

**Administrative Activities Review
Office of Research Administration (ORA)
August 2018**

I. Basic Facts and Description of the Unit

a. Mission & Goals

Mission:

ORA's mission is to provide pre- and post- award administrative services to the research enterprise of the University of Akron. ORA identifies key research opportunities; facilitates the submission of all sponsored programs proposals on behalf of the University; negotiates and executes agreements; manages all financial aspects of funded sponsored projects; provides grants management assistance to faculty, staff, and students; and works to ensure regulatory compliance in human and animal subjects, biohazard and radiation safety, export control, conflicts of interest, and responsible conduct of research.

Merged in July 2012, the combined pre- and post-award functions continue to operate as a one-stop destination for all business related to externally funded research and sponsored programs. The ORA operates as a team, on a single system completely integrated with UA financials, which has streamlined operations and increased overall efficiency.

ORA is part of UA's research enterprise (shown in blue in Figure 1) and interacts closely with Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) and University of Akron Research Foundation (UARF) under direction of the Vice President of Research. ORA serves the campus community (orange) through interactions through the Provost (including Finance Office), Office of General Council, as well as the Colleges and Faculty. ORA provides UA the major pre-and post-award administrations plus regulatory compliance. Proposals and awards are with external entities (green) including government agencies, foundations, non-profit organizations, and private companies. ORA manages contractual agreements between the external agencies and UA for research in the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, math) but also for creative activities related to the arts and pedagogical/educational studies.

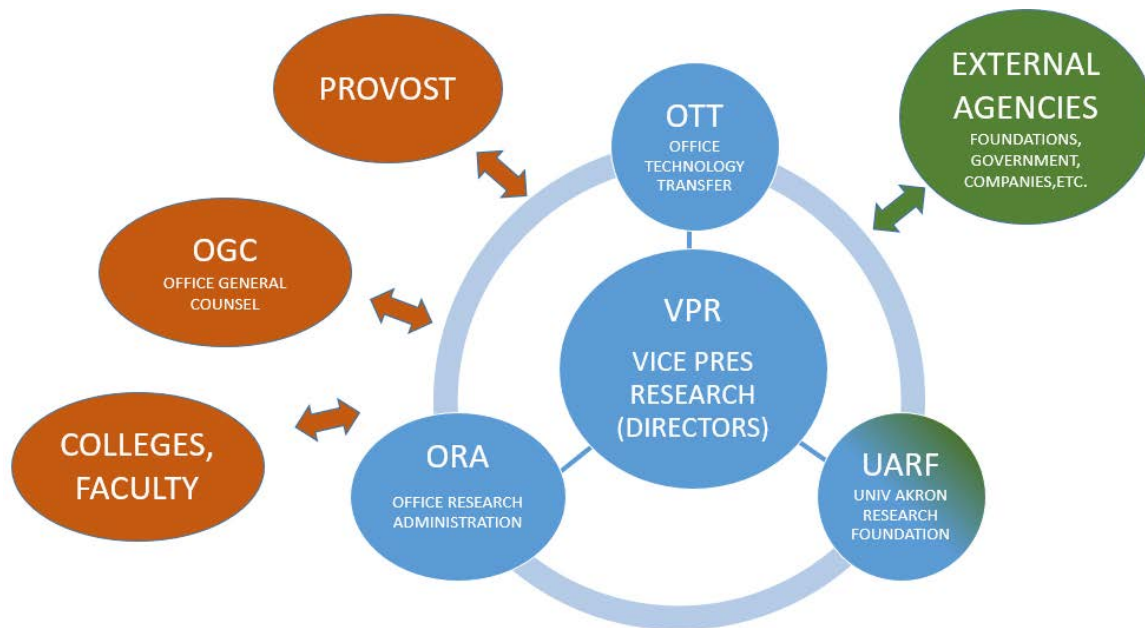


Figure 1. ORA (lower left of circle) interacts with UA's research enterprise (blue), UA campus organizations (orange) and external agencies (green)

Goals:

ORA's External Goals are

- To assist faculty and research investigators to submit research proposals that are competitive at the local, state, and national/international level.
- Accurately manage awarded research funding accounts in accordance with accepted accounting principles and within guidelines of funding agencies,
- Submit required reports to funding agencies accurately and on time,
- Manage compliance aspects of research (including time accountability, export control, and special requirements for human and animal use in research) to ensure UA maintains good standing for conduct of research and eligibility for applying for research funding.

To achieve these, ORA also has Internal Goals to

- Earn and hold trust of the faculty and leadership
- Build lasting relationships with both internal customers (including administration and faculty) and external customers (including sponsors)
- Excellence in service
- Increase the number and size of grant proposals
- Respect for the research enterprise and goals of the research community
- Understand the needs of the faculty and sponsors in order to come to a mutual agreement
- Emphasis on flexibility while ensuring regulatory compliance (especially in export control)

b. Services

Due to the broad scope of the mission of ORA, ORA provides a number of services to UA partners and to external customers. Critical partners, customers, performance and assessments of these services are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. ORA Services

Critical Partners	Customers/ End-Users	Key Performance Analysis	Brief Assessment
Pre-Award Research Administration			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty • HR • No overlap or duplication of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External sponsors • Faculty 	<p>Performance is based on faculty activity. In FY18, four FT employees handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 426 proposals • 244 awards • 85 extensions • 30 administrative changes, such as pre-awards and underwrites • Over 30 active subcontracts • Untracked activity: multiple reviews required of above activity; Letters of Intent, proposals not submitted or withdrawn, compliance mandates (i.e., NIH Just-in-Time requirements) 	<p>Strength: grace under pressure</p> <p>Challenge: frequent non-adherence to proposal deadline policy by investigators</p> <p>Opportunity: training and aids to assist faculty in seeking external funding</p>
Post-Award Research Administration			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty • Controller's Office: General Accounting, Purchasing • HR • Department admins • No overlap or duplication of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External sponsors • Faculty • Controller's Office 	<p>Performance is based on faculty activity. In FY18, six FT employees handled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 244 awards • 85 extensions • 30 administrative changes, such as pre-awards and underwrites • Over 30 active subcontracts • Thousands of journal lines reviewed and corrected for unallowable or incorrect charges • Billing sponsors 	<p>Strength: clean A-133 and agency audits</p> <p>Challenge: ability to adequately convey the importance of adhering to grant terms and conditions and compliance requirements to investigators</p> <p>Opportunity: training and aids to assist faculty and departmental admins in working with external funding</p>
Effort Certification			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty • Department admins • No overlap or duplication of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External sponsors • Federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx. 3,200 effort cards per period (3 periods per year) of which approx. 1,400 cards needs certified • Nearly 350 payroll adjustments for FY17 effort certification • Work with 56 effort coordinators in departments across campus 	<p>Strength: maintain compliance with federal regulations</p> <p>Challenge: electronic system is not aligned with other university functions; faculty do not like the program</p>

			Opportunity: upgrade the program; train faculty on its use
Compliance			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty Committee members (IRB, IACUC, Biohazards, Radiation Safety) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty External regulatory agencies of the federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 300 IRB protocols 51 IACUC protocols Less than ten Biosafety Committee protocols 	<p>Strength: strong committees</p> <p>Challenge: lack of formal documents for certain areas of compliance (such as Export Control and Responsible Conduct of Research)</p> <p>Opportunity: training and aids to assist UA community in ethical and responsible conduct.</p>
Communication (including reporting, social media, website, training)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications and Marketing IT 	<p>Internal: Anyone at UA interested in external research and sponsored programs funding</p> <p>External: Agencies, sponsors</p>	Links work and information is timely	<p>Strength: providing reliable data and information quickly (e.g., getting Nathan Mortimer information to support a modification of our bonds)</p> <p>Challenge: time required to remain current with changes across campus and with external funding and regulatory entities</p> <p>Opportunity: form partnership with Communications and Marketing office to collaborate and share information</p>

c. Resources

Personnel:

The last five years were a period of tremendous turnover. First, there were two different individuals who served as Vice President/Vice Provost of Research, and presently George Chase (STEM) and Philip Allen (Non-STEM) are serving as Research Directors. As UA prepares to search for a new president, it is difficult to search for a new Vice President of Research. This is an attempt to both provide the new president with a voice in hiring a new Vice President of Research and to provide cost savings at a time when our UA budget is under considerable financial pressure.

Two senior pre-award employees also retired in July 2018 (Director of Pre-award and Senior Grants Coordinator). Of the current post-award staff, only three were here in FY14, and, of those, one was a new employee. Of the current pre-award staff, two retirements in July 2018 (searches in progress) mean training two new employees in the next few weeks.

With external research and sponsored programs activity at its current level, Pre-Award (with the two vacancies filled) and Post-Award can be considered as fully staffed; however, Post-Award is also fully burdened. A significant increase in award activity or in additional unfunded mandates will lead to a request for an additional grant accountant position. Salaries for both Pre- and Post-Award staff continue to lag behind comparative salaries at our neighboring schools (KSU, NEOMED) which leads to morale concerns and a risk for high turnover rates.

Personnel		
Title	Key Functions/Description	FTE
Research Directors: George Chase and Philip Allen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-level oversight and support of UA research endeavor and research administration; serve as liaison between the Sr. VP/Provost and campus-wide constituencies (deans, faculty) in all matters concerning research and research compliance; work to effect positive change through strategic planning, policy development and implementation Signatory authority for research administration matters (such as contracts and other agreements) 	1
Assistant Vice President, Research Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversight of research administration operations, including funding opportunity dissemination; proposal submission and award administration; compliance with federal, state, local, and university regulations regarding sponsored research and other programs, protections of human and animal subjects in research, responsible conduct of research, and conflict of interest regulations; policy review and development, strategic planning, development/enhancement of partnerships with external organizations Signatory authority for both pre- and post-award (includes contracts, financial documents relating to research administration) 	1
Manager, Pre-Award Research Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform same duties as Sr. Grants Coordinator; in addition, oversight of pre-award research administration, including advising on issues regarding contracts, negotiations with external agencies, subcontracts, and with faculty; review award and subcontracts for acceptable terms and conditions and work with Office of General Counsel to resolve issues; manage workload of pre-award staff; develop and provide research administration training Signatory authority for pre-award (such as proposals, and award contracts relating to research administration) 	1
Manager, Fiscal Research Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform grant accounting administration duties the same as the grant accountants; in addition perform all Letter of Credit drawdowns and reconciliations; manage audits; and manage effort reporting Signatory authority for post-award (such as financial statements relating to grants and sponsored programs) 	1
Manager, Financial Research Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform grant accounting administration duties the same as the grant accountants; in addition, supervise post-award staff and oversight of post-award, including advising on issues with external agencies, subcontracts, and with faculty Signatory authority for post-award (such as financial statements relating to grants and sponsored programs) 	1
Sr. Grant Accountant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform grant accounting administration, which includes monitoring compliance with Federal and sponsor financial regulations; analyzing cost share; reconciliation and reporting of financial activity to sponsors; completing new and continuing award setups; investigating and correcting coding, keying, and other errors; analyzing and resolving deficits; performing award closeouts Also, facilitates training and cross-training of post-award jobs and duties, and conducts period-end analyses and diagnostics; uploads journals 	1
Grant Accountant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform grant accounting administration, which includes monitoring compliance with Federal and sponsor financial regulations; analyzing cost share; reconciliation and 	2

	reporting of financial activity to sponsors; completing new and continuing award setups; investigating and correcting coding, keying, and other errors; analyzing and resolving deficits; performing award closeouts	
Research Billing Systems Analyst	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsible for all invoicing of external research and sponsored programs sponsors, handling their invoice payments, and managing collections 	1
Sr. Grant Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance to faculty in the development and submission of proposals for external funding; assist with budget development; secure approvals and confirm sources of cost sharing; help resolve unusual requests and secure approvals; facilitate the negotiation and acceptance of awards from external sponsors; develop subcontracts and consultant agreements 	3
Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serves as ORA coordinator, managing hiring via Recruiting Solutions, managing equipment and repairs; maintaining ORA and UARV budgets, created and maintains UARV/IACUC Access database; OIEX lead; completes special projects as requested ▪ Serves as webmaster, maintaining website for ORA, IRB, IACUC, and the content that falls under the Research umbrella. Also, creates content ▪ Completes internal and external reporting as required and requested. Internal: Board of Trustees report, six times per year. External: NSF Expenditures Survey annually and NSF Facilities Survey every two years. Completes ad hoc reports and data requests 	1
Student Assistant – ORA/Pre-Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Serves as receptionist (greet visitors, answers main telephone line); performs clerical duties for IRB, Faculty Research Committee 	.5
Student Assistants – Post-Award (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perform as junior-level accountants, monitoring p-card purchases, travel, etc. for allowability; performing award setup 	1

Financials

General ORA and pre-award personnel are paid from the ORA operating account, 202710. Post-award personnel continue to be paid from the grant accounting account under the Controller's Office, 200211.

Travel has been discontinued, and supplies and services are kept to a bare minimum. New computers were able to be purchased for all of the staff in FY18 due to many reasons: our own frugality, providing very little financial backup to the animal facility, and the ever increasing reliance on electronic documents for both proposal submission and invoicing. (For example, the days of spending over \$10K annually on express shipping are long gone.)

Equipment and technology

Up-to-date computers and software (must be compatible with faculty, and external funding agencies)
Fax machine, because some external entities require this method of communication
Color scanner/printer/copiers
Network speed/capabilities
Electronic storage for large documents for the required retention period

Space

Polsky, suites 284 and 285. Approx. 6,600 sq. ft. Includes a lunch room, a conference room, copier/office supply room, storage room (which allows internal storage of files for the required retention period so no documents are moved to Archives for their retention period), and each

employee has an office with four solid walls and a door. Our current location with its State Street entrance, convenient parking, and the Roo Shuttle provides easy accessibility to those wishing to visit the ORA. However, being located away from central campus is a definite negative, and relocating to a comparable space nearer to those with whom we work is desirable.

II. Future Plans

a. Potential Changes

As noted above, ORA has consolidated grant pre-award and post-award groups for “one-stop shopping,” thereby increasing our overall efficiency. As illustrated in Figures 2-4 below, FY18 represented an important inflection point for ORA and UA in which both proposal amount (for both total dollars and anticipated indirect costs) and award amount (both total dollars and anticipated indirect costs) increased compared to FY17. The goal, then, is to maintain this upward trend in FY19 and beyond. This will likely require that we increase both the number of submitted proposals and the size of proposals in the future. An important strategy to meet this goal will be to increase the number of NIH R01 submissions and awards because this grant mechanism allows awards 5-7 times larger than the typical NSF award (although it will also be important to maintain the size of our successful NSF portfolio, as well). Thus, in the next five years, ORA will facilitate and strive to procure five, or more, NIH R01 awards (we presently have none). Once we have enough R01 awards, UA will then be much more competitive in NIH Center Grant applications (which have the potential to be more like the Corrosion Grant). Additionally, we will focus faculty on the importance of State and other Federal Contracts that allow larger total costs. This is crucial moving forward because it will allow the possibility of some 9-month salary support for faculty as well as tuition support for students—and both of these impact positively on the UA General Fund.

b. Trends

While Proposals and Awards have experienced a “positive inflection point” in FY18 relative to FY17 (see Figures below), Expenditures are still lagging—although it does take time for Awards to convert to expenditures, and this bodes well for expenditures because both the number of proposals and awards have increased.

PROPOSALS

FY16	Count	Total \$	Anticipated IDC \$	Anticipated Cost Share \$
Federal	276	\$ 95,484,206	\$ 27,400,188	\$ 2,357,232
State	35	\$ 9,231,378	\$ 413,787	\$ 829,608
Local	11	\$ 207,182	\$ 15,713	\$ 899
Corporate	174	\$ 5,861,764	\$ 1,247,379	\$ 23,263
NonProfit	89	\$ 8,026,180	\$ 1,145,991	\$ 680,420
Other*	8	\$ 2,229,083	\$ 436,630	\$ 337,286
Total	593	\$ 121,039,793	\$ 30,659,688	\$ 4,228,708

FY17	Count	Total \$	Anticipated IDC \$	Anticipated Cost Share \$
Federal	288	\$ 91,464,152	\$ 26,250,111	\$ 2,266,330
State	23	\$ 4,279,937	\$ 99,701	\$ 2,992,221
Local	11	\$ 223,122	\$ 1,740	\$ -
Corporate	95	\$ 3,027,687	\$ 435,075	\$ 75,000
NonProfit	78	\$ 3,999,572	\$ 162,221	\$ 163,459
Other*	6	\$ 625,824	\$ 196,935	\$ 129,112
Total	501	\$ 103,620,294	\$ 27,145,782	\$ 5,626,122

FY18	Count	Total \$	Anticipated IDC \$	Anticipated Cost Share \$
Federal	265	\$ 109,118,289	\$ 31,715,230	\$ 1,506,177
State	37	\$ 7,590,273	\$ 477,153	\$ 3,563,252
Local	8	\$ 174,220	\$ 5,697	\$ -
Corporate	61	\$ 6,391,168	\$ 1,594,230	\$ -
NonProfit	53	\$ 3,601,566	\$ 211,885	\$ 172,470
Other*	2	\$ 547,447	\$ 176,116	\$ 32,994
Total	426	\$ 127,422,962	\$ 34,180,311	\$ 5,274,893

Figure 2. Proposal activity for fiscal years 2016-2018

AWARDS

FY16	Count	Total \$	Anticipated IDC \$	Anticipated Cost Share \$
Federal	135	\$ 18,828,117	\$ 4,413,166	\$ 562,787
State	23	\$ 7,403,985	\$ 323,388	\$ 653,968
Local	9	\$ 104,990	\$ -	\$ -
Corporate	171	\$ 4,814,612	\$ 1,135,162	\$ -
Other*	85	\$ 5,509,437	\$ 1,090,224	\$ 272,954
Total	423	\$ 36,661,141	\$ 6,961,940	\$ 1,489,709

FY17	Count	Total \$	Anticipated IDC \$	Anticipated Cost Share \$
Federal	126	\$ 14,133,119	\$ 3,742,260	\$ 736,217
State	21	\$ 3,429,959	\$ 210,929	\$ 244,568
Local	16	\$ 242,407	\$ -	\$ -
Corporate	100	\$ 2,211,725	\$ 416,048	\$ -
Other*	73	\$ 2,962,398	\$ 308,877	\$ 374,202
Total	336	\$ 22,979,609	\$ 4,678,114	\$ 1,354,987

FY18	Count	Total \$	Anticipated IDC \$	Anticipated Cost Share \$
Federal	112	\$ 16,309,029	\$ 4,114,664	\$ 451,243
State	22	\$ 5,983,433	\$ 203,535	\$ 5,013,350
Local	11	\$ 171,213	\$ 6,792	\$ -
Corporate	59	\$ 4,429,948	\$ 1,088,217	\$ 75,000
Other*	40	\$ 1,247,596	\$ 79,207	\$ 107,874
Total	244	\$ 28,141,220	\$ 5,492,414	\$ 5,647,467

Figure 2. Awards activity for fiscal years 2016-2018

EXPENDITURES

FY16	Total \$	Actual IDC \$	Actual Cost Share \$
Federal	\$ 24,231,137	\$ 3,390,938	\$ 807,486
State	\$ 11,151,334	\$ 597,760	\$ 2,309,985
Local	\$ 547,435	\$ 6,757	
Corporate	\$ 4,224,247	\$ 644,913	\$ 125,782
Other*	\$ 13,559,162	\$ 698,449	\$ 771,209
Total	\$ 53,713,316	\$ 5,338,817	\$ 4,014,462

FY17	Total \$	Actual IDC \$	Actual Cost Share \$
Federal	\$ 14,143,643	\$ 3,090,896	\$ 866,821
State	\$ 9,778,462	\$ 510,750	\$ 2,627,143
Local	\$ 528,743	\$ 42,535	
Corporate	\$ 3,958,685	\$ 678,365	\$ 57,866
Other*	\$ 13,359,761	\$ 732,308	\$ 1,249,540
Total	\$ 41,769,295	\$ 5,054,855	\$ 4,801,370

FY18	Total \$	Actual IDC \$	Actual Cost Share \$
Federal	\$ 11,546,009	\$ 2,720,864	\$ 212,064
State	\$ 6,016,853	\$ 401,893	\$ 977,551
Local	\$ 221,738	\$ 15,011	\$ 7,798
Corporate	\$ 4,762,779	\$ 953,413	\$ 116,440
Other*	\$ 13,286,946	\$ 607,658	\$ 913,210
Total	\$ 35,834,325	\$ 4,698,839	\$ 2,227,062

Figure 4. Expenditure activity for fiscal years 2016-2018