Strategies for Working with Investigators: Crucial, Critical, Courageous Conversations

Jamie Caldwell
Kim Moreland
Jill Frazier Tincher
Partners in Research
DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES: RESEARCHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Kim Moreland
What I Thought I Said

I know you believe that you understand what you think I said,
but I’m not sure that you realize that
what you heard is not what I meant.

Bumper Sticker
Two Perspectives

While the partnership between faculty and administrators is essential to shared governance, it is also a fragile one, characterized by lack of harmony and large doses of mistrust.

Faculty highly value autonomy and the direction of their work is largely self-determined. The role of administrators on the other hand, is to serve the collective good, requiring them to measure and weigh a multitude of interests. Influence is a tool widely used by administrators to build consensus.
Poll Question

What do you think are primary characteristics of investigators? Select three from the list below.

- Curious
- Good instructors
- Practical
- Problem-solvers
- Theoretical
- Good collaborators
- Determined
- Respectful
- Creative
- Other (please list)
Faculty Responsibilities

- Nourish a climate of intellectual growth
- Foster curiosity
- Advance knowledge
- Mentor
- Provide outstanding learning experiences
- Participate in departmental responsibilities
- Participate in governance

- Engage in research, creative activities, instruction, service
- Cultivate a safe and inclusive environment
- Model professional conduct
- Ensure compliance with responsible research requirements
- Provide timely submission of deliverables
- Manage the lab, classroom, etc.

Excerpted from University of Maryland, College Park, Faculty Expectations and Responsibilities
Poll Question

What do you think are primary characteristics of research administrators? Select three from the list below.

- Curious
- Practical
- Theoretical
- Determined
- Creative
- Good instructors
- Problem-solvers
- Good collaborators
- Respectful
- Other (please list)
Support project investigators in the development of proposals and related financial narratives and budgets

Supports the research departments of an educational institution, corporation, government agency, or non-profit organization.

Assist faculty members in the department with all administrative aspects of proposal development

Organizes, plans, establishes and monitors fiscal budget control of contracts and grants administration

Solve problems

Help faculty members navigate the complexities of submitting and managing research

Communicate critical information to principal investigators

Etc., etc., etc.
Understand the Reason for the Meeting

Common reasons

- Facilitate a request
- Solve a problem
- Convey information
- Reduce misunderstandings
- Demonstrate capability
How Can We Approach the Divide?

1. **Distinguish**
   - Distinguish between an isolated issue and a systemic problem

2. **Don’t overlook**
   - Don’t overlook what works well

3. **Try**
   - Try to mesh their priorities with responsible administration

4. **Make notes**
   - Make notes of their concerns

5. **Identify**
   - Identify the needs of researchers

6. **Understand**
   - Understand research priorities
Service in Research Administration

Customer Service

Responsiveness

Accuracy

Integrity

Professionalism

Respect
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Jamie Caldwell
Building Relationships and Communicating With Investigators

We work in a complex environment that involves collaboration with many different types of people and personalities at different organizational levels. The foundation of great working relationships is strong and effective communication skills, especially when working closely with different types of PI’s.
Building relationships and trust between investigators and research administrators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Elements</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is on the team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ability to answer questions in real time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be an ambassador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tools and resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transparency

Success for the PI is accomplished with support of research administrators who work in various roles and areas of a university. Being honest and transparent is very important.
Who is on the team?

- Departmental Research Administrators
- College level Research Administrators
- Central Office Research Administrators
Poll Question

Which area best fits your role at your institution?

Department
College
Office of Sponsored Programs Administration
Vice Chancellors Office
Other
Thinking Out Loud

Providing answers to Questions

There is no such thing as a dumb question.
Who can answer questions quickly and in real time?
Where should the question be directed?
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Jill Frazier Tincher
Poll Question

Consider a recent conflict with a faculty member. Don’t think about the issue itself. Instead, focus on what impeded your ability to resolve the issue?

Were the parties ineffectively communicating
Was there a clash of egos,
Was there a lack of trust,
Was either party being indecisive?
Common Causes of Conflict

- Clash of Egos
- Lack of Collaborative Environment
- Lack of Trust
- Frustrations
- Indecisiveness
- Lack of Understanding
- Communication Breakdown
Poll Question

Thinking back to past conflicts, what mistakes have you made which caused or inflamed the conflict?

- Avoiding conflict
- Being defensive
- Forgetting to listen
- Wanting to win the argument
Common Mistakes With Conflict

- Being Defensive
- Being “Right”
- Avoiding Conflict
- Forgetting to Listen
- Playing the Blame Game
- Trying to “Win” the Argument
Poll Question

What are some conflict resolution techniques that you have utilized with success?

- Picking up the phone and talking through the issue
- Listening effectively
- Looking critically at the issue
- Giving the benefit of a doubt
- Proposing solutions
Conflict Resolution Techniques

1. Clarify the Source of Conflict
2. Bring Together the "Right" People
3. Listen Actively to Everyone Involved
4. Evaluate Potential Situations
5. Agree on the Best Solution
   Identifying Who Will Do What
6. Follow Up Evaluating How Things are Going
Conflict Solutions

1. Identify Conflict Causes
2. Avoid Common Mistakes
3. Utilize Proven Techniques
4. Collaborate on Solutions
5. Build Trust
BEST PRACTICES

Jamie, Kim, Jill
Prepare carefully for the meeting
Be professional
Avoid jargon
Organize your thoughts
Set goals for the conversation

WHAT WE’VE LEARNED
Think about the other perspective
Be clear about the source of any requirements
Be sure the right people are in the room
Be clear about changes needed
Articulate an action plan

MORE LESSONS LEARNED
Listen carefully
Don’t blame someone else
Accept your own responsibility
Don’t be defensive or personalize comments
Maintain civility

WE’RE STILL LEARNING
STAY WITH US!

AFTER THE SHOW

Will begin 5 minutes after the conclusion of the webinar