

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

Context

- The number of sponsored awards dollars per research administration FTE is low compared to peer institutions.
- Current research administration business processes at KU do not always fully leverage local expertise or authority.
- Research processes at KU underutilize technology and as a result many are overly manual, lack transparency, and are difficult to evaluate from an efficiency perspective.
- Generally, central (KUCR) pre-award processes are functioning better than post-award processes, although potential gains in efficiency exist in both areas.

Goals

- Seek to better utilize strong local expertise to alleviate central workload and potentially provide a higher level of service to customers.
- Strengthen KUCR operations, processes, and overall effectiveness (particularly on the post-award side).
- Pursue system improvements that allow administrators to work more efficiently.
- Strengthen the caliber of research administration at KU by increasing skills and retaining top performers.

Challenges

- Effective change management is a major factor in successfully implementing the recommendations posed in the business case.
- Within KUCR fear exists regarding holding local units more accountable for compliance as local support currently has variable skill sets and conflicted reporting relationships.
- The requirement of a high level of cross-functional collaboration to implement potentially the most impactful recommendations presents a major challenge.
- Elements such as a defined leader, clear executive support, financial resources, and a clear and defined implementation plan pose significant challenges to successful implementation.

Opportunities

- The expected benefits of implementing research administration improvements are process-related and are achievable through:
 - Increased effectiveness in serving KU's research customers both at a local and central level
 - Better utilization of technology leading to more efficient and transparent services to customers
 - Minimal compliance risk to the University
 - Potentially reduced overall cost of the research administration enterprise at KU with minimal disruption to customer service.