



NCURA Region IV

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The Abilene Paradox and Other Quandaries of Change

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I'm sorry for those of you who were not able to attend the Region IV meeting or were there but were not able to make the keynote. Our speaker was Gale S. Wood, the facilitator of NCURA's Leadership Development Institute (LDI).

Gale's premise was that we all know that rules, regulations, and resources for research administrators seem to be changing at breakneck speed. Our workplaces seem to be in constant flux as our institutions are affected by change. We also know that change is here to stay: it's the byword of our world these days. In her keynote, Gale addressed change at the individual and group levels. Through a lively and multimedia format, Gale challenged us to think of change in different ways, presenting it as an opportunity over which we may actually have some control.

The Abilene Paradox is a peculiar, though common, phenomenon that occurs when a group of people chooses a certain course of action together when individually none of them think it is a good idea. The situation then continues, even if clearly the wrong course of action, because nobody is willing to raise an objection. To illustrate this, Gale showed a

short, humorous movie that hit a little close to home. In the movie, a variety of situations occurred because nobody would say that they thought it was a bad idea, including two people who didn't want to get married but were afraid of telling the other or anybody else because they didn't want to disappoint everyone.

The point was that we each need to be willing to speak our minds, even when we think that everyone else in the room is solidly behind the project. It takes courage, especially to disagree with senior management. In the end, that courage may end up saving a project from disaster. Sometimes, we have to drive a change, and that is often a hard thing to do.

Gale then tied this change to something called Polarity Management, a way of managing

both change and stability. You can see the chart Gale used at www.ncuraregioniv.com. It is a constant dance in that continuity can become stagnation and change can become chaos. The goal, therefore, is to carefully manage an organization so that it is energized when change happens but has enough continuity to have a solid platform.

Gale then equated the poles of the chart with Pls and Research Administrators, where science and compliance can seem at odds but are flip sides of the management cycle.

Gale said it much better than I just did! It is well summed up by a quote Gale provided from Pauline R. Kezer: "Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights."

*Diane Barrett
University of Wisconsin-Madison*



Gale Wood, Keynote Speaker

Pamela Vargas Receives Region IV Distinguished Service Award

“This truly is an honor, especially knowing the dedication that the members of Region IV have to the profession and NCURA. It is very humbling to be singled out when there are so many deserving candidates right here in this room, including others who have been nominated and many of whom have helped me and therefore contributed to this award.”

Pamela Vargas speaking at the Region IV Awards Luncheon

Pamela Vargas, Director of Sponsored Programs, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the Air Force Institute of Technology, was named the recipient of the NCURA Region IV Distinguished Service Award at this year’s regional meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This award recognizes NCURA members who have performed exceptional service in the field and is bestowed only during those years when a nominee has met a considerable set of requirements, including having at least five years’ experience in the field of research administration, serving as a regional or national officer or as chair of a committee at the national level, and making presentations and publishing articles in the field.

Tamara Hill, University of Cincinnati, Chair of the Awards Committee, presented the award to Pamela at the annual awards luncheon on May 1, 2006. Tamara noted that Pamela “enthusiastically supports the region as a resource for the many individuals that cannot attend the national meetings or seminars. Her participation in the countless regional meetings, committees, and presentations is known to the regional officers. It is time to recognize her to the regional membership at large.”



Tamara Hill, Awards Committee Chair, presents the Distinguished Service Award to Pamela Vargas.

Robert Andresen (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Cynthia Muhammad (Northwestern University), Beth Seaton (Western Illinois University), and Jaynee Tolle (University of Cincinnati) served with Tamara on the Awards Committee that made the selection.

Pamela’s considerable service to the profession and NCURA includes a stint as chair of Region IV. She has also served as the regional Nominations Committee chair, as a member of the Awards and the Publications Committees, and as a member of the national Professional Development Committee. She is a frequent presenter at regional and national NCURA meetings and is well published in the field of research administration.

In addition to her current role at the Air Force Institute of Technology, Pamela served for many years at The Graduate School, Office of Research, at the University of Notre Dame. Her research administration experience spans over fifteen years. Region IV is truly fortunate to be able to claim Pamela as one of its own.

*Bill Sharp
University of Kansas*

Riding the Rapids: The Ever-Changing World of Research Administration

This year, Region IV was welcomed to Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Amway Grand Hotel for the Spring Meeting. "So, what are the highlights?" you ask. The Program Committee did an excellent job of bringing presenters together who could cover a wide variety of Sponsored Research topics. There was something there for everyone, and of course, Grants.gov was covered many times. We all learned a great deal from each other! There were so many opportunities to meet our colleagues, including the Hospitality Suite, a mixer at one of the lunches,

Dinner Groups, the Newcomer Reception, and Murder at the BOB. What fun! The Awards Luncheon gave us the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and extra efforts of some of our peers. The most animated discussion at the Business Meeting concerned where to have future meetings. All in all, there was a good blend of fun and learning. So, whether you were there or not, I hope to see you next year!

*Diane M. Meyer
Iowa State University*



The cast for the Murder Mystery



Region IV Members Jim Casey and Dave Lynch get involved in the murder.



New members are welcomed with a reception in their honor.



Chair's Corner

Hello, Region IV,

As I was preparing to write my first Chair's Corner newsletter, for some reason I was reminded of a novel I read at least 20 years ago and have not thought about since then. The main character is missing his arm at the elbow, and of course, people are always asking him what happened. He begins responding with "See what comes of biting your nails?" It's the best line in the book.

Though this character is missing an arm, he has several different "attachments" that do all kinds of cool things. In a poor analogy, I have discovered that Region IV is something like that. None of the many volunteers for the regional meetings or committees could do the whole thing by themselves, but they use cool tools—other members—to make sure the work is done. In this instance, none of us is complete without others. That's what makes for a strong region, and Region IV has that kind of strength. That strength, in turn, lends itself to the entire organization.

I am so glad to be serving as the Chair of Region IV this year. The region has done a lot for me, and I'm happy to have an opportunity to give back. I gave my first presentation at a regional meeting back around 1987. I was presenting with someone who actually knew what he was talking about, so it was a good way to try it out and start feeling more at ease in front of a group of people. I have done many presentations since then, but I had never had the opportunity to see first-hand how a regional meeting is put together until this year. It is an impressive feat, involving hundreds

of combined hours. Many people beyond the Program Committee were vitally important, and I'd bet that most who attended did a little something to help somewhere, even if just to give directions to the food! My heartfelt thanks, everyone.

So what happens now? Believe it or not, your Chair-elect, Sarah Streich, is already up to her eyeballs in planning the 2007 meeting where we will join Region III in Nashville. The Region IV Board of Directors is planning their summer meeting, and we are preparing for the Regional Leadership Meeting being hosted by the national board to bring board representatives from all of the regions to Washington to learn from each other. We will also begin working on the agenda for the regional business meeting that is held at the national meeting in November.

This all means that committees are being formed. Starting out on a committee is a great way to begin or extend involvement in NCURA. Most of them don't take a lot of time, and it gives you a chance to begin networking with your peers. Is there a committee or a task that appeals to you?

Membership Committee

Join Diane Meyer in making our new members feel welcome by assisting in calls and e-mails before the national meeting and possibly help with some new member activities at the meetings. At least two of the members of the committee must be new members themselves. Contact Diane at meyerd@iastate.edu for more

information.

Awards Committee

This committee is great for newcomers because it requires that at least one member be a research administrator with less than three years of experience, plus other members. Tamara Hill can tell you all about it. Contact Tamara at hilltv@ucmail.uc.edu.

Communications Committee

Karen Spear (kspear@clarian.org) is the chair of the Communications Committee this year, and Beth Seaton (b-seaton@wiu.edu) is the editor of the regional newsletter. This committee publicizes Region IV activities through the newsletter, provides articles for the national newsletter, and promotes activity to enhance professional development of Region IV members. Any and all takers are welcome, as the more help there is, the easier the burden on everyone.

Sarah will be looking for help with the Program Committee activities as she coordinates with Region III for the Nashville meeting. If you have an interest in a particular area or just want to be involved somehow, Sarah (s-streich@northwestern.edu) wants to talk with you!

If you have any suggestions or need help with something related to your membership in NCURA, please let me know. My e-mail address is barrett@rsp.wisc.edu.

Diane Barrett
University of Wisconsin–Madison

2006-2007 NCURA Region IV Communications Committee



Pam Vargas presents outgoing Chair, Heather Offhaus, with a gift from Region IV.



Outgoing Chair, Heather Offhaus, refuses to pass on her crown to Diane Barrett.

Karen Spear, Chair – Methodist Research Institute at Clarian Health Partners, Indianapolis, IN

kspear@clarian.org

Position Vacant, Co-Chair

Bill Sharp, Past Chair–University of Kansas

wsharp@ku.edu

Beth Seaton, Newsletter Editor – Western Illinois University

b-seaton@wiu.edu

Stephanie Gray, Webmaster – University of Wisconsin–Madison

sgray@rsp.wisc.edu

Working Group

Diane Barrett – University of Wisconsin–Madison

BARRETT@rsp.wisc.edu

Jeffrey Ritchie – Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee, WI

jeffrey.ritchie@aurora.org

Region IV Elects New Board Members

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The results of this spring's election results for new members of the Region IV Board of Directors were announced at the Spring Meeting. The results are as follows:

Chair Elect

Sara Streich, Northwestern University

Secretary

Michelle Meeks, Indiana University Medical Center

At Large Members

Jayne Tolle, University of Cincinnati

Robert Andreson, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Other Board Member

Christa Johnson, Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville

Returning board members include the following:

Chair

Diane Barrett, University of Wisconsin–Madison

Past Chair

Heather Offhaus, University of Michigan–Ann Arbor

Treasurer

Robert Aull, Indiana University Medical Center

At Large Members

Crystal Taylor-Nevils, University of Chicago

Tamara Hill, University of Cincinnati

NCURA Board of Directors, Region IV

James Casey, Cardinal Stritch University



Diane Barrett, Chair, Region IV