



SOCIETY OF  
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# **The Power of Diverse Perspectives: Unlocking Innovation and Creativity in Research Administration**

Exploring Cognitive Diversity for Stronger Teams and  
Better Outcomes

# Speaker

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Nicole Quartiero leads the Research Project Management team at the University of Notre Dame, driving strategies to support complex, collaborative research. A Certified Research Administrator (CRA) with over a decade of experience across the research lifecycle, she is a nationally recognized thought leader in research administration. Nicole has been honored as an SRAI Future of the Field Rising Star and serves as the Future of the Field Subcommittee Co-Chair. She frequently presents and publishes on research project management best practices and was part of a team awarded an NSF GRANTED planning grant in 2024.



# Session Objectives

1. Explore cognitive diversity as a strength in research administration.
2. Learn Key Strategies and how to apply them to harness cognitive diversity in teams.



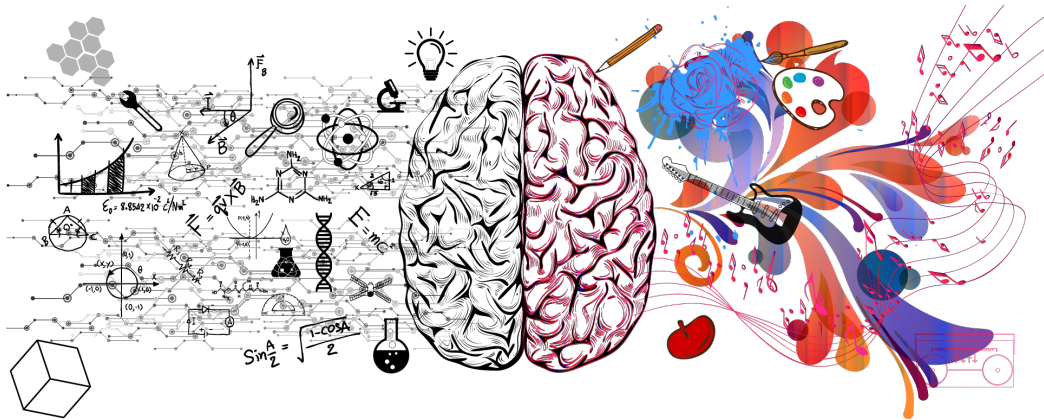
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# What Is Diversity? Defining Key Concepts

**Formal Definition of Diversity:** The condition or fact of being different or varied.

**Cognitive Diversity:** The different ways people think, approach problems, and make decisions.

**Why It Matters in Research Administration:** Complexity requires multiple perspectives to drive innovation.



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# The Superpower of Diverse Thinking

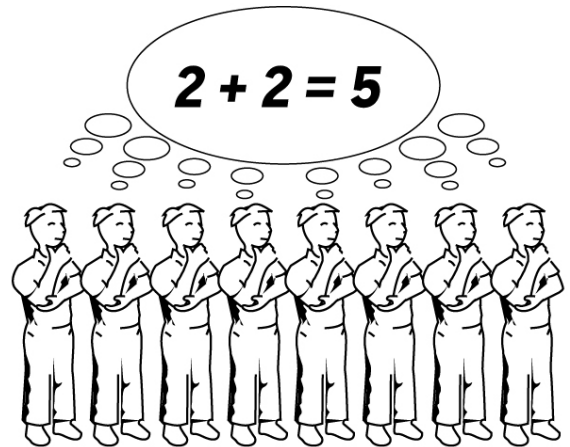
- Rationale for why diverse perspectives leads to better decision-making
- Avoiding Echo Chambers & Groupthink
- The Role of Research Administrators as Integrators of Multiple Perspectives



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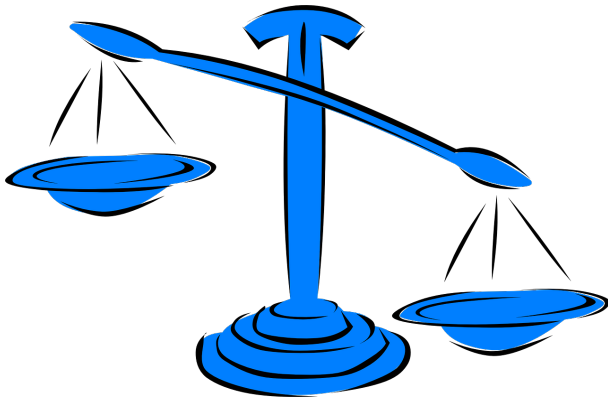
# Example #1 - Avoiding Groupthink in Research Administration

- Scenario: A team of only pre-award administrators tackling a post-award financial issue. For example, they submit a proposal that agrees to monthly invoicing and a 15 day closeout period.
- Potential Pitfall: Pre-award ONLY thinking dominates, missing compliance or financial reporting needs and accounting perspectives.
- Solution: Including post-award experts for a more holistic discussion and approach.



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## Example #2 - Balancing Technical & Human-Centered Perspectives



- Scenario: Engineers designing a research program that includes potential impacts to a vulnerable population without social scientists or ethicists.
- Potential Pitfall: Overlooking ethical or social implications of working with human subjects and vulnerable populations.
- Solution: Integrating diverse expertise (e.g., social sciences, research admin) for a more balanced approach.

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## Example #3 - Problem-Solving Through Different Lenses

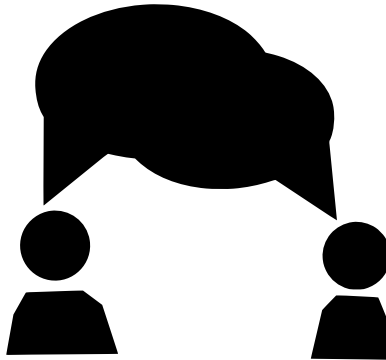
- Scenario: A compliance officer vs. a finance expert interpreting a regulation related to prior approval budget revisions.
- Potential Pitfall: A narrow compliance view or a purely financial approach.
- Solution: Merging both perspectives for compliant AND financially viable solutions.





# Key Strategy #1 - Encouraging Open Dialogue

- The Importance of Psychological Safety: Leaders must create and foster an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing alternative viewpoints.
- Emphasize Challenging Ideas, Not People: Constructive disagreements lead to better solutions.



Always be hard on the problem and easy on the people!

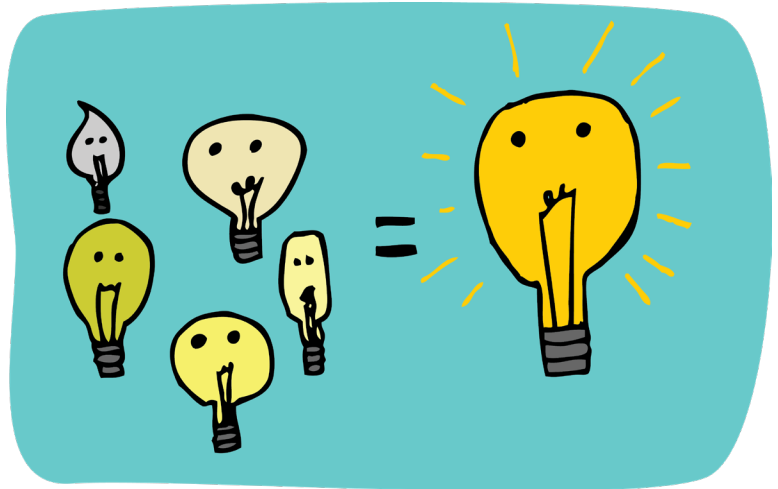
## Key Strategy #2 - Leveraging Strengths-Based Teaming

- Recognizing Different Problem-Solving Styles: Logical, intuitive, creative, analytical, etc.
- Try to Align Roles/Assignments to Strengths: Placing people where they can contribute their best thinking is optimal for all.



# Key Strategy #3 - Integrating Multiple Perspectives in Decision-Making

- Gather Feedback Before Making Policy or Operational Decisions When Possible: Ensure input from diverse areas (pre-award, post-award, compliance, finance, project management) prior to solidifying decisions that have downstream impact.
- Example: Policy development that considers both practical implementation and compliance risks.



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# Key Strategy #4 - Cross-Training and Exposure to Different Domains

- Encourage Research Administrators and Managers to Learn from Other Areas:
  - Finance administrators understanding compliance
  - Research project managers learning about pre-award processes
- Benefits: Better collaboration, improved problem-solving and a greater appreciation for the different perspectives, priorities and considerations.



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# Practical Takeaways & Final Thoughts

## How to Apply This in Your Daily Work:

- Actively seek different perspectives
- Invite and value alternative viewpoints
- Leverage team strengths strategically

Q&A: How have diverse perspectives helped solve a challenge in your work?



# Questions?





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**Thank you!**