



# NCURA Region IV

VOLUME 18, ISSUE 2

FALL 2006

## NCURA's 48th Annual Meeting November 5-6, 2006

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Pre-Award Research Administration Conference: "Blazing a Trail to Excellence"</b> | 2 |
| <b>NCURA Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration</b>                        | 2 |
| <b>Region IV Summer Board Meeting</b>  | 3 |
| <b>LDI Acceptance</b>  | 4 |
| <b>Lean: What Is It and How Do You Begin to Use It?</b>                              | 5 |
| <b>2006-2007 NCURA Region IV Communications Committee</b>                            | 6 |
| <b>Region IV Board Members</b>   | 6 |

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Two years ago, when I attended my first national Annual Meeting, my flight out of Chicago was cancelled and I missed the address by James Carville and Mary Matalin. I am NOT going to fly through Chicago this year!

The keynote address not to be missed this year will be by Tim Russert, managing editor and moderator of *Meet the Press* and political analyst for *NBC Nightly News* and *The Today Show*. He anchors *The Tim Russert Show* on CNBC and is senior vice president and Washington bureau chief for NBC News. Russert will touch on topics ranging from the effect of homeland security on research and the potential for a U.S. "brain drain" to future funding, stem cell research, and the positive and negative impact of the media on research.

Also not to be missed is comedian Paul Mecurio's address at the opening banquet on Sunday night. Trained as a lawyer at Georgetown University School of Law, Mecurio wrote jokes for Jay Leno while working

on Wall Street. As a staff writer for *The Daily Show* on Comedy Central, he won numerous awards for his writing. Also a performer, Mecurio has appeared on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*, *NBC's Comedy Showcase*, *The Late, Late Show with Craig Kilborn*, and *New Joke City* with Robert Klein. We won't have to stay up quite so late to catch his act at 8:30 PM after the banquet!

Now let's get down to serious work. On Sunday, there will be 25 offerings of workshops, forums, and senior seminars on a plethora of topics. More than 170 concurrent sessions and discussion groups are planned over 2½ days from Monday to Wednesday. NSF and NIH updates will each be offered twice. Grants.gov sessions and discussion groups abound. Check out a couple of "stress reliever" sessions, too, like "Naked at Lunch" or "Extrovert Tips for the Introvert." Thursday offers two full-day workshops: "A Day at NSF" and "A Day at NIH."

Networking opportunities are plentiful at the Annual Meeting: Monday evening dinner groups (a bonus being a great meal at a DC restaurant), regional hospitality suites, new member orientations—even the sessions themselves can open up dialogue.

One of the things NCURA does best is honoring its own. The Annual Meeting provides an opportunity to showcase the great talent within the group. After Tim Russert's keynote address, stay to honor the recipient of the NCURA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Research Administration and to recognize the 2006 class of the Leadership Development Institute.

With all the workshops, sessions, networking opportunities, and wonderful guest speakers, this should be a great Annual Meeting. See you in DC!

Karen Spear  
Methodist Research Institute at  
Clarian Health Partners

# Pre-Award Research Administration Conference: “Blazing a Trail to Excellence”

The first annual (we hope) Pre-Award Research Administration Conference took place in Portland, Oregon on August 20-22, and Region IV was well-represented with 31 of the 300 attendees. In fact, the conference broke the NCURA record for attendance at a summer meeting. Our very own Heather Offhaus served on the Program Committee and did a fine job putting together all of the discussion groups.

The theme of the conference, “Blazing a Trail to Excellence,” was a reference to the Oregon Trail and to Lewis and Clark. To that end, the keynote speech was by Doug Erickson, the head of Special Collections and college archivist at Lewis & Clark College. He gave a fascinating account of some of the little-known facts about the Corps of Discovery and showed many slides of the participants, the terrain, the animals, the Natives, and the flora.

The concurrent session tracks included eRA, PUI, Contracting/Compliance, Departmental, Communications, and Open Forum. Though this seemed like a lot of tracks for a conference of this size, all sessions were well-attended. A great many of the attendees were very new to the field, and many sessions were geared towards them. The conference was preceded by four morning

workshops, leaving extra time for networking in the afternoon.

Region IV presenters included the following individuals:

Diane Barrett (University of Wisconsin–Madison) co-presented the workshop “Essentials for the Trail – Fundamentals of Pre-Award.”

Beth Seaton (Western Illinois University) and Christa Johnson (Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville) were speakers for the “Pathways to Research Compliance at PUIs: Models, Policies, and Structures that Work” session.

Terry May (Michigan State University) presented “Responsible Conduct of Research: An Emerging Imperative for Compliance or a Professional Moral Obligation?”

John Massa (University of Iowa) presented “Plotting Your Course: Grants.gov – Process, Policy, and Technical Infrastructure.”

Jim Casey, independent consultant and attorney, presented “Strengthening Collaboration: The University-Industry Partnership Project.”

Kirsten Yehl (Northwestern) was a presenter for “The Budget Expedition: Development, Submission, and Revision.”

Heather Offhaus (University of Michigan) led a discussion group on “How to Get to the Pacific When All You See are the Rockies: Compliance Issues in Pre-Award.”

Tim Reuter (University of Cincinnati) was a presenter for “Forging a Single Trail for Improving Communication Between Central and Departmental Research Administrators.”

Ellen Ingram (University of Toledo) and Paula Roberts (Western Michigan University) were panelists for “Foundations: Strategies for Effective Communication to Finance Your Expedition.”

Glenda Luecke (Washington University) was a panelist for the discussion group “Departmental Administrators and the Compliance Journey.”

Congratulations to all of the presenters and to the Program Committee for an auspicious start for this new offering for pre-award research administration!

*Diane Barrett*  
*University of Wisconsin–Madison*

## NCURA Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration

I attended the Fundamentals of Sponsored Project Administration workshop in Burlington, Vermont. Why do I encourage even my veteran colleagues to consider attending a fundamentals workshop?

First, the field of research administration is always changing. Changes

to procedures, regulations, policies, etc., can occur on a daily basis so it is important for us all to keep current on information relevant to our field. Second, it is helpful to review

the entire research administration cycle since many offices may handle only one phase of the process such as pre-award and post-award. The more we understand all phases of the process, the better we can all work together for one common goal—even if several different offices are involved.

**“This is a wonderful program that I highly recommend to any newcomers to the field of research administration. In fact, I would recommend that veterans in the field of RA should also attend a fundamentals workshop.”**

**Kathy Lantz**  
**Western Illinois University**

The presenters were excellent, with each one providing useful information on their areas of expertise. I particularly like how they interjected real-life experiences into their presentation to illustrate and bring to life the many concepts they were discussing. Humor was also an important part of their presentation and helped to keep things interesting during the sessions.

Attending NCURA workshops and conferences always inspires me with new ideas on ways to complete daily job-related tasks in a different and more efficient manner. I also appreciate the networking opportunities where I can learn how other people handle similar situations or complete their tasks in a different way than I do. Sometimes it just helps to know that others struggle with the same problems, challenges, and frustrations that my office does on a daily basis!

Newcomers to the field of research administration should also be aware that the NCURA fundamentals website ([www.ncura.edu/members/fundamentals/](http://www.ncura.edu/members/fundamentals/)) is an excellent source of information. Topics include Legal Framework, Pre-

Award, Post-Award, Compliance, Negotiation and Award, and Post-Award Administration. The website is a great reference tool that is available to all NCURA members.

### Faculty

Patricia Hawk, Assistant Director, Sponsored Programs & Research Compliance at Oregon State University in Corvallis, OR

David Mayo, Associate Director, Sponsored Research at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, CA

Cynthia White, Director, Research Office at Washington University in St. Louis, MO

*Kathy Lantz*  
*Western Illinois University*

## Region IV Summer Board Meeting

Each year, the Region IV board meets at least three times. At the spring and fall board meetings, most of the time is spent preparing the latest information for the business meetings. The summer board meeting provides more time for the board to devote to discussions around the region's direction, focus, and resources.

This summer, the board met in mid-September in Cleveland over two days. There were the usual committee reports to be shared and discussed, but a large portion of the time was spent looking at the strategic direction of Region IV.

There is an article in the next national newsletter co-authored by Diane Barrett, Robert Aull, and others about the governance workshop sponsored by the national board in July. We were fortunate to have several in attendance from the region. Based on the discussions at the national level, the attendees brought back several key issues that face the Mid-America Region (for example, local volunteer or governance succession and identity as a region). These issues served as the basis for the Region IV board's discussions at the summer meeting.

The board formulated the following core purpose and mission: "Region IV serves its members and advances the field of research administration by providing locally accessible education and professional development programs and by fostering a regional sense of community." The board then identified some ways to focus on and address the mission statement, both in the short- and long-term. One of the more immediate changes includes placing

additional information in the administrative procedures about the time commitment of service on committees and the potential resources available to various volunteers. Also, the board discussed possible ways for Region IV members attending the national meeting to identify and network with one another so that the community of Region IV within the larger (and sometimes overwhelming) national meeting would be recognizable. Watch for an idea or two to pop up this fall and next spring!

The board was extremely pleased at the overwhelming response to the "Zoomerang" survey, which asked for input on meeting days and also called for volunteers for various capacities. Thank you to everyone who responded. The results of the meeting days will be shared after the final tally is completed. For those of you who volunteered, the board's goal is to contact each of you before the national meeting this fall and/or the regional meeting in the spring to let you know how you can help.

The time spent to sit back and take a good look at our region and how we can make it better for our members, both immediately and in the future, was very exciting. We will keep you updated as the Region IV strategic plan continues to evolve.

*Heather Offhaus*  
*University of Michigan—Ann Arbor*

*Diane Barrett*  
*University of Wisconsin—Madison*

# Leadership Development Institute (LDI) Acceptance

Region IV extends its congratulations to two of its members, Craig Reynolds of Central Michigan University and Karen Spear of Methodist Research Institute at Clarian Health Partners, for their acceptance into the next class of the Leadership Development Institute (LDI).

The LDI developed out of NCURA's recognition that if the organization was to thrive, new leaders would need to be cultivated from its members. LDI assists the organization in identifying and developing its leaders for the future. LDI participants are paired with an advisor and complete monthly assignments in a virtual classroom where they interact with each other and the LDI facilitator. Participants also undertake a leadership project that will benefit their institution. In the late spring, LDI participants gather at a retreat for 2½ days with the LDI facilitator and NCURA leaders. Finally, a workshop at the Annual Meeting focuses on meetings, stress, and conflict management, and students plan the next steps in their journey.

**"My vision of what I have to offer NCURA is defined by my view of NCURA's mission. I see that vision as twofold: (1) educational: providing the information that members need for their jobs; and (2) community: providing a group of like-minded others with whom to share information, frustrations, joys, and friendship."**

*Karen Spear*

Any NCURA member who has been a member for at least two years is eligible to apply to the LDI. Candidates must demonstrate their commitment to the organization. The application essay must address what specific leadership skills they wish to develop and how participation in the LDI will enhance their individual professional development and contribute to NCURA and their home institution.

Craig Reynolds is a Research and Program Officer at Central Michigan and has experience in research administration that ranges from the departmental, to the central office, to the funding agency. He has participated in a variety of NCURA events, from SRA

fundamentals and video workshops to regional and national meetings, learning the basics and best practices and, just as importantly, developing networks of friends and colleagues upon whom he can count and vice versa: "Ensuring the continuity of the profession and maintaining our hard-won role as respected advocates for the research enterprise requires a constant refilling of the pipeline of dedicated individuals willing to take up the cause. I hope the LDI will help enable me to give back to the NCURA community and do my part to advance our interests in times of regulatory burden creep, constricting federal budgets, and difficult funding decisions among competing valid interests."



Karen Spear presents tips on delivery of oral presentations to summer research students.

Karen Spear has served as Grants Coordinator at Methodist Research Institute at Clarian Health Partners in Indianapolis since 2002. NCURA was essential to her learning what it means to be a research administrator. Her involvement as a volunteer in NCURA has helped her realize more about what she is capable of, about what a group of dedicated volunteers can achieve in an organization, and about how willing people in NCURA are to help one another succeed.

Karen and Craig are both delighted to have been selected for the 2007 class of the Leadership Development Institute and look forward to getting started on the program. Congratulations and good luck!

*Diane Barrett*  
*University of Wisconsin—Madison*



Craig Reynolds relaxing at home

# Lean: What Is It and How Do You Begin to Use It?

Lean . . . It's not the latest diet craze, but a process that can be applied to improve the efficiency of the workflow process. The goal is to create a structure where everything that is being done adds value to the product and waste is eliminated.

## Origins

The concepts of Lean originated in Japanese manufacturing companies. United States and European companies responded by looking for just-in-time processes to remain competitive in the world market.

Lean thinking was given its name in a book titled *The Machine that Changed the World: The Story of Lean Production* by James P. Womack, Daniel T. Jones, and Daniel Roos. The book builds on examples of Lean manufacturing that were used by Ford in the U.S. and Toyota in Japan. The core concepts are as follows:

- Specify value in the eyes of the customer
- Identify the value stream and eliminate waste:
  - Over-production
  - Wait time
  - Transportation
  - Processing
  - Inventory
  - Motion
  - Scrap
- Make value flow at the pull of the customer
- Involve and empower employees
- Continuously improve in the pursuit of perfection.

The Dell computer company is airing a commercial that offers a good example of Lean concepts in practice. While you listen to a customer placing an order over the phone, you see the lights come up in a warehouse assembly line. The computer is assembled piece by piece in response to the customer's request. He gets the exact product he wants, there is no wasted effort at the factory, and there is no excess product left.

Who evaluates the process and recommends improvements? The employees who do the work take the lead, with the assistance of interested, third-party participants. This team evaluates the workflow, identifies waste, and develops a plan for improvement.

## Preparing to Use Lean in Sponsored Programs

So, all of this has been about *manufacturing*. Can this set of tools be applied to Sponsored Programs? Iowa State University has had the opportunity to answer this question with the assistance of an area manufacturer and an independent consultant.

The Office of Sponsored Programs Administration (OSPA) was introduced to the Lean process in the fall of 2005. In order to follow the Lean thinking path, it is best to have a guide or *sensei* (third-party person who can provide unbiased advice and coaching). Also, to have the most impact, you will need to have the support of upper management. Throughout our journey, we struggled with the definition of "support." For this step, it means that the administrators have a basic idea of what you hope to achieve and encourage you to explore the options.

This spring, our *sensei* was in touch with our director early and often when preparing for our first "event." The purposes of these conversations were to (1) help the *sensei* better understand what type of work our office did, (2) determine the scope of the work to be evaluated using Lean tools, and (3) gather base data.

The "event" we were preparing for was *Kaizen* (kai = change, zen = good). *Kaizen* means breaking apart the current situation, analyzing it, and quickly reorganizing it to make it more efficient.

OSPA is composed of three teams: (1) Proposal, (2) Awards, and (3) Industry. The Proposal Team had made significant changes following a *Kaizen* demo in the winter. For the summer *Kaizen* event, the Awards and Industry Teams were taking the lead by analyzing some of their processes.

Each team prepared information about what processes (contracts, no cost extensions, PI change requests, etc.) they handled, estimated how many of each were handled in a year, and calculated the time it took to complete each process. This proved difficult because the data weren't readily available. Instead, best estimates were used.

Gathering the base data is very important as you will see in the next article, "**Two Teams Walk Through *Kaizen*.**" We will explore lessons learned and hear success stories.

*Diane M. Meyer*  
Iowa State University

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# Region IV Board Members



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