

Infor al politics involves social and personal interactions between individuals. It creates alliances and advances individual goals and ideas. Infor al politics create interactions between individuals in everyday life situations

conductin research and the ad inistration of the research can so eti es end up creatin infor al politics and put research ad inistrators and rincipal Investi ators (Is on a collision course. So eti es these situations start lively conversations and can lead to an “us and the ” attitude etween a central office, the I, and

depart ental ad inistration his “us and the ” personalities. So eti es those personalities create a reputation of ein difficult with which to work. owever, no matter the reputation, their passion is evident the inute they start to talk a out the science. Is have a azin visions for their science and it is inspirin to hear a I talk to a pro ra

officer a out the scope of work and how it has pro ressed, particularly when it is clear their initial vision is eco in a reality. Often ti es the same. Is who are e cited and ani ated when e plainin the evolution of their science have a hard ti e navi atin the financial ana e ent of the award. his can e especially true if fundin for the visions ca e fro different sponsors. he I ay have reat success workin with various cohorts and yet is una le to work well with the central office or depart ental ad inistration. Infor al politics enters the i with each roup tryin to do their jobs while attainin the same goal.

The research administrator is complying with the terms and conditions of the sponsored project, and also helping the PI with budgets, compliance issues, submitting federal financial reports, and receiving reimbursements. The PI just wants to conduct the science, which sometimes doesn't fit into the institutional framework or terms and conditions of the award. It is crucial to remember where expertise lies: research administration has the financial expertise in administrative aspects of the award and the PI has the expertise in the science and research.

These inherent differences in viewpoints can make it hard for research administrators to do their jobs. Research is not always performed in a manner a research administrator would deem systematic. There can often be a struggle between the PI and the research administrator over the specific expenditures of a sponsored project, differentiating expenditures and a PI's time and effort across several projects that have the same scope of work and similar outcomes is often frustrating, and time-consuming for both the scientist and the research administrator.

The PI may not see projects as separate awards, but as a conglomerate of research to reach a desired goal of a single overarching project. The funding agency may or may not agree that is why separate modifications or different grants are issued, even though the work may be continuous.

Sponsors also have their own informal political agendas affected by current trends that cause further consternation for the PI and central administration. Funding for certain areas of science such as climate change may be more prevalent than funding for other areas of science. In situations like this, the research administrator should be adequately versed to help the PI find additional funding opportunities within the preferred area of study. The sponsor may also implement changes in the scope of work or the time frame of the award. The PI may be frustrated with the discrepancies in what is required while pursuing their research. The research administrator should be able to bridge the gap between the sponsor's priorities and a PI's research needs.

Bridging this gap is not often easy. It requires incorporating knowledge of federal, state, and local regulations, knowledge of generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), plus a grasp of the issues that guide the agency's informal politics and priorities.

Research administration usually consists of many areas, whereas the PI doesn't. The key areas within research administration can cause little

speed bumps that quickly turn into huge roadblocks. The simple question of "is this expenditure allowable?" usually goes from a straight forward "yes or no" to "it depends" or "maybe." Justification for the "maybe" or "it depends" can lead to a whole new set of questions. Changing the "it depends" back to a "yes or no" is often stressful and time-consuming. Diplomacy is used to create a consistent and applicable audit trail to ensure the expenditures can be billed to the sponsor. If a "yes" cannot be reasonably reached while ensuring compliance, then it's important to explain why the expenditure is a "no" and resolve the expenditure to unrestricted funding. This may increase differences of informal politics within the university, but it assures compliance with the sponsor.

It is also the research administrator's job to help create the audit trail. Hearing an auditor's hat is a helpful way to approach this good rule of thumb question. If the answer isn't clear, then ask more questions. The department or the PI should be able to explain why the charge is allowable and applicable on the sponsored project. Furthermore, the research administrator's job is to clarify and obtain adequate documentation.

The research administrator needs to connect dots within the audit trail that would be obvious to the researcher but not so much to an auditor (or anyone else for that matter). For example, a sponsored project may have budget for travel to Antarctica to study ice cores, but the PI is planning a trip to Florida to study anaerobic bacteria. Clarification from the PI and documenting it in the audit trail is the job of the research administrator. The research administrator must document the correlation and justification between the two and if there is a logical reason to change the trip to Florida, then it would likely be an allowable charge on the award.

Another example: the project allows the institution to purchase a computer for a graduate student working on the project, but the computer is purchased in the last week of the award. There must be documentation that shows the direct benefit to the sponsored project of purchasing a computer in the last week of the award. Knowing the political climate of the department, coupled with institutional knowledge and the goals of the sponsor, will help to navigate through these various areas.

Often times when a research administrator is asked what they do conversation tends to slow