

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATOR MENTORING PROGRAM

Sponsored research administration is a key component in Princeton University being a world-renowned research institution. As research continues to become more interdisciplinary and global in nature, the need for increased collaboration and knowledge sharing across key academic and business units grows. For research administrators to remain effectively engaged in meeting the demands of a dynamic global research enterprise, a proficient understanding of critical core areas of research administration is required. The establishment and maintenance of a Mentoring Program is one approach to address these demands by investing in the long-term growth and development of new University research administrators.

The **Sponsored Research Administrator Mentoring Program (RAMP)** offers a structured setting in which to develop beneficial relationships supporting ongoing professional development of the mentee as well as the mentor. Mentors have an opportunity to encourage and advise new research administrators or those interested in expanding their sponsored research experience by sharing their own experiences and knowledge of sponsored research activities on the Princeton campus and beyond. Goals of the program are to encourage regular interactions among research administration staff whether in similar or substantially different roles, establish a support team for new research administrators, offer a venue for exploring career options in sponsored research, and leverage the collective knowledge of research administrators toward building a strong community of resources.

The program will be coordinated by the Office of Research and Project Administration (ORPA) Training Manager. A steering committee will convene to assist with preparation and implementation of the programs objectives, consisting of the ORPA Training Manager, the Academic Managers Group (AMG) Research Administration Subcommittee Chair, and a representative from Sponsored Research Accounting (SRA).

Mentoring assignments will be for six (6) months with the possibility to extend up to six (6) additional months. Applications are open several times a year with a schedule posted on the ORPA RAMP website as well as announced via the ORPA News listserv. Previously participating mentors will be asked whether they wish to continue with the program. Matching of mentors with mentees will be based on availability and in consultation with the individual's manager, those with knowledge of the applicant, ORPA and SRA. Factors that may be taken into consideration: goals of applicant, geographic proximity, similarity of roles, similarity of sponsors supported, division or similarly sized units.

The mentoring program is not intended to replace department specific training, formal training, or onboarding activities within the hiring unit, but is intended to provide supplemental support and create opportunities for topic discussions directly related to current or future research administrative activities.

Requirements for participation in the program

- Full- or part-time employee in an academic unit or in a central office.
- Complete and submit program application.
- Willing to commit to the program for the six-month duration.

Mentee

Could be any of the following:

- Newly hired, newly promoted, or new to sponsored research responsibilities.
- Interested in learning about sponsored research broadly, or an area of sponsored research with which s/he is unfamiliar.
- Nominated by manager.

Mentor

Could be any of the following:

- Currently hold a research administrator position or similar role.
- Demonstrated engagement with research administration community on campus.
- Actively participates in/attends on-campus sponsored research training sessions and meetings.
- Potentially periodically attends outside conferences or meetings.
- Nominated by manager.
- Participation as a mentor can be on an individual or group basis.

Mentor guidelines

- Mentors will contact the mentee within 2 weeks of assignment.
- Mentor and mentee will, together, establish expectations for regular communication and aschedule for the period of the program.
- Mentor will, within one month after mentee-mentor match is established, submit agreed upon schedule and activity goals to the steering committee.
- Variations to submitted schedules are permitted to accommodate unforeseen events, as long as regular meetings continue.

Recommended schedule and activities

- Formal meeting time of 1 hour per month, half an hour every two weeks, or similar arrangement should be dedicated to the development of hard skills.
- Mentor should be available for additional ad-hoc activities, such as phone calls to address specific questions that may come up from time to time.
- Mentors and mentees are encouraged to complete more than one of the recommended activities described below.
- Mentor should periodically update program coordinators of progress and notify when complete.

Recommended Activities

These activities are intended to encourage regular interactions between mentor and mentee as the mentee moves through the academic schedule and gains understanding of the pace and flow of interactions between their center/program/department/central office and the larger Princeton community. It is recommended that the mentor and mentee meet on a bi-weekly basis, however each pair should determine a schedule that best fits their needs. Mentor and mentee are encouraged to draw from this list; however the list is not intended to be inclusive of all potential interactions.

The activity list is divided into two main areas:

- Job Tasks / Hard Skills: skill building, knowledge-based activities which build sponsored research expertise, such as entering a proposal into Princeton ERA
- Relationship Building / Soft Skills: help the mentee develop relationships with a support network

of research administrators, such as attending Coffee with ORPA together

Suggested Job Tasks / Hard Skills

- Assist with/observe a Princeton ERA proposal/agreement submission
- Shadowing a portion of a workday (either in mentor or mentee department)
- Review electronic, written and printed materials used in support of job duties
- Discuss financial management and best practices
- Serve as “on call” resource to the mentee
- Spend time with staff from SRA, ORPA, RIA, CFR, OTL, OAC, F&T, Graduate School or other research administration areas
- Work through closing out a grant/award (AWD)

Suggested Relationship Building / Soft Skills

- Discuss who to contact for what
- Discuss approaches for communication with Principal Investigator’s
- Attend on-campus trainings with mentor (example: Coffee with ORPA, SRA Wrap-up)
- Lunch/coffee/Zoom happy hour with mentor
- Attend outside professional meetings

Time Commitment

Staff are required to discuss participation in the program with their supervisor. The time commitment is dependent upon the needs of the mentor/mentee and should be established at the beginning of the assignment. The average time commitment described here is a guideline for discussions held with supervisors or managers. The program anticipates the total year commitment of Mentor Activities not to exceed 26 hours over six (6) months. This is comprised of an estimate for the six (6) months of 1 hour per week, which gives time for a one hour meeting every other week, and another hour of ad hoc questions/time.

Monitor and evaluate program results

It is important to maintain open communication with all participants and program coordinators. The committee will monitor and evaluate program results using more than one of the recommended methods listed below. The information gathered will be used to evaluate current practices in relation to program goals and adjust as necessary, improving the program for future participants.

- Follow up with participants to ensure that mentors and mentees have made initial contact and established a rough schedule.
- Request updates of the mentor experience from all participants.
- Meet with program participants individually or in groups to ask for program feedback.
- Ask participants to complete a program evaluation at the end of the assignment.
- Ask mentees to complete a follow-up evaluation on value of program after end of assignment, typically six (6) months after completion.

Steering Committee Members:

- Sarah McGovern - [AMG Research Administration Subcommittee Chair](#)
- Courtney Kohut - [ORPA Training Manager](#)
- Rita Jain - [SRA Representative](#)