



1. What are your current responsibilities and what are the most challenging and/or most rewarding aspects of your current position?

My current role is Director, Research Development in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS) at the University of Melbourne, Australia. I've been in the role for 5 years and still have a spring in my step on the way to work. As context MDHS is the largest biomedical research faculty in Australia. There are over 1,500 academic staff, 4,000 honorary staff and 1,500 graduate researchers undertaking world class research across a wide range of health and social issues in diverse research settings.

Our team focuses on the strategic and operational management of research at the Faculty level. We provide policy and operational support to the Dean, Associate Dean (Research), Associate Dean (Research Training) and Heads of School. As a team we support academic and professional staff across the Faculty's schools, departments, centres and institutes in the areas of research development, research institute partnerships, grant mentoring, collaboration and funding, graduate research, research performance analytics and strategic initiatives. The most rewarding aspect of my current position is working with colleagues both within the University and with other colleagues who are focused on supporting academics in research excellence.

2. How and why did you become a research administrator?

I became a fully-fledged research administrator in 2006 whilst working at the Australian National University in Canberra. At the time, the Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Lawrence Cram recognized research administration as a growing area. He developed a year-long graduate/post-graduate program. Five of us became part of this program (three graduate and myself and another took up the post-graduate program). It was an exceptional experience that provided us with the opportunity to undertake secondments in different areas of research management. This one year program, coordinated by the Deputy Vice Chancellor's Office and the Research Office, included my undertaking placements in Office of Sponsored Research (working with College of Medicine, Biology and Environment and the College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences), College of Arts and Social Sciences Research Office, and the Office of Research Integrity. The program included my participation in the University Executive meetings and an extensive training program focusing on leadership, management, and communication. It was an incredible experience and opened my eyes to an exciting and important profession. In 2008, I undertook

a one month staff exchange program to the University of Melbourne Research Office. This program was supported the Group of Eight (a coalition of leading Australian universities intensive in research and comprehensive in general and professional education). My application was successful and provided me with an opportunity to understand how different institutions undertake research administration. The aim of my undertaking this exchange was to share information, compare and contrast policies and practices, and identify areas of ongoing collaboration and good practices in research management. Later in 2008, I was fortunate to be supported to attend the NCURA 50th anniversary; it was an exhilarating experience! Never before had I been in a room with over 2,500 research administrators – with this experience heightened by the grants.gov dance. The program was jam-packed with opportunities to learn, to meet new people, and to interact with people in a variety of areas. A highlight was also the tour of the National Institutes of Health. My experience at that annual meeting made me realize that I wanted to pursue a profession in research administration, and I haven't looked back! It was great to again attend the NCURA annual meeting in 2012. At that meeting I met the wonderful Denise Clark who has continued to be a point of inspiration and support.

3. What does NCURA currently provide that is the most helpful to you in your current position? What would you like NCURA to provide to be even more helpful to you and other research administrators outside the U.S.?

NCURA provides an incredible sense of community and support. I am constantly amazed and impressed at the generosity and support of NCURA members. In 2012, I undertook a one month project to examine the development and implementation of research strategy and good practices in research management at the University of British Columbia, the University of Washington in St Louis, and Vanderbilt University and I attended the NCURA annual meeting in D.C. I met with a number of people who were not only helpful when I met them at their institutions, but on hearing that I was attending NCURA, made the effort to catch up with me at the meeting – particular thanks to Michelle Vazin for her help, kindness and support at the annual meeting. Many thanks to everyone I met whilst undertaking this project, special thanks go to Evan D. Kharasch, Denise McCartney, Blake Fuhler, Christa Johnson, Teri Medley, Melanie Roewe, Bradley Castanho, Becky Evans, Bradley Evanoff, Kelle Moley, Clint Brown, Jennifer Taylor, John Childress, Libby Salberg, Carolyn Miller and Judy Nixon. A huge thank you goes to Mariellen Dennett who was instrumental in helping me coordinate the project from afar.

Collaborate is a fantastic resource that I should utilize more, and I can generally find an answer through the Collaborate community. The sense of support and community makes those days that are long seem easier. I also think the NCURA Magazine is a great resource and I am always pleased to see it arrive in my in-tray.

I'm biased, as I am currently the Chair of region VIII, the International Region, however I think members of this region offer a useful support to one another. In particular I have had the opportunity to work with Agatha Keller, Annika Glauner, Eva Bjorndal, Susanne Rahner, and Melinda Heronas we navigate Skype and the different time zones when having our committee meetings. Being on the organizing committee of the 1st International Region meeting in 2014 was a great highlight of mine.

4. What are some examples of strong international research collaboration at your institution and/or in your country?

My institution has extensive collaborations with the United States, Europe and Australasia in particular. By far the strongest research collaboration is with institutions in the U.S., and it is great to be able to utilize the NCURA network to help enable these collaborations.

5. What are the key issues and differences that an institution from a different country should be aware of when collaborating with your institution for the first time?

Being in a global age, we are available by e-mail theoretically all the time, but there are still time zone differences to keep in mind. Having a time zone calculator handy is helpful in scheduling meetings and phone calls. Another area to keep in mind is the need to work through intellectual property issues and the contract language. I have seen that it is possible for research administrators with the proper experience to help defuse potential issues in negotiating a contract and to alleviate IP concerns on both sides. In the end, I see that our work in collaboration is the path towards excellence in research for both collaborating parties.

6. What are the factors that have caused research administration to grow in your country? What are the main challenges for research administration in your country in the next 5 years?

We have seen that in the last 10 years, research administration has been a growing profession in Australia, and this has been supported through the Australasian Research Management Society (ARMS). Again, I am biased as I am currently on the ARMS Executive Board. ARMS has recently developed an accreditation program that includes 10 modules (launched in 2013). I was fortunate to be involved in the development of this program and co-wrote the pre-award module with a fantastic colleague, Tania Tambiah, at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. A total of 60 people have completed the program already.

7. What kinds of national research funding sources are available for universities from outside your country?

In general, the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council are the main funding sources, and non-Australian institutions are not eligible to apply directly. However, a non-Australian institution could partner with an Australian institution, and then the two could submit a joint application. At the University of Melbourne, we have worked closely with institutions outside of Australia in applying for and being successful in applications.

A great way to learn more about research administration in Australia is to attend the International Network on Research Management Societies (INORMS) conference that is being held in Melbourne in September 2016. I was fortunate to be involved in part of the successful bid to host INORMS in Melbourne and very much look forward to seeing you there!