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PROFESSIONAL  
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# The RAP Up

the newsletter of NURAP

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

WINTER 2010

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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### March

24-NURAP at Noon,  
Training Grant  
Proposals, Norris  
104

25-NURAP at Noon,  
Training Grant  
Proposals, Hughes  
Auditorium, Lurie

### April

TBD-NURAP at  
Noon, Cost Sharing,  
Evanston

TBD-NURAP at  
Noon, Cost Sharing,  
Chicago



## NURAP Awards Travel Funding

by Alden Chang

On November 20, 2009, NURAP announced that Michelle Suran (Chemistry of Life Processes Institute) and Seletta Nichols (Medical Social Sciences) were the recipients of the first ever NURAP travel awards.

The travel awards are a critical element of NURAP's mission to provide education and to facilitate networking. These awards provide an opportunity for research administrators to travel and gain career-changing experiences at national meetings of research administration professional societies like NCURA and SRA, at a time when departmental and university-wide resources for these kinds of opportunities are scarce.

Ms. Suran and Ms. Nichols were selected from a competitive pool of applicants from across the university's schools and research centers. Both Ms. Suran and Ms. Nichols are planning to attend the NCURA regional meeting this spring in Omaha, Nebraska.

"I was extremely flattered and surprised," Ms. Suran said when asked how she felt when she found out that she was one of the award recipients. She explained in her application that by attending the NCURA regional meeting in Omaha that she would be able to "select the supplemental training I need to fill in the gaps in my current knowledge."

"This award will afford me the opportunity to attend an NCURA meeting," said Ms. Nichols, the other recipient of the NURAP travel award. "I know from personal experience [that the NCURA meeting] is a great place to learn about new research guidelines and what may be coming down the pike six months from now." She added, "one of the most important benefits of attending NCURA and other research professional meetings is establishing a camaraderie with people who are experiencing similar, if not the same, challenges and who might be able to offer a compatible solution."

As part of the terms of accepting the travel awards, Ms. Suran and Ms. Nichols will be providing summaries of their experiences which will be synopsized in the next edition of The RAP Up.



Michelle Suran with membership subcommittee co-chairs, Frank Cutting (left) and Dan Rademacher



Seletta Nichols with NURAP president, Lori Palfalvi (left) and membership co-chair, Dan Rademacher



Newsletter naming contest winner, Jody Hirsh

## From the Editor

by **Krista Galvin**

Welcome to the New Year and a new NURAP newsletter! We are very excited to introduce new content in this issue as well as our new name – The Rap Up. **Susan Morris, Katie Clarke-Myers** and **Rebecca Weaver-Gill** are the fearless reporters bringing you these stories. Please feel free to contact them if you have an idea for a newsletter article.

NURAP has had a busy winter continuing with its monthly NURAP at Noon series. In December, **Holly Falk-Krzesinski** presented on effectively finding funding and using search tools to cut through the funding maze. In January, NURAP hosted a winter warm up on each campus. Attendees networked over hot cocoa and cookies. Unfortunately, the weather was uncooperative for the event on the Chicago campus, but I hear those that could make it enjoyed the winter treats. February's session offered a chance to learn how to network online using LinkedIn. NURAP hosted its first outside speaker, **David Fisher**, of RockStar Consulting. The Steering Committee is excited about the lineup of programming in the spring.

See you in the next issue!



# How Stimulus Funding Has Affected OSR and NU's Research Enterprise

by Special Contributor **Susan Ross, Director, OSR-Evanston**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) was passed into law a little over a year ago, and in that short time has had a significant impact on Northwestern University. University researchers received over 200 different awards totaling more than \$110 million to date. The long term scientific and societal impact will be tremendous. At the same time, the short term administrative impact has also been tremendous, given the unique federal requirements that come with Recovery Act awards.

In order to receive Recovery Act funding, many principal investigators submitted new proposals to federal agencies, especially to NIH, an agency that ran many Recovery Act competitions. The increased volume was overwhelming. In April 2009 alone, the proposal volume was more than triple what it's been in previous Aprils. Looking at statistics from the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (a consortium of the Big Ten universities plus the University of Chicago), Northwestern had a disproportionately larger increase over its normal proposal submission volume than the other universities. In addition, Northwestern fared exceptionally well in terms of Recovery Act award funding. Collectively, our PIs are truly outstanding.

But we can't lose sight of the research administrators throughout Northwestern who have played key roles behind the scenes. Think of all the extra staff hours spent completing and reviewing 650 or so proposals as a result of the

Recovery Act. And the additional effort spent administering the awards. Office for Sponsored Research (OSR) staff may have experienced the brunt of the Recovery Act, since all of the University's proposals and awards flow through that office. There were days and weeks when the proposal volume was extreme. Any other activity that wasn't urgent had to be put on hold, sometimes leading to frustration all around. Accounting Services for Research and Sponsored Programs (ASRSP) will also feel the impact, as the volume of financial reporting and post-award administration increases.

In addition, some central staff have been tasked with mastering Recovery Act terms; developing policies and procedures; conducting training sessions; communicating with recipients; and submitting quarterly reports, with deadlines set a mere 10 calendar days after a quarter ends. The timelines are tight, and the guidance from the Office of Management and Budget and the various federal agencies has changed markedly over the past year, at times with little advance notice. There are 99 different data fields to keep track of, and each report has to be submitted individually. Yes, staff are working nights and weekends to meet the quarterly reporting deadlines.

Northwestern's research administration community can take great pride in its collective response to the Recovery Act. For those interested in learning more about the research that's been supported to date, please see:

<http://www.research.northwestern.edu/stimulus/>

### ARRA by the numbers (as of February 28, 2010)

- ⇒ Number of ARRA proposals submitted to date: **648**
- ⇒ Dollar value of ARRA proposals submitted to date: **\$478.4 mil**
- ⇒ Number of ARRA awards received to date: **212**
- ⇒ Dollar value of the ARRA awards received to date: **\$112.6 mil**
- ⇒ Number of ARRA proposals submitted in the last three months: **19**

ARRA data provided by David Hull, OSR-Evanston

### Welcome to our new ad hoc members:

#### Information Subcommittee

*Rachael Aniel Basnett (ORD), Susan Morris (McC)*

#### Membership Subcommittee

*Deborah Cundiff (McC)*

#### Programming Subcommittee

*Kelly Carroll (NUCATS), Seletta Nichols (Med. Soc. Sci.), Michelle Melin-Rogovin (NUCATS), Fruma Yehiely (OB/GYN)*

## NURAP Star: Michelle R. Grana

by Rebecca Weaver-Gill

*In every issue, NURAP will feature one of its members in a piece called "NURAP Star". To nominate one of your colleagues for this piece, please contact the newsletter staff (contact information on p. 4). Video interviews (if available) are posted to the NURAP channel on YouTube.*

*Michelle Grana is the Administrative Director of the Buehler Center on Aging, Health, and Society in the Feinberg School of Medicine. She has over ten years of sponsored research administration experience.*

*Q: How did you arrive in this field; this specific position?*

A: No one says, I don't think, I want to grow up to be a research administrator. After I graduated I took a position at the University of Chicago as an assistant to the chief of transplant surgery. From there I became an assistant grants administrator in the department of medical research and realized that I really liked this work and was pretty good at it. Within a year I was manager of research administration at the University of Chicago's Department of Medicine and was there for 6 years. As I grew more proficient, I also became more interested in how I could expand my role in academic medical center administration. At the encouragement of my supervisor I became active in several administrative organizations both within and external to the university in different areas of academic medical center administration. I still wanted to do more than just grants administration, which led me to the becoming the Administrative Director at Buehler in January 2004. The rest is history.

*Q: Can you describe a typical day in your present job?*

A: It's hard to say what a typical day is like as grant administration is one small part of my work. The one constant I have is supporting my staff, providing them with all of the resources that they need to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.

*Q: With the variety of activities in your day, what types of challenges do you expect or normally face?*

A: The biggest challenge is time. All research administrators can relate. Our internal and external deadlines are always there, but a grant deadline is always a \*hard\* deadline. In pre-award there is a lot of pressure and little time.

*Q: In what ways does this career meet other needs that you have--psychological, physical, or spiritual ones?*

A: I like that question...I think that the important thing about working at Northwestern University or other academic institutions is that you get to work with highly intelligent, highly competent



people with passion for their work and enthusiasm for their roles. Our faculty are passionate about what they do. Their passion is contagious. I appreciate being part of something bigger than a paycheck, bigger than the bottom line.

*Q: How would you manage a situation where you believed that something was not in compliance with professional ethics?*

A: Compliance is important at every level of what we do. I think we have to go beyond that though, and focus on the customer service aspect. PIs are busy coming up with great ideas, finding ways to get funding to implement these ideas.

All research administrators face these situations regularly with varying levels of seriousness. I think it's mostly a matter of involved parties not knowing the regulations. There is no question about the right thing, no pause or second thought--there's only understanding the situation completely and working to resolve any compliance issues. I don't think that our PIs want to break the rules; they just want to do their science. As research administrators \*we\* need to be the experts on what the rules are and educate them as needed on compliance issues, and work with them to meet these requirements.

*Q: How do you cope when unexpected obstacles hinder your work?*

A: Isn't that the definition of research administration? This is why we are here; to solve these problems. I think that seeking the opinions of my colleagues, not only at the Center but throughout the University, really gives us an opportunity to share solutions.

# Departmental Dossier

by Susan Morris

“Dear Dan” is on hiatus for this issue. Be sure to catch the feature column next quarter. If you have a question to ask of the university’s original research administrator, you can submit them directly to Dan at : [d-rademacher2@northwestern.edu](mailto:d-rademacher2@northwestern.edu)  
*Be sure to include “Dear Dan” in the subject line.*

You’ve just arrived at work, ready to tackle your long-but-not-unmanageable to do list, when you see The Email. It’s innocuous enough at first, but then there’s that dreaded phrase: “due today.” Or tomorrow. Or some other deadline that’s much too soon given the nature of the application. Which means that the email might as well say: “Good morning, Susan. Just in case you were wondering, you’ll be eating lunch at your desk today.” So what do you do?

**1. Freak out and panic.** Okay, this step is optional, but if you find it unavoidable, get it out of the way first.

**2. Check the facts.** Is the proposal *really* due today? Is your department definitely the lead unit? Is your PI even eligible to submit?

**3. Alert the troops.** If it’s a surprise to you, it will (probably) be a surprise to them. Inform your team immediately so they can be ready to help you out. This includes your GCO, staff who help you prepare proposals, co-investigators’ research administrators, and anyone who will need to sign off on the OSR-1.

**4. Rearrange the rest of your day.** Are there meetings you can cancel? Tasks you can delegate? Don’t be afraid to respond to emails with “something came up, but I know I promised you an answer and I’ll get back to you tomorrow.”

**5. Reach into your bag of tricks.** This is the time when checklists, templates, samples, bookmarks, personal favors, and granola bars you’ve been storing up will really come in handy.

Use them. If you don’t already have an RA First Aid Kit, make one (but not today!).

**6. Prioritize.** Focus on what you need to get the proposal moving: budget, justification, SOW. Yes, proposals can be rejected because of problems with the bio sketches or margins, but if you want to have any chance of funding, you need to get this proposal to the sponsor by the deadline with institutional approvals in place. It’s much easier to fix a messy or incomplete proposal than it is to fix a late one.

Finally, remember that this happens to all of us. If you receive a call from a colleague working on a last-minute proposal, she’s probably having a worse day than you are. Cut her some slack, because you never know when you’ll be the one with the emergency.

## Member Recognition

The following members of NURAP received a Service Excellence Award between January 1 and December 31, 2009 and were honored at the Service Excellence Luncheon on February 1, 2010:

**Rachael Andel Basnett, Barbara Beeuwsaert, Christine Beglinger, Alden Chang, Eugenie Chao, Katie Clarke-Myers, Ingrid Cox-Miller, Tyra Darville-Layne, Colleen De Luca, Tyler Dorsett, Mary Ann Edgell, Sally Gale, Krista Galvin, Susan Hall-Perdomo, Pamela Hawkins, Emily Heppard, Will Higgins, Jennifer Hill, David Hull, David Kaplan, Sheila Kessler, Sara Krentz, Stephanie Logaras, Andrew Ludington, Susan Morris, Katherine O’Donnell, Daniel Rademacher, Marta Roberts, Aaron Rosen, Matthew Temkin, Jen Thennes, Mary Tobin, Damien Trimuel, Latonia Trimuel, Mary Lynne Williams**

**Susan Morris** received a McCormick Staff Team Appreciation & Recognition (STAR) Award in January.

**Yvette Davis, Sheri Lindsay, Susan Ross, and Sheri Carsello** presented “Rules and Responsibilities: Cooperation Across Campus” at FRA, March 3-5, 2010.

**Katherine O’Donnell** began her fifth year of service at NU.

**Eliza Earle** will retire from Northwestern University in June after 15 years of service. Congratulations Eliza!



### Newsletter Staff

**Co-Managing Editor:** Krista Galvin

**Co-Managing Editor:** Rebecca Weaver-Gill

**Associate Editor:** Alden Chang

**Feature Contributor:** Susan Morris

**Special Contributors:** David Hull, OSR Evanston  
Susan Ross, OSR-Evanston

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