ACOR FELLOWS
2016 Cohort
FINAL REPORT

“Building a Bridge to the Knowledge Base”

2016 Fellows
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2016 Site Visits
Office of Risk Management
Office of Research Protections
Research Accounting
Office of Technology Management
Office of Research Information Systems
College of Engineering
Office of Sponsored Programs
College of Health & Human Development
Executive Summary

We found the ACOR Fellows program very beneficial. Meeting with other units provided insight into and empathy for all unit workloads and established human connection and points of contact for reference. We are grateful for the opportunity this program provided us and are appreciative of the time all the units spent in meeting with us.

Recommendations for ACOR Fellows Programming

- Recommend shortening presentation sessions at units to 3 hours to allow for an hour at the end for Fellows to debrief
- Create a worksheet/standard outline to be completed by each fellow post session to aid in debriefing and final report creation

Larger Recommendations for the Research Administration Community

We would like to start by emphasizing that many of these items have been recommended by previous ACOR Fellow cohorts, and we feel that, as such, they warrant serious review by the research community and leadership. As a group, we decided to start our recommendations by dreaming big: in an ideal world, what could research administration look like at Penn State? It would start with a consistent approach and constituent systems, including an award management system. As other Fellow cohorts have observed, we noticed inconsistencies across the units in how we handle very similar work. The lack of continuity across the University means we are not managing our human capital efficiently and as a result are losing revenue.

Specific recommendations:

- Penn State needs a research award management system (pre- and post-) for all colleges; this system would act as a bridge between SIMS and IBIS
- Consistent approaches and systems across all units (databases, tracking, training)
- Shared resources among units: we believe sharing systems/files/forms would be beneficial to all; moreover, a “floater” position(s) shared among the college grants offices would be extremely helpful and reduce the burden that accompanies turnover
- Find a consistent way to compare staffing and workload across the Research Administration and Contract Offices; this would help determine inequities in staffing
- For SIMS, we recommend the implementation of a more broad-based advisory board to help prioritize SIMS improvement (as exists for CATS)
- Additional training is needed that is geared towards financial system users (iTwo)
- Continually look for ways to reduce printing paper
- Training videos as end product of ACOR Fellows program; PIs could benefit from this information as well as the research administration community
- One additional “Dream Big” suggestion: a research concierge and compliance liaison within each grants office would be a real benefit to researchers