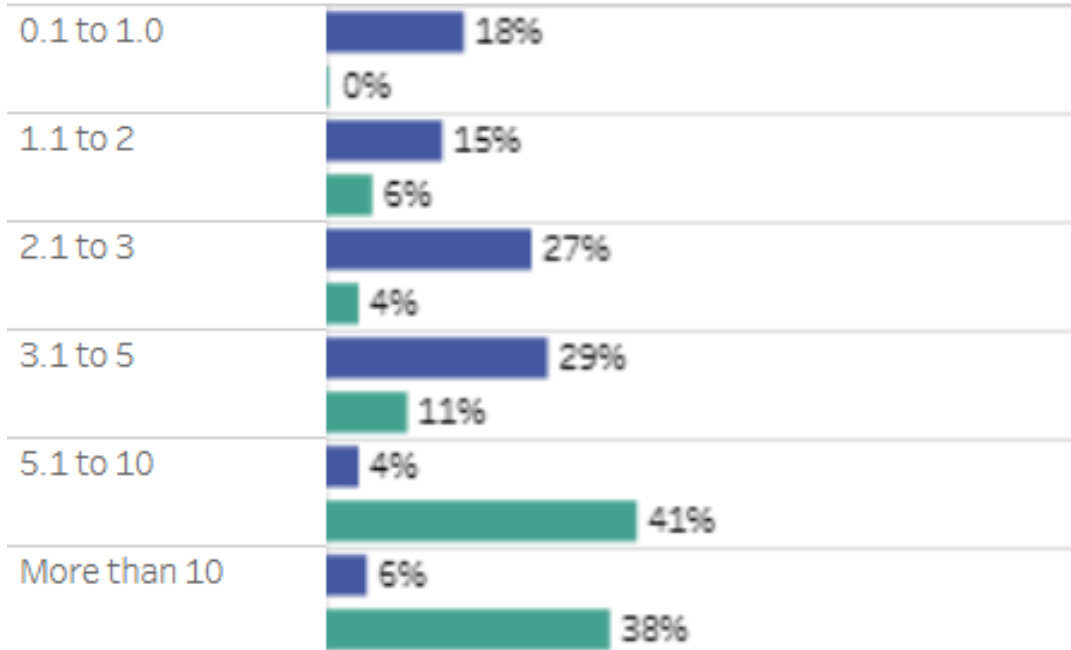
R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

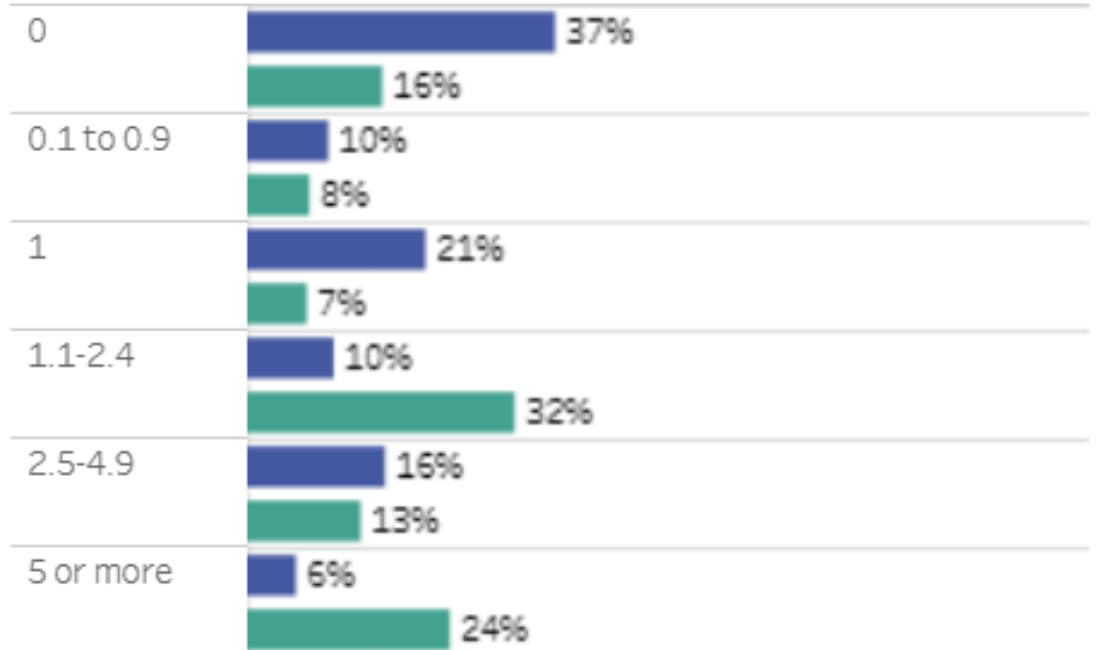
- About
- General Info
- Institution/Faculty
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing**
- Office Volume

OFFICE STAFFING

Total FTE Staff in Office 1



FTE exclusively devoted to RD functions



OFFICE STAFFING – Example VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

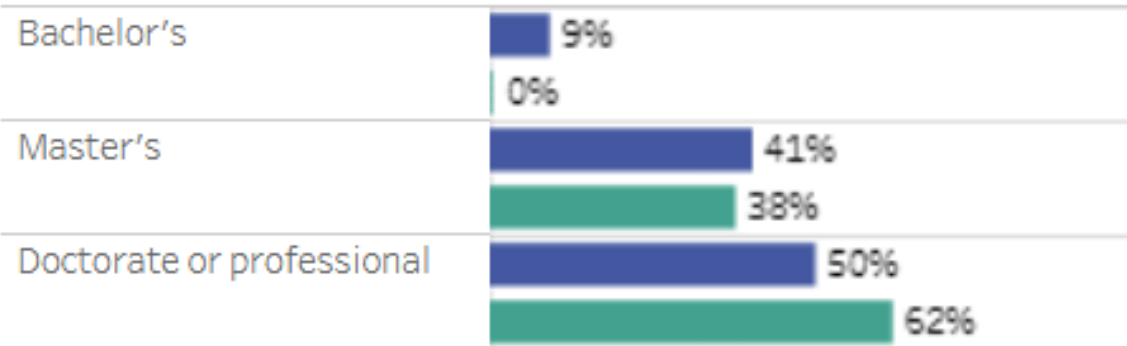
R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

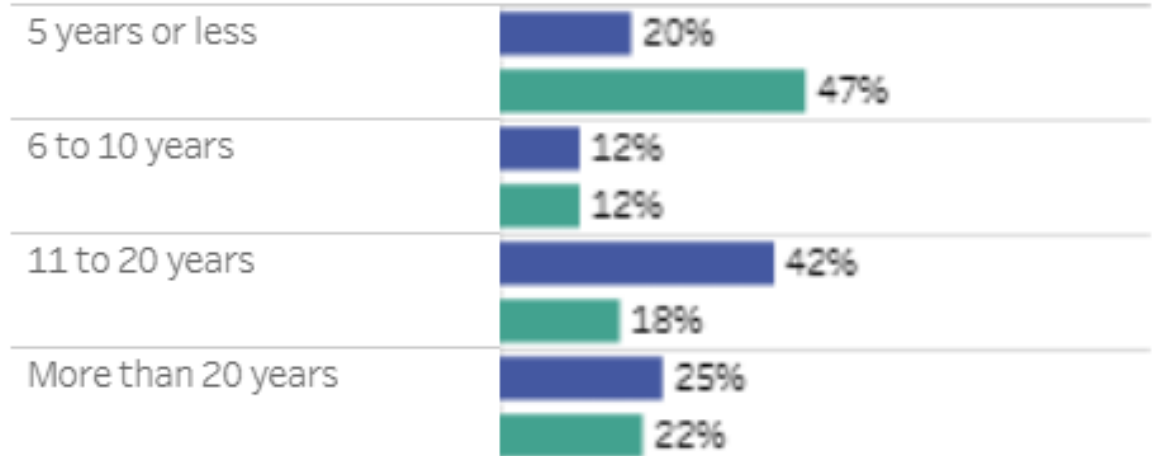
- About
- General Info
- Institution/Faculty
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume

OFFICE KEY PERSONNEL

Highest degree: Office 1 key personnel



Longest RD experience: Office 1 key personnel



OFFICE STAFFING – OTHER VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

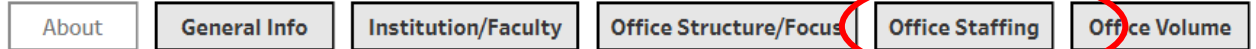
Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views



- Total FTE in Office 1
- FTE exclusively devoted to RD functions
- Highest degree among Office 1 personnel
- Longest RD experience among Office 1 personnel
- **Workplace arrangements in Office 1 – hybrid, in-person, remote, combo**
- **Change in Office 1 staffing over last 3 years**
- **Institution has office of undergraduate research**

OFFICE VOLUME – EXAMPLE VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

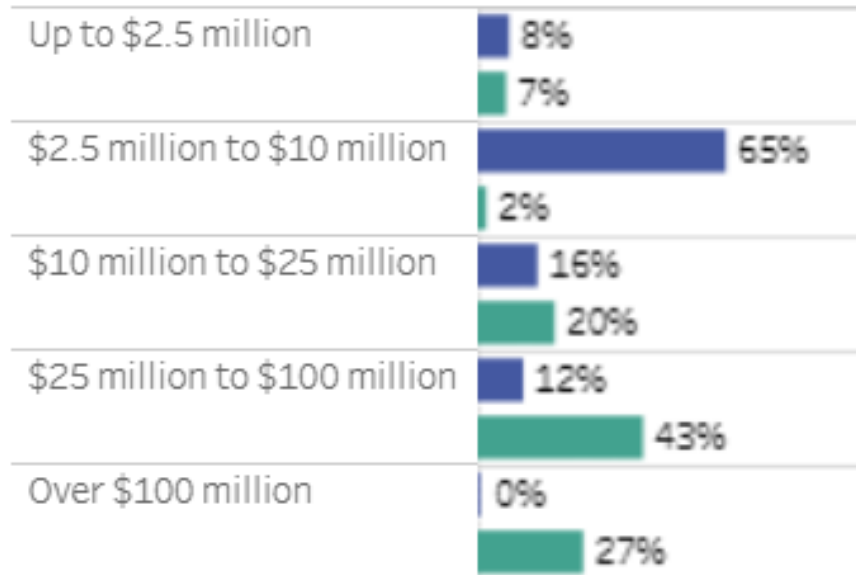
Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

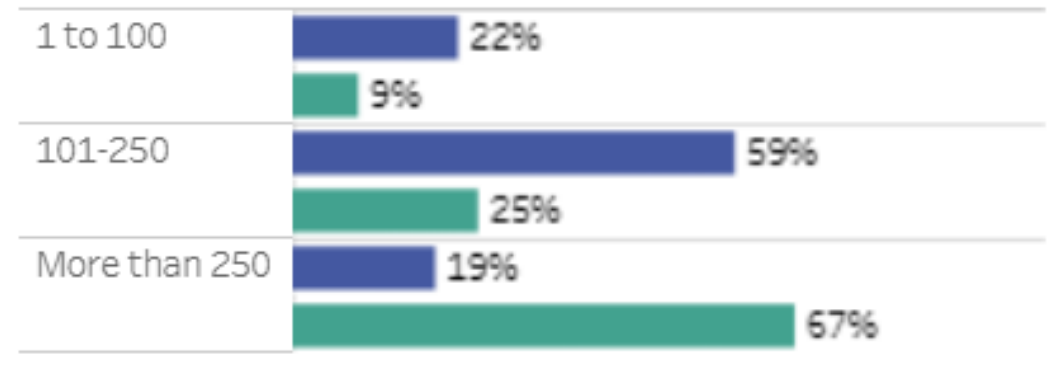
Navigate to additional views

- About
- General Info
- Institution/Faculty
- Office Structure/Focus
- Office Staffing
- Office Volume**

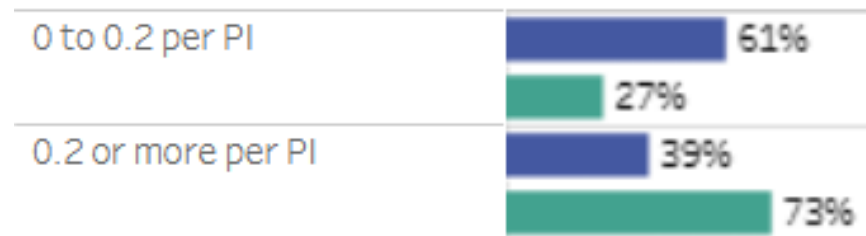
Total requested dollar value of submitted applications



Number of potential PIs served by Office 1



Ratio of submitted grants/contracts to total number of potential PIs in service area for Office 1



OFFICE VOLUME – EXAMPLE VARIABLES



Select groups of interest

Select Institution Type 1:

Baccalaureate, modest R&D expenditures

Select Institution Type 2:

R2, high R&D expenditures

Navigate to additional views

About

General Info

Institution/Faculty

Office Structure/Focus

Office Staffing

Office Volume

- Number of potential PIs served by Office 1
- Total requested dollar value of submitted applications
- Ratio of submitted grants/contracts to total number of potential PIs served by Office 1
- **Number of grant/contract applications submitted by Office 1**
- **Number of awards for most recent year**
- **Number of awards accepted/processed**
- **Ratio of submitted grants/contracts to total number of FTE staff for Office 1**

Support Networks at Diversified Research Institutions (SUNDRI)



Recognizing the challenges that 4-year colleges and universities encounter as they work to obtain external funding, craft competitive research proposals, and manage grants, this study seeks to better understand research development arrangements and opportunities nationwide. **This is where your expertise becomes invaluable!**



Presenter Contact Information



dean.gerstein@pomona.edu

THANK YOU!!