2017 Research Administration Satisfaction Survey
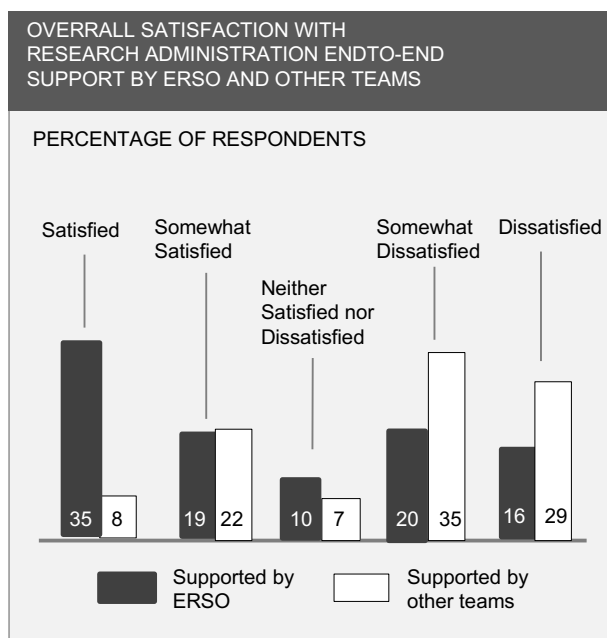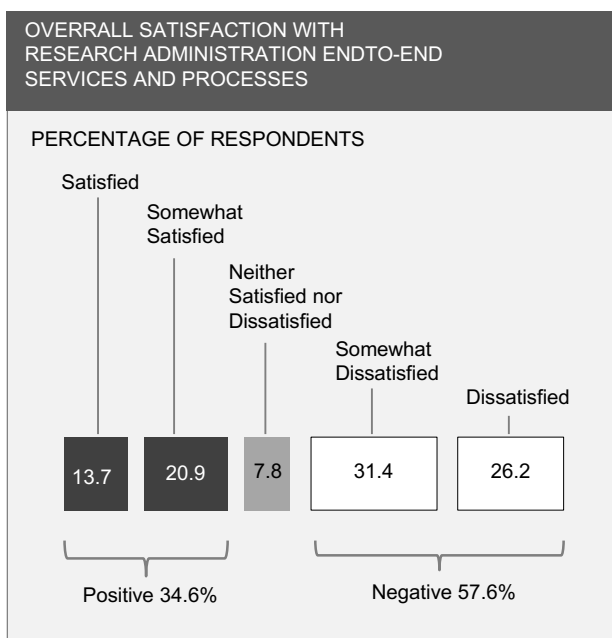
Key findings

As part of its efforts to improve research administration, UC Berkeley administered a baseline survey of principal investigators' satisfaction with research administration support services in February, 2017. Data and observations from the survey will be used to inform the RA Improvement Initiative efforts and the design of the regional service pilot. Going forward, the survey will be administered annually to measure the effectiveness and progress of improvement efforts. The next annual survey is scheduled for spring semester, 2018.

The survey was administered from February 8-22, 2017, and sent to 2,051 faculty and professional researchers who currently participate in internally-funded or sponsored research. A total of 408 completed responses were received. A high-level summary of responses below indicates that progress can be made in several areas: 57.6% of respondents reported being "Dissatisfied" or "Somewhat Dissatisfied" with end-to-end support services and processes; 7.8% of respondents reported being "Neutral"; while 34.6% of respondents reported being "Satisfied" or "Somewhat Satisfied." When looking at support teams, nearly twice as many PIs working with ERSO responded being "Satisfied" or "Somewhat Satisfied" as compared to PIs working with other support teams (53.4% to 29.4%).

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ENDTO-END SERVICES AND PROCESSES

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
13.7	20.9	7.8	31.4	26.2

Positive 34.6%   Negative 57.6%

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ENDTO-END SUPPORT BY ERSO AND OTHER TEAMS

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS

	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied
Supported by ERSO	35	19	10	20	16
Supported by other teams	8	22	7	35	29

SATISFACTION with SPECIFIC PROCESSES (1-5; 1 = Satisfied)	AVERAGE OF RESPONSES
CGA invoicing timeliness	3.2
Award set-up timeliness	3.2
Timely report. of post-award port. and proj.	3.0
Timely trans of GSI/GSR betw grant funds	2.9
Timely procurement process and approval	3.2
Helpfulness in hiring employees	3.1
Effective communication in award close-out	3.0

RESPONDENTS by APPOINTMENT (Self-selected)	PERCENT
Regular Faculty	70.8
Professional Research / Project / Specialist	11.8
Other (specify)	6.9
Faculty Emeritus	5.6
Other Faculty	4.4
Continuing Ed /Co-op Extension Specialist	0.5

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE by UNIT (1-5; 1 = Satisfied)	CAMPUS SHARED SRVS.	SPON. PROJEC. OFFICE	INDUST. ALLIAN. OFFICE
Timeliness	2.7	2.7	2.4
Accuracy	2.8	2.4	2.3
Responsiveness	2.6	2.8	2.3
Knowledge & expertise	2.9	2.5	2.3
Reliability	2.8	2.6	2.3
Communications	2.9	3.0	2.3
Taking initiative	3.2	3.2	2.7
Helpfulness	2.7	3.0	2.4

RESPONDENTS by RESEARCH TYPE (Check all that apply)	PERCENT OF CASES
Office-Based	53.2
Human Subjects	37.3
Field Research	34.1
Dry Lab	29.9
International Research	29.7
Wet Lab	29.2
Animal Research	9.6
Other	5.9

2017 Research Administration Satisfaction Survey - Qualitative Comments

Respondents were asked three optional free-form questions:
- What specific ideas do you have to improve research administration at UC Berkeley?
- What works well in the research administration process at UC Berkeley?
- Any additional comments?

Below please find frequent types of comments and representative examples from more than 700 responses received.

Common themes	Representative Comments
Administrative requirements are too complex, too risk adverse, and take an inordinate amount of time which could be better-spent on research.	*"After CSS, I ended up spending more time dealing with grant-related things, including hiring personnel (filling out forms, etc.) than before. I feel like the University is making the PIs do all the work…and leaving us with very little time to do what we do best…the actual research."* *"As a new faculty member, I have found communication about the roles and support provided by my RA, SPO, CGA, and other CSS to be lacking, ambiguous, and sometime contradictory."* *"We should initiate a 'sampling' model rather than run compliance on everything we touch."*
Research Administration has become depersonalized since the move to CSS.	*"I have a good relationship with CSS staff and am able to work effectively with them, but I am told by colleagues that my experience is very unusual. Placing CSS and other staff 'closer' to particular departments and faculty would be useful."* *"We need research administrators who can interact with us face-to-face and who understand the particulars of our research and our needs."*
Frequent turnover of support staff is a factor in poor service and insufficient knowledge.	*"For every proposal I've written, I've worked with a different CSS employee."* *"I was very worried when my CSS RA changed about 4 times in the course of 4 months last summer due to staffing issues…just as peak NSF proposal season was coming…but things turned out to work more smoothly than I had feared."* *"The people we deal with in CSS are constantly changing, and most are overloaded with work…"*
Research Administration is so frustrating that PIs are hesitant to apply for grants or they seek to apply for grants through a colleague's institution.	*"I am discouraged from wanting to applying for certain grants if I think it might get too complicated for staff."* *"I won't be applying for more grants at UC Berkeley until I am convinced of competence…instead, I will be running my grants through the organizations where my collaborators are based."*
Taking Initiative was cited as the service attribute most in need of improvement.	*"One of the major issues I have had has been requesting services that no specific staff member felt was in their role…"* *"It sometimes feels like I am taking the lead in telling the pre-award RA what items I need to submit, rather than the other way around."*
Effective Communications was cited as an area in need of improvement and one that leads to confusion in trying to manage grants.	*"Too many people in CSS that I don't know send me emails."* *"Emails are written in such dense and impenetrable language that I have no idea what they say. For example, I get a lot of these and I have no idea what they mean: 'SPO Modification distribution – The PAS and Modification documents for SPO number xx are attached. This Modification has been fed to Berkeley Financial System (BFS).'* *Plain English please!"*

Research Administration Improvement Initiative - Workstreams

RA Process Improvements
Mapping and streamlining separate RA processes to identify opportunities for efficiency and simplification to Pre-Award, Award Management, and Award Close-out. Work has begun on Award Set-up, Proposal submission, and Sub-Awards.

Academic Service Support – Regional Pilot
A regional support service delivery model will be piloted in fall, 2017, with the College of Chemistry and the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences.

RA Organizational Culture
The objective of this effort is to improve collaboration, initiative, and communication among all parties involved with RA end-to-end. Plans are under development and will be announced during fall semester, 2017.

Learn more about the RA Improvement Initiative at:
http://vcresearch.berkeley.edu/improving-research-administration/project