

Council of Principal Investigators (CPI)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 21, 2021, 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., Microsoft Teams

Members in attendance: Armen Akopian, Gregory Collins, Lynette Daws, Anibal Diogenes, Katherine Dondanville, Charles France, Bess Frost, Randolph Glickman, Asma Khan, David Libich, Daniel Lodge, Susannah Nicholson, Adam Salmon, Susan Weintraub

Members Absent: Mark Shapiro

Guests: Chris Green (Senior Dir, Sponsored Programs), Andrea Marks (Senior Executive VP and COO), Ginny Gomez-Leon (VP and CFO), Jennifer Potter (Vice President for Research, interim), Sunny Thompson (Sr Manager, Research Operations), Daniel Anzak (Manager, Post-Award), Manzoor Bhat (LSOM Vice Dean of Research), and Frank Dominguez (Supervisor, SPSC Pre-Award)

The general topic of this meeting was to discuss the EDGE initiative, with particular emphasis on its impact on research and grants administration. The meeting was opened by Dr. Lodge, who introduced Chris Green.

1. EDGE Update – Chris Green

- Chris Green stated that EDGE is still in its early stage, i.e. about four months for the Medical School, and about six months for the other schools. The EDGE initiative has now been implemented for research administration for the entire University.
- Chris gave status updates on awards: more than 300 pre-award proposals have been reviewed and submitted. On the post-award and agreements side, he explained the responsibilities handled by the Research Administration Service (RAS).
- Organization Structure. The OSP has three different offices: pre-award, post-award, and agreements. There are two research administrative service teams; one that assists the LSOM and the other for the SOD, SON, and SHP. The goal is to create a cohesive group that communicates with each other.
- The reporting structure for the SON, SOD, SHP and LSOM RAS was presented to the committee. Each department or service will have a “service partner” who will be their liaison to the RAS. The names of the partners, as well as other RAS members, can be found via the “ut health connect” page to which there is a link located near the top of the UT Health SA SharePoint site.
- Feedback surveys were sent to faculty across the institution via email, with response rates ranging from 9% (SON) to 24% (LSOM).
- Metrics for assessing the effectiveness of RAS are under development by the Institutional Service Governance Committee, with key performance indicators (KPIs) being evaluated.
- **Discussion**
 - Dr. Lodge asked what the benefits to the Schools were of the different reporting lines and how they could enhance the ability to submit grants and manage pre- and post-awards.

- Andrea Marks responded by pointing to a goal of the EDGE program to achieve a balance between PIs/faculty and the RAS so that RAS personnel were not perceived as too distant from departmental staff and investigators. Additionally, the consensus of the School Deans is that financial control should be maintained at the Dean level, because this would be the best way to control workflows from an accreditation perspective.
- Dr. Bhat noted that all the personnel shown in the RAS organizational chart report directly to Sunny Thompson (Sr. Mgr & Assoc. Dir. of the LSOM RAS). This provides a better opportunity for any issues to be quickly addressed and resolved rather than if post-award management were handled solely by a more centralized office.
- Dr. Potter discussed the roles of Sunny Thompson, Daniel Anzak, and Frank Dominguez within the structure model.
- Sunny Thompson described the level of interaction between Chris, Daniel, Frank, and herself. Weekly to bi-weekly meetings are held within the group to ensure that matters are handled consistently and properly. The goal is to enhance efficiency in grants administration and have a “faculty centered model” for the workflow. Feedback is needed to determine if the system is working as intended and that the overall mission is accomplished.
- Dr. Collins asked if the current feedback process would be improved, considering the response rate was low in the initial survey.
- Chris Green suggested that he and Sunny would go to departmental meetings as another way to obtain feedback and also provide quarterly updates to the CPI so there could be continued discussion on progress as well as problems with RAS.
- Dr. Lodge emphasized the importance of clear lines of communication between the investigators, departments, and RAS personnel.
- Dr. Weintraub expressed concern about personnel turnover and departures. Sunny Thompson stated that there had been no turnover since the current RAS structure commenced operations. Andrea Marks noted that the HR market is tight, but they are trying to increase staff back to pre-pandemic levels.
- Dr. Bhat and Dr. Libich both agreed that the RAS needs to reach out to the departments to improve communication and get regular feedback. Dr. Libich further suggested setting up an anonymous electronic comment system for user feedback.
- Dr. Potter suggested that the RAS representatives describe their “pain points” and share what they are working on and how they are moving to make improvements.
 - Sunny Thompson noted that an email survey system for feedback about specific functions is in place and that her group is developing additional institution-level methods for feedback, expected to be no more frequently than every eight-weeks so as not to bombard users with requests.
 - Sunny mentioned that the post-awards side needs more work, including training that is currently underway for staff to ensure departments are well supported.
- Dr. Bhat acknowledged that there are some issues that result from departments having different ways of managing post-awards. As a result, each service partner needs to be well trained on each department’s particular procedures.
- Dr. Lodge asked Chris Green to update the CPI on the agreements and contracts part of RAS, noting that these can involve lengthy and complex procedures.

- Chris Green stated four new individuals have been hired on the agreements/contracts central side and they will soon be ready to start interacting with faculty.
- Dr. Libich commented that the Materials Transfer Agreement (MTA) process should be simplified. Dr. Potter responded that changes in procedures are underway to facilitate implementing these agreements, but they are delayed due to work backlogs.
- Andrea Marks stated that the follow-up/tracking process is being improved to help move documents through the approval process. The tracking system will allow the faculty member to view the status of a document without having to contact the RAS.

2. Software

- Dr. Libich asked Dr. Bhat about the status of institutional software licenses. Dr. Bhat mentioned the software licenses are being implemented and should be available over the next several weeks.
- Licenses for EndNote and GraphPad will be available first, and faculty will be able to download these software products directly. Photoshop and the Adobe Creative Cloud suite are larger products, so the licenses will take longer to negotiate but will be available eventually.
- Andrea Marks stated the software pricing has been negotiated and institutional funding has been identified to cover the costs for the first year.
- Dr. Weintraub asked what the software would cost in subsequent years. Andrea Marks, said that volume pricing has been negotiated for these software products that will lower the cost to individual users; however, she didn't specify what the actual cost would be. The more users, the lower the charge for each individual.
- Dr. Weintraub noted the need for available technical support and wanted to know if it will be clear who will provide this support. Dr. Bhat assured the Council that help will be available, with the possibility of workshops for software users.

All current questions had been answered by the invited guests, and they left the meeting.

3. CPI Business

- September minutes were approved.
- Dr. Frost (CPI communications director) sent an email to all department chairs summarizing the last CPI meeting and asking if there were any issues they would like to have brought up in future meetings. A few chairs responded but none had any input for the CPI to consider at this time.
- The CPI website has been updated and is now on the UT SharePoint site.
- Heather Atkins (the web content overseer) requested a meeting after seeing the CPI website on the domain. She expressed concerns about specific content on the website.
- Dr. Glickman suggested two versions of meeting minutes: the full minutes on the inward-facing (non-public) site, and only the agenda on the outward-facing (public) site. Dr. Weintraub endorsed posting only the agenda and topics discussed on the public site.
- Dr. Lodge said that the CPI Executive Committee could meet with Heather Atkins to consider these issues. After discussion, it was decided to invite Heather Atkins and other IT personnel to the December meeting.
- Dr. Libich brought up the University website, saying that it needs to be streamlined, with improved marketing and branding, as well as navigation, as it is still difficult to find many

important items on the website. Dr. Lodge replied this would be a subject for a future CPI meeting.

- DLAR matters. Dr. Lodge mentioned that the rate increase in per diem charges should be discussed at the next CPI meeting, specifically addressing the following:
 - What were the metrics and rationale used to set the per diem costs for each animal species?
 - How were these metrics determined?
 - Dr. Libich stated there has not been much transparency in the way rates are set and there are large variations between rates for different animals.
 - The CPI will invite Dr. Hacker to an upcoming CPI meeting to address these concerns.

As there was no new business to consider, the meeting was adjourned at 5:19 PM