NURAP Northwestern University Research Administration Professionals

The RAP Up

The NURAP Newsletter

VOLUME 2, ISSUE I FALL 2010

FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

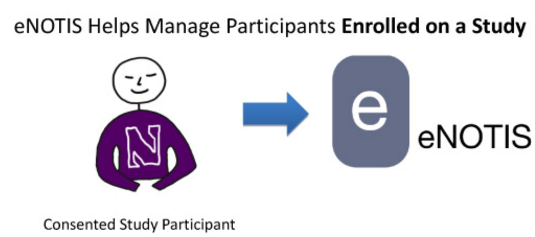
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Views expressed in The RAP Up are the sole opinion of the authors and unless specifically stated, do not represent institutional policy.

New Tool Worth Noticing: eNOTIS

by **Jill Bockes**

No research administrator can argue with the necessity of keeping good records. But what about sharing good records? We often file share through email, folders on drives, sometimes even send faxes or campus mail. But these methods can be time consuming, prone to error, and unfortunately not very secure.



The IRB approved Enterprise Northwestern Trial Information System (eNOTIS) was recently launched by Northwestern Biomedical Informatics Center (NUBIC) to alleviate steps and paperwork for studies that enroll participants for interventional research above a minimal risk. According to a survey put out by eNOTIS developers, a few hundred respondents said they use Microsoft Excel to track study participant data. Though some studies have access to industry or drug company sponsored tracking technology, a few are still even tracking information on paper. On-line tool eNOTIS keeps records in semi-real time, so users don't have to worry about saving new versions of Excel files and emailing files back and forth. Those authorized to see data, from the PI to the project coordinator, will see the same picture of who is enrolled, and they can access the information from anywhere.

ENOTIS was developed to "provide a simple, transparent, easily accessible and maintainable data repository for capturing, tracking and reporting accrual to clinical research studies across the Northwestern clinical research enterprise." It is a required component for all open interventional research above a minimal risk – so if the research is just a simple survey, for instance, there is no requirement to use the tool.

It also aims to keep records safe. One problem with storing information in Excel, according to eNOTIS lead developer Brian Chamberlain, is the security issue. Are the files fully protected? How are the records being transmitted? Is sensitive information being emailed? Are files being shared on easy-to-misplace, unprotected thumb drives? These are problems of privacy, but they are also questions of efficiency.

How is this system different than Excel? As a centralized web-based tool, eNOTIS offers an organized and manageable way to capture data on every clinical study participant at NU. Clinical investigators, coordinators and administrators with active studies can access the tool. It hopes to "fill the technological gap for institutes that do not already have their own clinical trials management system, replacing the use of paper and standalone solutions," according to the project description. And for top level administrators, eNOTIS provides the ability to see how the university is doing with study enrollment as a whole – data that would be difficult to capture from multiple individual spreadsheets.

And the project has room and a vision to grow. According to the project scope, the first version tracks basic patient and study data, but down the line there are plans for a patient tracking calendar and eventually a clinical trials budgeting system. For right now, according to lead developer Chamberlain, eNOTIS is meeting a basic need. But through working with the research community, the eNOTIS team hopes to cater to people and their ideas for expanding and improving the system for all of NU.

To view a slide show that illustrates some eNOTIS features browse to: http://slidesha.re/9Iv4a9

From the Editor

by **Alden Chang**

Hello NURAP!

Yesterday at the NURAP networking event in Chicago, I overhead one of the members say, “oh my gosh, I haven’t seen you in such a long time!” That simple exclamation provided validation for what NURAP has been doing since day one, connecting members of the research community together to build education and networking opportunities to serve the community as a whole.

This is my first issue alone at the helm of the RAP Up. Previously, I had had the distinct pleasure to publish with a team of editors—former NURAP steering committee members Rebecca Weaver-Gill and Krista Galvin. Just as managing the publication threatened to overwhelm me, President Schapiro steeled my will with the words he offered to us at the networking event when he said that research administration professionals are no less important than investigators.

As research administrative professionals, we serve the enterprise at Northwestern, providing important compliance and advocacy functions. We can and should take pride in the work we do and the organization we’ve built in NURAP.

Last month at the SRA Annual Meeting in Rosemont, a few NURAP members had a chance to show off what we’ve accomplished in front of an international audience. I think it’s safe to say that we are truly innovators and are now a globally recognized brand.

Before my closing, I want to note that Volume 2 marks the one year anniversary of our newsletter. I would like to thank all of the contributors for their hard work and especially those that were there from the beginning: **Jill Bockes**, **Daniel Rademacher**, **Susan Morris**, and **Matthew Douponce**.

As we head into the holidays, I wish all of you peace, joy, and a happy new year.

Member Recognition

- Congratulations to **Lauren Peterson, Patricia Trueba,** and **Thongsy Singvongsa,** winners of the NURAP SRA Annual Conference Travel Awards! ***(photo below)***
- **Gretchen Talbot, Deb Cundiff,** and **Kathy Mustea** have joined the NURAP Steering Committee
- **Farrin Abbott** joined McCormick Research Administration
- **Denley Gonzales** joined the Department of Chemistry
- **Pamela Hawkins** was promoted to Grant Officer
- **Stephanie Logaras** was promoted to Assistant Grant Officer
- **Katherine O’Donnell** was promoted to Associate Grant Officer
- **Mary Lynne Williams** was promoted to Senior Grant Officer

Membership Views

NURAP is in its second year of programming. At a recent NURAP at Noon event in Chicago, we asked members about what they learned in the first year of NURAP programming.

NURAP has done a great job over the past year providing administrators within the research community with a platform for open discussion. Plus it's also nice to finally be able to put faces with names of colleagues that I communicate with daily!

Tina Hollins, Department Assistant II, OSR-Chicago

I didn't realize how much NURAP was needed. It's wonderful to have a medium to communicate important changes and lessons learned between central administration and department research staff. Thank you for all the hard work in planning and implementing the sessions.

Kathy Mustea, Grants and Contracts Financial Administrator, ASRSP

In this past year since I started working at Northwestern, NURAP has been a wonderful way for me to learn about Research Administration in the University as well as connect with colleagues across both campuses.

Sara Sylvan, Research Administrator I, Robert H. Lurie Comp. Cancer Ctr.

I've learned that there are a lot of highly skilled Research Administrators on both campuses who are more than willing to share their knowledge. It's nice to know that you're not alone.

Mariela Huber, Department Assistant II, OSR-Chicago

It has been a great opportunity to get out and meet folks that I deal with over the phone and e-mail face to face.

Jamie Young, Associate Director, Office for Sponsored Research, Chicago

Department Dossier: Show Me the Money

by **Susan Morris**

As department administrators, faculty members ask us many important, nuanced questions, and it's critical that we give each one our thoughtful consideration. As a faculty member, however, there is often no more important question than "Where is my money???"

From best-case to worst-case scenario, here are some places your PI's money might have gotten stuck between the sponsor and having a chart string in hand, and what to do about them:

The PI received the chart string but forgot.
Before you panic, ask yourself whether you remember seeing the award mailing already. You may be able to simply forward the PI an email he missed. Congratulations, you're the hero!

OSR has your finalized award but they haven't interfaced it yet.
They're stealing the money for themselves! They don't want to send the chart string because they like keeping secrets! No, of course not. They're just working on your proposals instead. If your chart string is ready and the Grants Assistant (formerly DA) just hasn't had time to send the mailings, you can search the Award Profile page in NUFS with your Institution (InfoEd) Number and the Project ID will come up. You can also use the InfoEd Communications tab to see whose desk the award is on and how long it's been there; it may be approved but awaiting NUFS interface.

OSR has your award notice but they haven't processed it yet.
This is another great time to check the InfoEd notes. If you can confirm that your award was logged in, assure your PI that she should be receiving the chart string shortly. If an important award suddenly stagnates for a week or two, check with the Grants Officer (formerly GCO) directly to see whether OSR is waiting for something from you or is just experiencing a temporary delay.

The PI has the award notice but hasn't told anyone else.
PIs often assume that if the sponsor sent them an award notice, it must have gone to OSR as well. True for most federal funding, but not always true for subawards, industry, or non-profits such as foundations. What the PI assumes is a courtesy cc could actually be the institution's one and only original copy of the formal award documentation. Take it out of his desk drawer and ask him to make sure he lets you know about these in the future (and give the sponsor OSR's contact information).

The check is in the mail.
Sometimes it really happens! The sponsor has decided to snail-mail an award letter, and perhaps even a physical check, and it's working its way through USPS (or inter-campus mail, where it may be going from AP to ASRSP to HR your PI's office). For federal awards, the notice may be sitting in OSR's electronic inbox waiting to be picked up for processing. Be patient, but if funding is lost in transit for more than a week, start investigating. Who sent it from the sponsor, when, how, and to whom? Who might have gotten it at NU by mistake?

The sponsor needs something else from NU.
Did you send NIH all requested JIT information? Does the foundation have your banking codes? Does the other institution have a revised SOW? A polite call or email to the sponsor asking whether they are waiting on something from your end can help straighten out snafus, and prompt them to act on your award even if it's not waiting for anything other than their attention.

The sponsor hasn't actually made a funding decision yet.
Someone may have told your PI that he scored very well, or he would hear on such-and-such date, but agencies' funding offices get behind just like OSR. In this case, you just have to wait for the real decision to occur and educate your PI about how she'll know that a decision is official.

To allow OSR and our sponsors to spend their time on getting us more money, I recommend doing your own detective work when possible and limiting follow-ups to situations where you're desperate or something has clearly gone wrong. With experience, you'll learn to balance patience with a sense for when to call in the bloodhounds.

<u>NOTES FROM ASRSP</u>

Subrecipient Monitoring
An important part of subrecipient monitoring is the review and certification of the invoices sent to NU by our collaborators. ASRSP sends invoices to PI's with a certification attached which needs to be signed and sent back to us before we will approve payment. It is important that the invoice charges are reviewed carefully. Certifying an invoice indicates the PI believes that there has been acceptable progress by the collaborator; that the charges are appropriate for the work reported; and that sponsor guidelines are being met. It is also a good time to determine if your collaborator is invoicing us with sufficient frequency. One invoice at the end of the year is not sufficient to adequately monitor the performance of your collaborators throughout the budget period!

Non-Federal Award Payments
Remember that most non-federal sponsors such as foundations and private industry will not pay our final invoice until the final technical report has been accepted. Please work with your PIs to get these reports submitted in a timely fashion. It is a contractual obligation and a best practice to get your reports submitted by their deadline, which is usually 60 days after the end of the project.

Fall Networking Event Photos

On October 26 and November 10, 2010, NURAP held its semiannual networking events in the Guild Lounge of Scott Hall on the Evanston Campus and the Lurie Atrium.

President Schapiro was the featured guest at both events and he inspired NURAP with his take on research and the role it plays in the economics of higher education.









Compliance Corner

by **Matthew Douponce**

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is one of the agencies of the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government. Working cooperatively with the Federal agencies, OMB establishes government-wide grants management policies and guidelines through circulars and common rules. The principles are designed to provide that the Federal Government bear its fair share of the total costs, determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, except where restricted or prohibited by law.

Agencies such as the NIH and NSF are not expected to place additional restrictions on individual items of cost. These policies are adopted by each grant-making agency and inserted into their Federal regulations.

The OMB Circular A-21 establishes four principles for determining costs applicable to grants, contracts, and other agreements with educational institutions. In preparing budgets and in assigning costs to grants and contracts, PIs and research administrators should consider the sponsor's guidelines and regulations. Costs charged to a project must meet the following criteria:

1. Allowable under the cost principles of A-21 and under the terms of the specific award;

2. Allocable in that the cost can be associated with a high degree of accuracy to the sponsored project;

3. Reasonable in what a prudent person would pay for the item in a like circumstance and;

4. Consistent treatment of costs to assure that the same types of costs are not charged to grants and contracts both as direct and indirect costs.

In some cases, known as exceptional circumstances, costs that are normally viewed as F&A costs, such as administrative assistance, can be charged directly to grants and contracts when a major project exception has been documented with OSR and approved by the sponsor.

For more information on A21 allowable cost guidelines please see OSR's website:

http://www.research.northwestern.edu/guide/text/basics/a21.html

NURAP at the 2010 SRA Annual Conference

October 17-20, 2011, Rosemont, IL

Elizabeth Adams, Lori Palfalvi, and Dan Rademacher presented about NURAP at a concurrent session.

Lori Palfalvi, and Daniel Rademacher, and Alden Chang presented a poster about NURAP at the conference.

NOTES FROM ASRSP

Clinical Trial Invoicing
A quick reminder for those in the Medical School who issue clinical trial invoices themselves to please begin to use the new ASRSP invoice template. It is available on the ASRSP website, or can be obtained by contacting Ruben Evora in the Chicago Office.

Post Award: Training Compensation vs. Supplementation

by **Frank Cutting**

In the last issue we talked about efficient ways to handle NRSA appointments and termination forms. Another topic which frequently comes up in the management of these awards is the difference between stipend supplementation and additional compensation.

The key question that you need to ask to differentiate between the two is "what is the work expectation associated with these extra funds?" NIH defines it this way:

The funds provided as compensation for services rendered, such as teaching or laboratory assistance, are not considered stipend supplementation; they are allowable charges to Federal grants, including PHS research grants. However, NIH expects that compensation from research grants will be for limited part-time employment apart from the normal training activities.
(NIH Grants Policy Statement 12/03)

In layman's terms, funds characterized as compensation may be paid to fellows only when there is an employer-employee relationship since the payments are for services rendered. , NU Policy provides further guidance and recommends that ten hours per week is the maximum amount of time that should be spent on the compensated activities.

So that's clear- right? Well, not always! NIH maintains that compensation may not be paid from a research grant that supports the same research that is part of the fellow's planned training experience as approved in the Kirschstein-NRSA individual fellowship application. There are similar rules for institutional training grants as well. NU provides compensation through part-time employment, usually in the form of being a Research Assistant and getting paid on account 60076. Occasionally in small centers, programs or laboratories, providing additional compensation for work unrelated to the training experience may pose some difficulties. It may be necessary to collaborate with faculty outside of your unit, or who are not preceptors on the training grant, to identify suitable unrelated opportunities.

Supplementation on the other hand is fairly straightforward. Stipends, paid on expense account 78050, may be supplemented by an institution from non-sponsored funds provided this supplementation **does not require any additional obligation from the fellow.** A stipend is provided as a subsistence allowance for Kirschstein-NRSA fellows to help defray living expenses during the research training experience. **It is not provided as a condition of employment** with either the Federal government or the sponsoring institution (NIH Grants Policy Statement 12/03). An institution can determine the amount of stipend supplementation, if any, it will provide according to its established policies governing stipend support. These policies must be consistently applied to all individuals in a similar status regardless of the source of funds. Federal funds may not be used for stipend supplementation unless specifically authorized under the terms of the program from which funds are derived.

Lastly, there are tax ramifications associated with the decision to supplement a stipend, or additionally compensate a trainee / fellow. Wages earned as compensation on account 60076 are taxable, because of the implied employer-employee relationship. Stipends paid on 78050 are also taxable, but there is no requirement for the University to report these earnings to the IRS. Payroll does send out a reminder to those affected each January reminding them of this requirement. Trainees / Fellows should be reporting this income yearly.

Hopefully these facts will provide you with some guidance when determining if you are going to compensate or supplement your trainees and fellows. I haven't yet decided on the topic of the next column. If you have a post-award financial topic you would like to see addressed, let me know:

fc@northwestern.edu

NOTES FROM ASRSP

FFATA
You may have heard about the new reporting requirements required under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA). As with ARRA, the intent is to empower every American with the ability to hold the government accountable for each spending decision. The end result is to reduce wasteful spending in the government. The FFATA legislation requires information on federal awards (federal financial assistance and expenditures) be made available to the public via a single, searchable website. Federal awards include grants, subgrants, loans, awards, cooperative agreements and other forms of financial assistance as well as contracts, subcontracts, purchase orders, task orders, and delivery orders.

Similar to our ARRA reporting rollout - OSR, ASRSP, and Café have assembled a team that is working to develop both short-term and long-term strategies to identify these awards, query report data from NU Financials and InfoEd, and develop suitable template formats for data submission so that NU can meet these reporting requirements. ASRSP will keep you informed as more details become available.

Certification in Research Administration: What's the Scoop?

by **Elizabeth Adams**

How do you know what you know about research administration? Trial and error? A good--and getting better--intuition? A few basic-level training classes? Sessions from an annual NCURA or SRA conference? A great colleague, supervisor or mentor? An audit? If you're a seasoned research administrator, chances are that all of the above have played a role in your education in the field. But the question remains for research administrators at all levels: is there an efficient, high-quality way to gain knowledge in research administration?

Certification is one option. While Northwestern does not currently offer a research administration certificate program for its staff, an extramural professional organization does, on a national basis. That organization is the Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC; http://www.cra-cert.org), an independent non-profit organization, founded in 1993. RACC offers professional certification (a Certified Research Administrator designation, or "CRA") to candidates tested on a broad range of material that the RACC terms the "Body of Knowledge". Information in the Body of Knowledge is divided into four sections:

I. Project Development and Administration
II. Legal Requirements and Sponsor Interface
III. Financial Management
IV. General Management

According to Joan Campbell, Executive Director of the RACC, the current CRA exam consists of 250 questions. 180 of these questions must be answered correctly (a score of 72%) in order to earn the CRA. However, RACC recently redeveloped the exam, which will be in use in 2011. RACC has yet to fully evaluate the difficulty of the new exam and determine the new passing score. That the organization seems committed to refreshing its exam is a good sign.

To be eligible for a CRA, a candidate should have a Bachelor's degree and three years of substantial involvement in research or sponsored programs administration, though some exceptions can be made on the degree requirement, depending on the years of related work experience. Recertification, required for CRAs every five years, consists of demonstrating continued participation/employment in the field, along with educational activities either taken or taught.

The CRA exam will be offered during a May 7-21, 2011 testing window at computerized testing centers throughout the country (including several Chicagoland locations). The fee to take the CRA examination is $340. To help exam-takers succeed, RACC offers one-day review sessions around the country on the Body of Knowledge. On February 11 of next year, it happens that the University of Illinois at Chicago will host such a review session. The registration fee for the review session is $195. The study materials represent the only other potential cost of the CRA (beside the amount of time each candidate invests in studying), but these materials are printable from links at the RACC website. At a total maximum price of about $550, less than the costs associated with attending most research administration conferences, pursuing a CRA over the course of a few months represents a cost-effective investment and exciting professional goal. (Attending the one-day overview could itself be a worthwhile experience for new research administrators as well as managers responsible for training research administrators in their offices.)

Per the RACC website, nearly 1400 research administrators nationwide have achieved the "Certified Research Administrator (CRA)" designation. Just a few of these CRAs are at Northwestern. Some peer research institutions have dozens of CRAs on their campuses: Carnegie Mellon, Duke, Emory, Ohio State, UTexas-Austin, University of Illinois-Chicago, and University of Washington. A growing number of top-tier institutions have their own certificate programs (Cornell, Stanford, Harvard), but it's clear that many universities rely on the CRA to provide fundamental training in research administration to staff in those roles. Interestingly, Huron Consulting Group and sponsors such as NIH and NCI also have a handful of CRAs. According to the RACC website, the current Chair of the RACC Board of Directors is John D. Sites, Jr. CRA, in the Health and Education Practice of Huron Consulting Group.

The RACC website includes a page entitled "Why Hire a CRA?", which states: "The CRA indicates that an individual has taken the time and effort, beyond just job experience, to learn the Body of Knowledge, thus exhibiting a significant commitment to working in this profession." The CRA may thus not only be an investment in your current position but your next one, and position you well for future learning--and possibly mentoring--in the field.

NURAP is considering organizing a small "pilot" group to study for the CRA exam this coming spring and take the exam in May 2011. Are you interested in exploring something new, connecting with other folks at NU doing research administration in pursuit of a common professional goal? Let us know if you'd like to learn more by writing Alden Chang, NURAP Secretary, at alden-chang@northwestern.edu.

NOTES FROM ASRSP

4Q2010 Effort Reports are due Friday, November 19, 2010
All 4Q2010 effort reports should be pre-reviewed by now. According to the Quarterly Effort Reporting Communication and Monitoring Timeline, these are the actual dates of the actions that will be taken with 4Q2010:

->Day 0: October 20, 2010 -- Effort Reports were generated by central administration and notification was sent to Department Administrators with the deadline communicated (November 19, 2010)
->We are here Week 3: November 12, 2010 -- Deadline reminder sent to Department Administrators
->Week4/4Q Deadline: November 19, 2010 -- Effort Reports due/no communication sent this week
->Week 5: November 26, 2010 – (1st warning) completion results communicated to Department Administrators
->Week 7: December 10, 2010 – (2nd warning) completion results sent to Department Chairs
->Week 10: December 30 (actually January 3, 2011 due to holiday) – (3rd warning): completion results and individual delinquency reports sent to Deans offices
->Week 14: January 28, 2011 -- Delinquency reports sent to VP of Research and Provost Office to determine appropriate action (Final Warning for 4Q2010)

ARRA Reporting
NU has **256 active ARRA awards**, and ASRSP has a dedicated team for ARRA Reporting (NURAP members Janet Maher and Suseela Gopikanth). Many thanks to those of you who assist us with answering sponsor questions and to the PIs who review the quarterly ARRA review file (located at http://www.northwestern.edu/asrsp/arra.html), and submit their quarterly activity reports via the web survey in a timely manner.

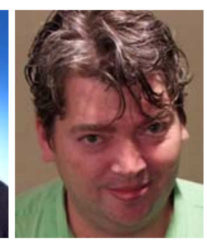
Together, we can continue this excellent on-time submission record!

Newsletter Staff









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