Research Administration Improvement Project

Academic Senate Division Meeting
May 3, 2017

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Ron Cohen, Associate Dean for Research Administration, MPS/CoC
Ann Jeffrey, Chief of Staff for Administration and Finance
Strategy

- **Process Improvement** → end-to-end review of RA processes
- **Service Delivery** → Regional Service areas
- **Culture**
Process Improvement

- Faculty and staff have identified various processes requiring improvements
  - Proposal Development & Submission
  - Award Set Up
  - Award Closeout
  - Other: Subawards, Purchasing, International Awards

- Award Set Up and Proposal Development & Submission Process Improvements currently underway

- Next, we will focus on the Subaward Process which is planned to start in May followed by the Purchasing Process slated for later in the Summer
Award Set Up Process Improvements

The Award Set-up process was selected last semester as an area for improvement. The first set of more than 21 planned enhancements, include:

**Improved communications to keep you informed about your award set-up:**
- Starting this month, an automated email will be sent from Contracts & Grants Accounting (CGA) to PIs and RAs when your Award Set-up is complete and funds are available to spend.
- Coming in May, an automated email will be sent to PIs and RAs when the Sponsored Projects Office receives a notice of award from your proposal sponsor. The notice will include next steps as well as links to information about how to process a Fund Advance if you'll need funds before the award set-up is complete.
- A dashboard is online that depicts award processing time by common sponsors and research categories. The current dashboard reflects the time needed to negotiate awards with sponsors; planned enhancements for a new dashboard will depict dates when the notice of award is received from the sponsor, the award set-up is complete, and when your project funds are available.

**Better transparency into how your award set-up is progressing and anticipated next steps:**
- *Phoebe Search* allows PIs to monitor their Award Set-up status and view summary details for all awards. Status categories have been introduced to inform you the stage in which your award set-up is.

**Process improvements to help get you started when your sponsor’s notice of award is received:**
- The recruiting process has been streamlined with CSS HR to help you initiate a personnel search before your Award Set-up is complete. The chartfield string is no longer required until the offer of employment is made, allowing you to initiate the search and hire process simultaneously to your award being set-up.
- Improvements have been made to Fund Advances which can provide you with access to funding while your award negotiation is in process.
Proposal Development & Submission Process Improvements

These improvements are currently being developed:

- New Proposal Development and Submission Checklist for PIs with clear instructions on deliverables required for the proposal, who’s responsible i.e. RA vs PI for the deliverable, and when it’s due

- Increasing knowledge, skills and abilities of Research Administrators through improved training, guidelines on what constitutes a complete proposal, establishment of a WIKI for RAs, etc.

- Improved SPO proposal review and feedback presentation to PIs by breaking down comments into three categories: a) issues that put the university at risk, b) comments to enhance the success of proposal, and c) other less crucial or more cosmetic comments

- Standardization of templates e.g. budget and budget justification template

- PIs & Co-PIs now automatically have the ability to view and edit their proposals in Phoebe
Faculty / PI Service Satisfaction Survey

- Survey of Faculty and other PI satisfaction with RA services conducted in February, 2017.

- First annual survey will serve as a baseline and to identify areas needing immediate attention. Annual survey will measure effectiveness of improvement efforts.

- Survey was sent to 2,051 Faculty and other PIs and was open from February 8-22. 408 completed responses were received.

- When asked about overall satisfaction:
  - 57.6% of respondents were “Dissatisfied” or “Somewhat Dissatisfied.”
  - 34.6% of respondents were “Satisfied” or “Somewhat Satisfied.”
  - 7.8% were neutral

- More than 700 qualitative comments were received and are being reviewed to prioritize improvement efforts.

- Results will be communicated to campus this month.
Regional Model

College of Chemistry and L&S MPS Division volunteered to pilot a new management structure for research administration. Goals include:

- Reestablishing partnership between academic units and research administration staff at all levels. Deans with management, faculty with staff, MSOs with CSS managers, …

- Culture of continuous improvement

- Insuring the RA staff identify themselves as part of the success of the faculty/units they support (and that faculty identify the staff as part of their team)

- Emulating the elements of ERSO that make it a comparatively successful service delivery model. Recognize that people and management are the most important element of that success, not just better tools.

- Attend to the survey results as a baseline
Regional Model

Process:

● Develop testable, reproducible models for organization, management and governance that support partnership between RA and academic units.

● Build electronic tools that support faculty and staff. A web portal that will consolidate key information in one place and allow streamlining and simplifying some processes (e.g. hiring GSI/GSR) is in process.

● Develop methods for standardizing the many ways we do things across different departments.

● Build in metrics to evaluate success from the beginning.

● Take small steps so it is not painful to start over.

● Make retention of talented staff a high priority throughout the process.
Culture Project

The project goal is to promote and foster a campus culture of respect and civility between faculty, staff and students, and between academic and administrative units.

- Our approach will be to integrate work on culture into all RA Improvement projects.
- We will be consulting with faculty in relevant fields to inform our work.
- We are starting with a review of the survey results to identify themes.
- Jennifer Chizuk appointed April 2017 to lead efforts.
Thank You

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