



VCU
Research Administration
Advisory Board

FALL 2022 SUMMARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Membership</i>	2
<i>Sponsors</i>	2
<i>Mission & Purpose</i>	3
<i>Fall 2022 Projects</i>	3
Institutional Base Salary for Research Appointments.....	4
challenges facing vcu ra community: Potential for shared services.....	5
<i>Looking Ahead</i>	6

MEMBERSHIP

Ezrah N. Medina, CRA, co-chair

*Assistant director, Grants & Contracts Accounting
Email: medinacn@vcu.edu*

Lydia E. Klinger, CRA, co-chair

*Project manager, Office of the Vice President for
Research and Innovation
Email: leklinger@vcu.edu*

Lisa Gagliano

*Grants administrator, Department of Psychology, College
of Humanities and Sciences
Email: lgagliano@vcu.edu*

Madrenna Horn

*Senior accountant, Grants and Contracts Accounting
Email: machorn@vcu.edu*

Heather Lennon, CRA

*Director of sponsored programs, College of Humanities
and Sciences
Email: hnlennon@vcu.edu*

Sabrina Lumpkin, MSG, CRA

*Special projects team leader, Division of Sponsored
Programs
Email: hises@vcu.edu*

Nancy Nicholson, MS

*Gamma team manager, Grants & Contracts Accounting
Email: nmnicholson@vcu.edu*

Danielle Quereshi

*Fiscal administrator, Ryan White Program, School of
Medicine
Email: danielle.quareshi@vcuhealth.org*

Juellisa Secosky, MSHA, CRA, CCRC

*Assistant director, clinical research finance administration,
Massey Cancer Center
Email: jasecosky@vcu.edu*

Ashley Tankesley

*Director of sponsored programs, College of Engineering
Email: actankesley@vcu.edu*

Candice Weber

*Associate director for research administration and
training, School of Medicine Central
Email: candice.weber@vcuhealth.org*

Melissa Yopp, MSHA

*Finance manager, Rehabilitation Research and Training
Center (RRTC), School of Education
Email: mayopp@vcu.edu*

SPONSORS

Tina Cunningham, J.D., CRA

*Associate Vice President of Research Administration, Office of the Vice President for Research & Innovation
Email: tlcunningham2@vcu.edu*

Javeria Kazi, CRA

*Director of Grants & Contracts Accounting, University Controller's Office
Email: kazij@vcu.edu*

Michael Newsome

*Senior Associate Vice President of Finance & Operations, Office of the Vice President for Research & Innovation
Email: manewsom@vcu.edu*

MISSION & PURPOSE

As the VCU research enterprise continues to grow, and cross-disciplinary research begins to play a larger role, adaptation will be necessary towards providing an infrastructure capable of supporting the changing environment. This includes not only the systems, policies, and procedures to effectively administer such levels of research activity, but also the growth of a culture that supports the professional development of research administrators with demonstrated paths of upward mobility.

To that end, the mission of the Research Administration Advisory Board (RAAB) is twofold. RAAB provides feedback, insight, and advice on a variety of initiatives, ideas, and action plans proposed by VCU research leadership. The advisory board also promotes the professional development of its membership through relationship building and collaboration. RAAB's unique contribution to the VCU research enterprise is its ability to deliver in depth analyses in an efficient and timely manner through the lens of those carrying out the day-to-day operations of research at VCU. This will ultimately help VCU support, retain, and grow its own research administration community.

FALL 2022 PROJECTS

Upon being formally established in August 2022, VCU research leadership solicited the insight and expertise of the Research Administration Advisory Board to provide input on two unique challenges facing the University's research enterprise. The first was the need to revise and operationalize the University's definition of Institutional Base Salary as it pertains to research appointments. The second was to better understand the challenges facing the VCU research administration community and what pathways and solutions should be developed to adequately address them. The sections below provide a detailed summary of each task and the recommendations made by the Advisory Board.

INSTITUTIONAL BASE SALARY FOR RESEARCH APPOINTMENTS

Over the summer semester of CY2022, it came to the attention of the Effort Reporting team, within VCU Grants & Contracts Accounting, that there was a need to revise the University's definition of Institutional Base Salary (IBS) as it pertains to research appointments.

Discrepancies were found in how salary and effort were being budgeted for sponsored projects compared to what was being charged to grants and certified in the effort system. While these minor differences could be solved on a case by case basis, addressing the root of the problem was the only viable solution for the long term.

To that end, the RA Advisory Board's input was sought to provide subject matter expertise as to which types of compensation should be considered IBS. Under consideration were supplementary compensation for various roles such as: chairmanship and board appointments, secondary job assignments, bonus compensation, and several others. After a thorough review of Uniform Guidance, specifically [2 CFR 200.430\(i\)](#), and consultation with RAAB, a new definition was created collectively by individuals representing the University Controller's Office, the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, and the VCU School of Medicine. The new definition, detailed below, will ensure that VCU is compliant with federal regulation.

IBS is the annual compensation set by VCU for an employee's primary job or appointment, whether that individual's time is spent on research, teaching, administration, patient care, or other activities. This includes supplemental pay for additional duties inextricably linked to a primary job. Examples include but are not limited to roles such as: department or division chair, center or institute director, committee chair, program director, and board appointments.

IBS may also include other non-VCU salaries for clinical faculty who receive compensation from VCU Board of Visitor approved sources such as: MCV Physicians Practice Plan or VCU Dental Care. Lastly, when 9-month faculty take on summer assignments that are inextricably linked to their primary 9-month appointments, this compensation is considered IBS. This includes 3-month, grant-funded, research appointments that occur over the summer semester.

VCU does not consider the following types of compensation as IBS: bonus pay, overload compensation (positions that are separate and in addition to an employee's primary role), and approved consulting external to VCU. Non-IBS compensation is not tracked in the University's Effort Reporting system, with the exception of those charged directly to sponsored programs.

Lastly, adjustments are underway to modify how RAMS-SPOT and ECC will pull salary data from Banner Finance to ensure alignment with the revised definition, and consistency in budgeted and charged effort. Updates will be communicated to the VCU RA Community once they are completed.

CHALLENGES FACING VCU RA COMMUNITY: POTENTIAL FOR SHARED SERVICES

With a growing research enterprise and a desire for sustainable growth, VCU research senior leadership is placing an increased emphasis on addressing the needs of the VCU RA community. To that end, the RA Advisory Board was approached to help outline the pain points associated with low staffing, frequent turnover, and employee burnout. Additionally, senior leadership was interested in envisioning a successful shared services model for research administration. Such an initiative is one of several ideas being considered to more fully support the VCU RA community. Below is a modified summary of the suggestions and input RAAB provided in response to these matters.

The RA Advisory Board feels strongly that a successful shared services model (SSM) would need two primary things: a director to oversee the program and staff and 5-8 full time staff hired solely to work in the SSM. To ensure their efficacy, these staff would need to be experienced research administrators who are knowledgeable on pre-award and post-award tasks, as well as VCU systems and processes. Once in place, work could begin to address the needs of the departments/units, which have been summarized below:

- **Pre-Award:** Due to the time-sensitive and deadline driven nature of pre-award work, a successful shared services model would need to have resources available during standard business hours. Additional support from leadership in enforcing the sponsored programs proposal submission deadline policy would mitigate burnout and improve proposal quality.
- **Post-Award:** Lack of adequate FTE and frequent turnover has resulted in post-award work becoming reactionary and problem solving focused. Over time, this can lead to significant compliance risks.
- **Training & Onboarding:** Current managers are overburdened with day-to-day tasks and do not have the bandwidth to adequately train and onboard new staff, especially with frequent turnover. Hands on training provided by the SSM team would add value to VCU research administration.

Collaboration is ongoing between RAAB and VCU research senior leadership to identify opportunities and pathways to holistically support the VCU RA community.

LOOKING AHEAD

Heading into 2023, the Advisory Board will continue to provide valuable input, strategic guidance, and substantive information and insight to VCU research leadership.

To be a valued partner in crafting a better future for the VCU research administration community, RAAB plans to begin the year by addressing two unique projects:

1. Quantifying risks associated with research administration staffing: RAAB will provide senior leadership with a report and/or presentation quantifying the risks associated with lack of adequate staffing, resources, and frequent staff turnover.
2. Training and onboarding: The advisory board will develop actionable strategies to address missed opportunities in the training & onboarding of new research administrators.

Updates will be given to the VCU RA community as progress is made. For additional information, please contact Lydia Klinger, leklinger@vcu.edu and Ezra Medina, medinacn@vcu.edu.