

Developing a Research Administration Course for Academics: A Need Too Long Ignored

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ABSTRACT: *Inefficiencies in the administration of research cause immeasurable delays, increased costs and missed opportunities. The authors can call upon decades of experience with research in government, defense contractor and academic settings to support this assertion. They are intimately informed as to the academic training process that produces research managers who are well versed in their science, but woefully weak in management skills. While many of these impediments to optimization may be wedded to intractable human frailties, the authors assert that improvements are not only possible, but mandatory. Drawing from extensive experience with research professionals, they first lay out the manifold ways in which otherwise brilliant researchers are almost universally un-tutored in administrative functions, collegial organization, legal imperatives and financial management. They adduce examples to show how the lack of elementary understanding of these areas did, and will in the future, prove to be disruptive, constraining or fatal to research. The authors then lay out, with specificity, their outline of a course designed to address their understanding of the most important needs in this area. They recount their discussions with government, industry and academic leaders concerning the need for, comprehensiveness of and proper method of presentation of the course developed. The outline is then presented and each section justified as to its need, applicability, and pedagogical goals. The overall goal of the course is to give researchers and graduate degree candidates an understanding of the range of sources of research support, the nature of award process, and the effective management of research, all in order to prepare them to rapidly master the proposal process, organizational techniques, management requirements and the administration of research in a government, academic or contractor environment. The authors close with their current plans for implementation and an overview of their continuing research into this area of great need.*