



Executive Summary

Research Administration and Infrastructure Review

July 2008

A. Overview

As characterized by the Carnegie Foundation, The University of Georgia (UGA) is a “*Very High Research Activity Institution*” that received \$221 million in external grants and contracts during fiscal year 2007. While research funding at UGA has grown slightly over the last five years, UGA has slipped in a number of important research rankings such as the National Science Foundation ranking of federal R&D expenditures. The University’s strategic plans call for additional growth in the size and scope of the research enterprise during the coming decade. Growth, along with increased faculty recruiting, some infrastructure investments, and additional staff needs, will all place additional pressure on the research administration infrastructure.

UGA appointed a *Research Administration and Infrastructure Ad Hoc Committee* (composed of faculty and administrative staff) last Fall to assess and evaluate the current infrastructure and determine if the support structure was sufficient to enable UGA to meet its strategic goals for research. In addition, the committee was to develop recommendations for creating a “balanced culture” of research administration efficiency and compliance. Improving the level of administrative support for UGA’s research mission, yet maintaining a balance with compliance requirements is high priority with the University administration.

The principal objectives of our Committee’s work were to:

1. Assess existing research and grant administrative and compliance processes and make recommendations to improve administrative efficiency and effectively manage compliance risk.
2. Assess existing roles and responsibilities for all participants involved in sponsored research and make recommendations for changes and new definitions.
3. Assess current training mechanisms for PIs and research administration personnel, and make recommendations for measures to ensure that they are properly trained and have the tools necessary to meet their responsibilities.

B. Current Assessment

While UGA has made improvements to its research administration infrastructure over the past few years, there remain challenges and weaknesses that will make it difficult for UGA to effectively support expected research growth. Our analysis revealed several key factors contributing to these challenges, including:

1. Variable and currently insufficient research support service levels across the University for faculty and staff.
2. Technology has not been adequately integrated into research administration processes.
3. Less than fully effective and consistent coordination between key research administration offices.
4. The continuing challenge of recruiting, developing, training, and retaining skilled central office research administration staff.



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5. The relationship between the central offices and faculty is often strained; the general perception is that the central offices have focused more on “policing” the environment as opposed to “facilitating” the research process.
6. Roles and responsibilities among the departmental and central administrative units involved in research administration are not clearly defined and communicated.
7. There are limited formal training and education programs for central research administrators, departmental research administrators, and faculty.
8. There is no formal performance measurement system for research administration offices and academic units.

C. Key Recommendations

In the *Ad Hoc Committee's* full report, there are 37 detailed recommendations that will enable UGA to improve the services provided to the research community, more effectively manage its sponsored program activities, and mitigate compliance risk.

If adopted, these recommendations will better enable the university to meet the needs of the growing research enterprise. Following are 16 **key** recommendations contained in our report about which the Committee members felt particularly strongly.

Organizational Structure

1. Increase the level of communication between OSP and C&G through additional joint departmental meetings, regular meetings between central offices and unit/college administrators, and occasional direct forums with research faculty.
2. Consider alternative organizational structures for the Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP) and Contracts & Grants (C&G), including the possibility of combining both offices and evaluating the overall reporting relationship of the Office.
3. Develop performance and productivity measures for key central research administration units such as Office for Sponsored Programs (OSP), and Contracts & Grants (C&G), as well as for academic units.

Roles & Responsibilities

1. Implement the “Future State” matrix of roles and responsibilities that was developed by this committee.

Policies & Procedures

1. Where missing or under-developed, strengthen formal policies and procedures for key research administration functions.
2. Continue to monitor and evaluate policies and supporting procedures for high risk fiscal and research compliance areas.



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Systems & Technologies

1. Continue current efforts to improve financial management reporting and other related reports (e.g., effort reports, animal care and use reports, other self-generated reports) for research faculty and staff.
2. Adopt and implement an integrated, web-based proposal development and compliance management system in the next 12-18 months. This system should also incorporate proposal routing, submission, protocol development, and approval requirements.

Research & Fiscal Compliance

1. Strengthen and deepen UGA's programmatic investments in compliance across eight key program elements, including specific additional investments in compliance staffing, monitoring, training, and education.
2. Create more comprehensive, campus-wide training and education programs for compliance, particularly for faculty and departmental administrators.

Training & Education

1. Develop and implement a formal training and education program aimed at departmental and central research administrators.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive research administration and compliance education program for faculty.
3. Consider supporting formal "certification programs" for research administrators to incentivize desired behaviors and reward achievement.

Research Facilitation

1. Undertake additional administrative actions that facilitate and support inter-disciplinary research. Develop a formal "Grant Mentoring Program" for junior faculty, and align the appropriate administrative support with the program.
2. Develop a staffing model to ensure comparable administrative support for units and colleges who are not traditionally "research-funding heavy" (i.e., humanities, journalism, law).
3. Re-evaluate the current process for returning faculty & administrative (F&A) funds to units/colleges, ensuring transparency, equity, tighter alignment with current priorities of the University, and stronger research promotion.