ACOR FELLOWS

2017 Cohort

EXECUTIVE REPORT

“Above the Silos, One Blue and White Sky”

2017 Fellows

JoZane Cardamone, Office of Sponsored Programs
YouYou Cheng, College of Engineering
Jeremy DeRicco, Office for Research Protections
Danielle Fasick, Office of Research Information Systems
Jackie Jacobs, Social Science Research Institute
Jamie Ross, Engineering Design, Technology, and Professional Programs
Diane Rudy, College of Agricultural Sciences
Brad Swope, Office of Technology Management

2017 Site Visits

Office of Risk Management
Office for Research Protections
Research Accounting
Office of Technology Management
Office of Research Information Systems
College of Engineering
Office of Sponsored Programs
College of Science
Penn State Institute for Cyber Science
Executive Summary

The 2017 eight ACOR Fellows had the opportunity of visiting two college research offices in addition to several research administration units across campus. Additionally, the ACOR Fellows had the privilege to tour the Penn State Institute for Cyber Science which was extremely exciting and very interesting. The Fellows were appreciative of the time and in depth sharing of knowledge provided by each of the hosts.

In general, we felt that each of the units were managing the research requirements with their overall processes efficiently. However, many of the processes and systems across the units have been created in silos. We propose by aligning various tools, it would lead to more consistencies and efficiencies for all units and relieve burden on the researcher.

Recommendations for ACOR Fellows Programming

Recommendation to permit ACOR Fellows to participate remotely in site visits. While in-person participation is highly valuable, Penn State does have access to great collaboration tools such as Zoom. Zoom could provide Fellows the opportunity to view video, audio and screen share during the site visits. Remote participation could also lead to more involvement to those in the research administration community who are located at one of the Commonwealth Campuses where frequent travel to University Park isn't feasible.

We would like to suggest at the beginning of the program to have the group assign a Chair for the group. The Chair would coordinate the group in completing the final report and communicating with OSP representatives regarding the final report process. Additionally we would suggest the department visits be limited to a 3 ½ hour timeframe for presentations, and an additional ½ hour at the end of each session to allow the Fellows time to discuss thoughts and specific recommendations from the visit.
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 consistent 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 compromising our value.

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.
- Quarterly networking event hosted by individual Colleges to discuss best Research Administration practices and facilitate consistent approaches and systems.
- Continued support of a “floater” position(s) shared among the research administration offices (to include OSP) would be extremely helpful and reduce the burden that accompanies turnover.
- Continue to evaluate staffing and workload inequities across the Research Administration and Contract Offices to allow capacity for professional development, cross-training and allow for improved retention.
- Reinstate Research Administration Working Group (RAWG) quarterly negotiator team meetings with the colleges to increase efficiencies and communication.