



# Howard University

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## Research Administrative Services Update

*June 2011*

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# Where We Began

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- ❑ **Dr. Bonner started her sabbatical at the end of August 2010.**
  - ❑ **CFO's office assumed responsibilities of Research Administrative Services ("RAS") – September 2010.**
  - ❑ **Shared Service model was reviewed and approved by the President – September 2010.**
  - ❑ **Assessment of current processes, staff and deliverables was conducted – September/October 2010:**
    - Staff for pre- and post-award services were located in 4 different buildings across the campus;
    - Processes were mostly manual;
    - PeopleSoft was not optimized – grant module(s) were not deployed or set-up to maximize reporting capability;
    - Different processes were used for Health Sciences vs. Academic Affairs;
    - Staff were not trained appropriately and some lacked the basic required skills;
    - There was no effective coordination with other key functions (e.g. purchasing, hiring, legal); and
    - There was no periodic reporting - financial information was not understood, and accounting processes were slow, inaccurate and lacked basic controls.
  - ❑ **Design of the shared service model was rolled-out to the research administrators in a Town Hall Meeting – November 2010.**
  - ❑ **Improvement plans were developed for each supporting function (financial reporting, operations support, communications/training and compliance – November 2010.**
  - ❑ **The Responsibility Matrix was developed and reviewed with research leaders - approved by Audit & Legal Committee in January 2011.**
  - ❑ **Research leaders from AA and HS requested that regulatory compliance come under their authority – this was transferred in January 2011.**
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# Where We Are

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## □ *Priority I - Correcting Cumbersome Process and Approval Issues*

- We are utilizing PeopleSoft functionality to facilitate better reporting and storage of all grant and contract-related information (e.g. important deliverables for each grant and all proposals from 2010 forward have been uploaded in PeopleSoft and are readily accessible by all RAS team members and research leaders and their direct reports.)
  - We are in the pilot phase of implementing DocuSign software – which allows us to electronically route all grant-related documents to ensure all signatures are received and material is not lost. This also reduces the time required to set-up a grant in People Soft – eliminating the delays from office-to-office, various routing issues, etc. The roll-out to the entire PI community will be by the end of June.
  - We have provided research executives (and their direct reports) access to the grant modules so they can view all grant information. We have also provided training sessions to the direct reports on how to view, run queries on the information, and understand what data is available to them as a management tool.
  - We have embedded an OTM and Strategic Sourcing professional in RAS to help facilitate matters relating to hiring and purchasing. In addition, we are working with Legal to ensure that contracts are reviewed on a timely basis. This process has seen great improvement in AA, as reviews normally took 90-120 days, now take approximately 10 days. HS reviews have and continue to take several months. Legal will actively search for an attorney in fiscal 2012 to be embedded in RAS to alleviate this delay. Finally, Legal has provided an external consultant that is available every other week to advise faculty on intellectual property and technology transfer.
  - We have worked with AA to develop grant and contract training sessions for faculty and administrators; working on updating/improving the training modules and utilizing “blackboard” as an electronic tool to help deliver the exams.
  - We are developing a SharePoint site to support an electronic PI forum to log all issues and responses - will be available when the faculty return this fall. This will give RAS an archiving and calendar tool, provide a “versioning” function which will allow for direct feedback on proposals (track changes), drafting of policies, etc.
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# Where We Are

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## ❑ ***Priority I - Correcting Cumbersome Process and Approval Issues (continued)***

- We have initiated monthly reporting to maintain accountability.
- We have investigated three (with one to go) front-end systems to facilitate proposal development, review and submission.

## ❑ ***Priority II - Scrub Data Sets to Ensure Integrity of Information Used to Measure and Manage Grant Activity***

- We have cleaned up approximately 70% of all data. We had to suspend the remediation effort in May/June due to budget constraints. Work continues internally but it is slow given all the other activity and needs of the customers.
- We have created checklists for each analyst to ensure that proper procedures are followed and signed-off a daily, weekly, monthly basis. This provides the discipline needed to ensure analysts are successful in managing a grant/contract. In addition, the checklists provide greater visibility to their activities which allows us to identify skill gaps and develop a focused and personalized training plan for each analyst.
- We are developing a dashboard to track certain performance metrics. These metrics will be analyst-specific as well as function-specific – ranging from how many proposals were submitted to an agency on time with no errors, to how many invoices were submitted on time and with no errors.

## ❑ ***Priority III - Collect All Monies that are Due to Howard***

- We are working with Oracle to identify solutions to the difficulties caused by how our system had been set-up. The original set-up inhibited efficiency and accuracy in the billing process. Given that we are in the middle of a PeopleSoft upgrade – some solutions will be rolled into the upgrade. Others will be outside of the upgrade – based on urgency/need for accuracy of reporting.
  - Collection activity has improved measurably as four analysts were hired in the financial support area to review, correct and ensure billing and reporting accuracy going forward. This project is also aligned with the data integrity project.
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# Where We Are

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- ❑ ***Priority III - Collect All Monies that are Due to Howard (continued)***
    - We have improved receivables by \$8 million since June 2010 and we have collected more than we have billed on a year-to-date basis.
    - We met with many of the agencies regarding question cost issues from prior year audits and have reconciled most. Given our outreach efforts with the agencies and our commitment to better reporting – NSF is re-evaluating whether we can resume “draw-down” status. NIH and the DC Government just completed site visits. We are awaiting their official reports but their initial feedback was very positive on the improvements made to date, our plan for improvements going forward and the shared service model.
  - ❑ ***Priority IV - Fully Staff and Co-Locate to the Central Campus***
    - The RAS group was co-located in late April. They are identifying improvements within each of their teams and working effectively together.
    - The co-location has allowed us to better align analysts to schools/colleges, projects and sponsors.
    - There is less paper-flow and loss of material due to multiple locations and manual processes.
    - There is better coordination of time and effort.
    - We have eliminated duplicative processes.
    - PIs no longer have to travel to 4 different campus buildings to deal with the administration of their grant.
    - Given the central campus location – PIs and the RAS team are able to meet on a regular basis.
  - ❑ ***Priority V - Implement A-133 Compliance Checks Monthly***
    - Checklists and monthly processes have been developed by Bobby Young and Maisha Williams of the Risk Control function to assure we are meeting expectations.
  - ❑ ***Priority VI - Implement an Automated Effort Report System Across Howard***
    - We are currently fulfilling our effort reporting requirement on a manual basis.
    - The system we were to deploy has been delayed due to current year budget constraints. Will begin this work after July 1, 2011.
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# Where Do We Go From Here

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- We will continue to implement process improvements as identified through this report and embedded in action plans for each RAS leader.
  - By the end of the calendar year we expect to take advantage of the PeopleSoft upgrade to provide better functionality in the areas of invoicing, tracking project charges, ease of reporting, etc.
  - We will work with the established University Policy Committee and research executives to update all research policies.
  - We intend to refine the research web-site so that it can be more effectively utilized by internal (faculty, administrators) and external (agencies) customers.
  - We will continue to train and upgrade the skills of RAS analysts.
  - We need better coordination between AA and HS regarding wants, needs and operating practices to avoid unnecessary duplication.
  - We are striving for a clean A-133 audit. The only impediment we still need to address is effort certifications from the HS faculty.
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