



2024 SRAI SO/NE
SECTION MEETING
HILTON HEAD, SC
MAY 7 - 10

Us vs. Them: Synergistic Strategies for Enhancing Faculty-Research Administrator Relationships

Wednesday, May 8, 2024/ 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

60 min session

Intermediate level

Presentation overview

- Introductions & Learning Objectives
- Research ecosystem overview at Penn State
- How faculty and research administrators view each other
- Case study 1
- Case study 2
- Reflection and open discussion



PennState



INSTRUCTORS



Camelia Kantor, Ph.D., MBA.

Associate Director

Director of Strategic Initiatives

Associate Research Professor

Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences

Penn State- University Park

Debra M. Sokalczuk, CRA

Proposal and Award Coordinator

Penn State -Harrisburg Campus

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand faculty needs for/perspectives on improved support in research development.
- Explore strategies for balancing academic innovation with administrative duties.
- Implement joint problem-solving and resource-sharing to enhance the pre-award process.

Structure of Penn State-Main Campus

Location & Roles

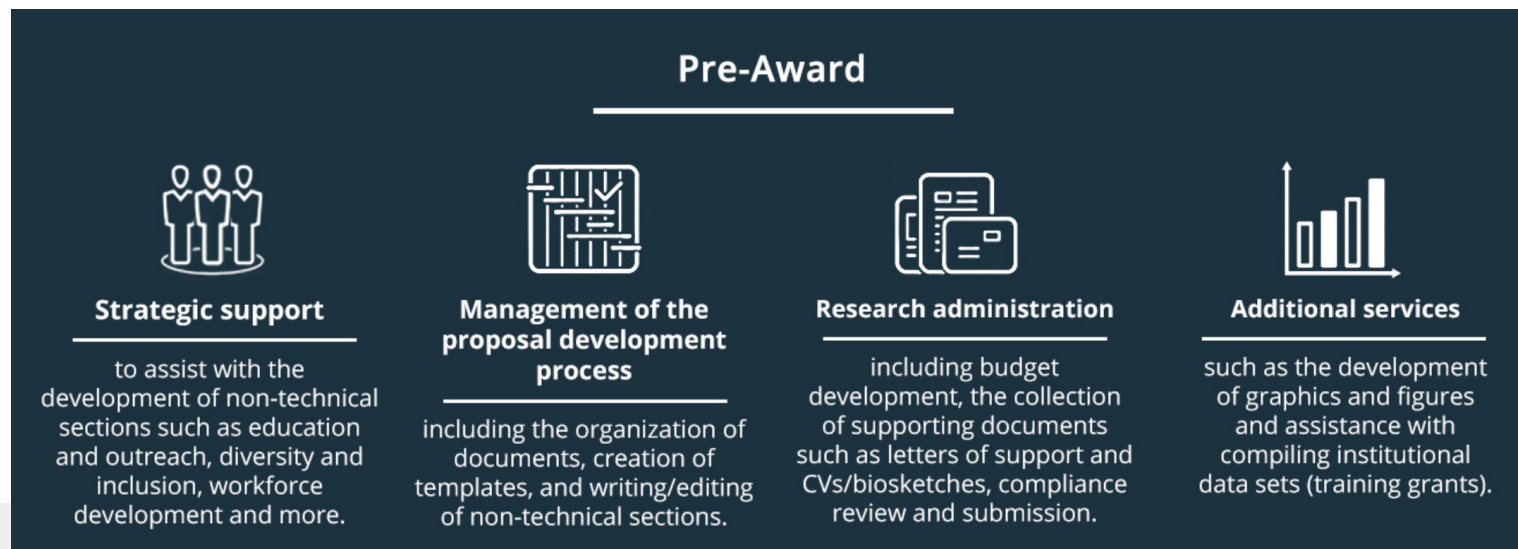
Penn State's main campus location at University Park located in State College, PA is where all the centrally located offices reside.

- Office of Sponsored Projects
- Account Management
- Conflict of Interest & Intellectual Property
- Research Protections (IRB/IACUC)
- Export Controls, Data Security & Data Use
- Federal Contracting and Negotiations
- Procurement

Research structure- University Park



- R1 institution, Land-Grant University, but also a Space Grant, Sun Grant, and Sea Grant University.
- \$1.239 billion in annual research expenditures
- OSVPR → 7 Interdisciplinary Research Institutes
→ Strategic Interdisciplinary Research Office



Penn State's campus diversity



	Within 15 miles	Within 30 miles	All Pennsylvania
Population	9 million	12 million	13 million
Rural Population	1.5 million	2.6 million	3 million
% White	69%	74%	74%
% Black	14%	11%	11%
% Hispanic	9%	8%	8%

Structure of Penn State-Commonwealth Campus Locations and Roles

- Behrend/Altoona
- Harrisburg
- Abington, Great Valley and remaining 14 other Commonwealth Campuses
- Research Office located in Behrend Services Altoona, handled both internal and external, Staff of 5
- Research Office located at Harrisburg, handled both internal and external, Staff of 3
- Abington, Great Valley, and remaining Commonwealth Campuses (14) for external grants managed by Staff of 1

Data- proposal frequency

Commonwealth Campuses (CC)

University Park

CC-Altoona/Behrends/Harrisburg,
support faculty with Internal Seed
Proposals-55/campus/year

Submissions by faculty, no
support with Internal Seed
Proposals

SIRO

CC-support faculty with External
Proposals-70/year/office-1 or more PIs
and institutional (3 CC offices)

2-3 per week, tend to cap at 100/year
Very large and complex
Multi – institutional.
Full support package.

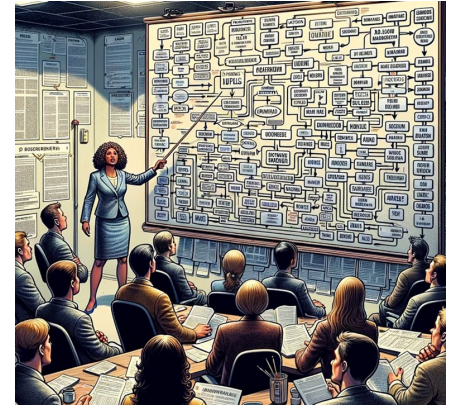
Faculty's life in a R1 institution

- High expectations for research outputs: high-impact publications, conference presentations, research innovation, translation and commercialization, etc.
- Tenure/non-tenure line faculty covering % salary
- Grant acquisition (F&A)
- Teaching and mentoring students- responsible for PhD students' success and funding.
- Running a business- building, sustaining, and managing a research team and research equipment.
- Administrative and service duties- committees, governance, grant panel reviews, journal reviews, etc.
- Building relationships and networks with stakeholders (industry, government, foundations, farmers, schools, etc.)
- Maintaining/growing professional prestige among peers

Research Administrators' Life in a Campus Location at a R1 Institution

- Finding Funding Opportunities
- Assist Faculty with Applying for Research Opportunities (*see additional slide for more details)
- Liaison between Faculty, Central Research Offices, and Sponsors
- Understanding of Institutions Policy and Procedures related to research and ensuring adherence.
- Understanding of Campus Policy and Procedures related to research and ensuring adherence
- Understanding Sponsors' Policies and Procedures and ensuring adherence.

Faculty's View of Research Administrators



POSITIVE

- Crucial facilitators of research initiatives
- Guardians of compliance to institutional, federal, and international regulations and standards
- Financial gurus
- Liaisons between faculty and administration/other institutions' grant offices
- Skilled project managers

NEGATIVE

- Bureaucratic obstacles
- Lack of understanding of complex research connections
- Lack of understanding of how panel reviews and relationship building with program directors from funding agencies work
- Inflexibility and lack of responsiveness
- Impersonal and transactional relationship

Research Administrators' view of Faculty



POSITIVE

- Their desire to do Research
- Quality of Research they produce
- Number of new inventions
- Number of student lives they affect

NEGATIVE

- Last-minute notice of planned submissions
- Inflexibility and lack of responsiveness
- Want to sidestep Policy and Procedures
- Lack of respect, talk down to the Research Administrator

Differences in ways of thinking

The administrative assistant in a unit tells you Dr. Mendez and her Co-PI traveled to London to attend an international conference. Which of the following is the best description of the purpose of the trip?

- A. To attend a conference.
- B. To attend the annual AIS conference held in London, England.
- C. To attend the Avian Influenza Study conference held in London, England, from March 12-16, 2024.
- D. To attend and present an Avian Flu research paper at the 15th annual Avian Influenza Study conference held in London, England, from March 12-16, 2024.
- E. Any of these descriptions are fine; the key point is to include the word “conference” to indicate that it is work-related.

Differences in ways of thinking

The RFP states that the due date for the proposal is April 30, 2024. When is the proposal due?

- A. Proposal is due by 11:58 p.m.
- B. Proposal is due by 5:00 p.m.
- C. Proposal is due by noon
- D. Proposal is due by 9:00 p.m.

Case study 1: Navigating Complex Grant Proposals with Professor C.

- Check handout



Case study 2-Navigating a Simple Grant Proposal with Professor Smith



- Mechanical Engineer
- New faculty member
- NSF Career Award Grant
- NSF Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) proposal
- MRI has a limited submissions clause

Turn negativity into positivity: we all work for a common mission!

Reflect

Think back to a successful project you've been part of: what role did collaboration between faculty and research administrators play in its success? Share a key moment where this relationship made a difference.



Ways to improve the relationship



1. Clear, Open, Timely Communication
2. Civility and kindness
3. Clarifying of each others' roles and responsibilities from the beginning
4. Early involvement – educate faculty to reach out as soon as they learn about RFP
5. Collaborative problem-solving (task force)
6. Respecting each other's time and expertise
7. Implement regular check-ups and feedback mechanisms
8. Reduce redundancy and increase efficiency by streamlining processes as often as observed
9. Have advocates on both sides
10. Offer joint events and professional development (including Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers)
11. Celebrate success and achievements together
12. Flexibility and empathy training
13. Mentor-mentee programs
14. Shared goals and vision workshops

Make it fun!

1.Dream Team Time: If you could choose any historical figure to join your grant team, who would it be and why?

2.Quick Fix Genius: Imagine you have a magic wand that can solve one common issue in grant applications instantly. What would you fix?

3. Time Travel Consultant: If you could go back in time and give one piece of advice to your past self about working on grants, what would it be?

4. Superpower Selection: What superpower would make your role in the grant process easier, and how would you use it?

5.Emoji Summary: Can you describe your experience with grant applications using only three emojis?



Continue to make fun a recurring theme!

1. Two Truths and a Dream: Share two true statements about your work experience with RAs/faculty and one dream project you wish to accomplish.

2. The Role Swap Game: Professors and RA briefly explain a typical day in their role, then others guess the challenges and rewards of that role.

3. Desert Island Scenario: If you were stranded on a desert island and could only take three tools from your work to help you secure a grant, what would they be and why?

4. Wish List Workshop: Professors and RA write down one thing they wish the other party knew about their work, then discuss these points in pairs or small groups to demystify their roles and responsibilities.

5. The Timeline Challenge: Create a hypothetical project timeline together in a fun, competitive format, like a game or race. This helps both parties understand the time and effort involved in the grant process.

6. The Unsung Hero Award: Nominate each other for an 'unsung hero' award, describing a scenario where the person went above and beyond.

7. The Myth-Busting Mission: Each person lists common misconceptions about their role, and then clarifies them. This activity can dispel myths and foster mutual respect.

8. The “If I Could Change One Thing” Box: Provide a box where professors and RAs can anonymously drop suggestions for improving their working relationship. Review these together in a light-hearted session to discuss possible changes.

