

NORDP News is a bi-annual publication of the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP)

[www.nordp.org](http://www.nordp.org)

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## Join us in Austin for the 5th Annual NORDP Conference!



"I am so glad I went to the Research Development conference and that NORDP exists. The conference was incredibly well organized and the most useful conference I have ever been to, both in terms of content and in terms of networking and contacts. Terrific job!"

That's what one NORDP Member had to say about last year's Research Development conference! **Join us on May 13-15, 2013 for NORDP's 5th Annual Research Development Conference in Austin, Texas!** Network with colleagues, find out what's happening with the funding agencies, learn about new and best practices in research development, hear

inspiring keynote speakers, and enjoy the sights and sounds of "the Live Music Capital of the World." Visit [www.nordp.org/annual-conference](http://www.nordp.org/annual-conference) to register!

Barbara Walker (UC Santa Barbara) and Jacob Levin (UC Irvine) are co-chairing a tireless Conference Committee, and planning is well underway for another outstanding conference. We are delighted to be hosting our event at the Hyatt Regency, a four diamond hotel set on the shores of Lady Bird Lake in downtown Austin.

According to evaluations of last year's conference, networking ranked highly among benefits of attending the conference.

One NORDP member said: "The most valuable part of my participation in the conference was meeting people and networking; getting a feel for the expanse of what RD means, and how it differs by institution." Another said: "I learned a lot about inter and multi-disciplinary research. I met numerous colleagues both nationally and regionally who will be valuable contacts as I (and my institution) grow in the research development field."

Three keynote speakers are confirmed for Austin, Drs. Alicia Abella, Susan Fitzpatrick, and Brad Fenwick.

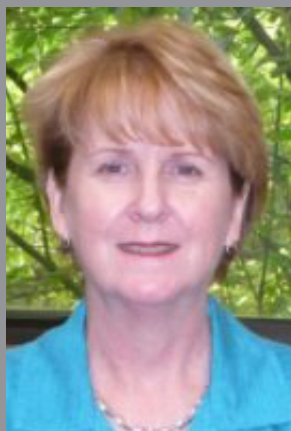
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Photo: Stevie Ray Vaughan Memorial

## President's Corner

By Ann McGuigan, Ph.D.



“Research development attracts those of us who at our core possess the ability to be nimble, to see the big picture, to know the importance of the small details, and to respond to rapidly changing conditions.”

Welcome to the Winter/Spring 2013 edition of the NORDP News.

NORDP will be holding its 5th annual conference in May. It's hard to believe that just six years ago, we were individual research development professionals in search of a community, trying to explain to colleagues and friends what we did for a living. Little did we realize that six years later, we would not only have a vocabulary (see the feature on page 8) but we would also have a network of over 500 research development friends that spans 44 states, Washington DC, Puerto Rico and 8 countries.

Our profession is growing and developing because individual research development professionals are continuing to grow and develop. Research development attracts those of us who at our core possess the ability to be nimble, to see the big picture, to know the importance of the small details, and to respond to rapidly changing conditions. And the way that we sustain our nimbleness is by continuing to learn new skills and develop new strengths that allow us to navigate the continuously shifting federal and private funding environments.

That nimbleness also guides us as an organization. At our board retreat, we spent much of our time deliberating about what is next for NORDP. We want our organization to grow and evolve alongside its members. One approach: we will be expanding the organizational structure of NORDP to allow greater participation of

our membership. Specifically, we will be transitioning from relying on our three working groups, Enhancing Research Collaboration, Effective Practices & Professional Development and External Engagement, to a more formalized standing committee structure with more committees that will allow more opportunities for member's to participate in the growth of our organization. Our hope is that these new opportunities for engagement will help you to expand your personal networks and give you access to more resources.

Another terrific way to develop new skills and strengths, of course, is to attend our annual meeting – this year in Austin,

Texas. As Barbara Walker notes, this meeting will be ripe with opportunities for networking, skill building, and information gathering. Most important, though, is that we have built this conference around your feedback. On behalf of the NORDP Board, I invite you to gather with us in the friendly city of Austin for three days of panels, workshops, and development opportunities, all designed to keep you flexible, strong, and creative. We hope to see you there!

**Ann McGuigan, Ph.D.**  
President, NORDP  
Assistant Vice President,  
Research Development,  
Texas A&M University

*Research development: a career for the future. Pictured: Rachel Krzesinski, daughter of past NORDP President Holly Falk-Krzesinski.*





## 2013 NORDP Conference (cont.)



**Dr. Alicia Abella** is Executive Director of the Innovative Services Research Department at AT&T Labs, where she manages a group of multi-disciplinary technical staff specializing in data mining, user interfaces, IPTV, mobile services, and SIP/VoIP technology. Dr. Abella has been honored with numerous awards and distinctions, including the AT&T Science and Technology Medal award in 2008, the 2008 Hispanic Engineers National Achievement Award for Outstanding Technical Achievement, and the 2010 Women of Color STEM Conference Pioneer Award for contributions solving the educational challenges facing the Hispanic Community. She was appointed to President Obama's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics in 2011. She is widely recognized as a national force in increasing the pool of women and minorities in science. Dr. Abella holds a Ph.D. in computer science from Columbia University, a M.S. in computer science from Columbia University and a B.S. in computer science from New York University.

We also welcome a return visit from **Dr. Brad Fenwick**, Senior Vice President for Global



Strategic Alliances at Elsevier. His keynote will focus on his work with the Research Universities Futures Consortium and *The Current Health and Future Well-Being of the American Research University* report. Dr. Fenwick formerly held executive roles such as Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and Vice President for Research at Virginia Tech. In 2011, he was named a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for distinguished contributions in the field of veterinary and comparative medicine, scientific association leadership, editorial review, and research program development and administration. He completed his B.S. (Biology), D.V.M., and M.S. at Kansas State University and his Ph.D. (Comparative Pathology) and residency (Diagnostic Pathology) at the University of California, Davis.

**Dr. Susan Fitzpatrick**, Vice President of the James S. McDonnell Foundation, will also be giving a keynote presentation in Austin. The McDonnell Foundation is one of a limited number of international grant-makers supporting university-based research in

the biological and behavioral sciences through foundation-initiated programs via competitive, peer-review proposal processes. Fitzpatrick lectures and writes on issues concerning applications of neuroscience to clinical problems, the role of private philanthropy in the support of scientific research, and on issues related to the public dissemination of and understanding of science. Dr. Fitzpatrick is president of the board of the Association of Women in Science, on the board the Ontario Brain Institute and is a past member of the board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Fitzpatrick received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Neurology from Cornell University Medical College (1984) and pursued post-doctoral training with *in vivo* NMR spectroscopic studies of brain metabolism in the Department of Molecular Biochemistry and Biophysics at Yale University.

The Conference Program Committee, led by Alicia Knoedler (University of Oklahoma), received over 75 proposals for conference sessions. The Program Committee is busy reviewing and organizing sessions into three different tracks that will cover the range of expertise among our NORDP members:

• **Early Career Track** activities will be for individuals who may not yet be familiar with the full breadth and depth of research development. This track also targets our members who are coming from research administration, who might need more expertise about the nuances of working with faculty as creative colleagues, rather than as control points and gate-keepers.

• **Senior Track** will be for intermediate to senior research development professionals, and will cover more advanced proposal development topics.

• **Strategic Track** will focus on strategic elements of research development, such as the role it plays in university policy, challenges to changing campus culture, strategic initiative planning, designing and implementing new programs related to research development, and addressing significant research issues (e.g., diversity, broader impacts, tenure policies that are roadblocks to collaboration, incentives for interdisciplinary team research, etc.)

We expect to hold over 30 different sessions during the conference – including panel presentations and discussion group sessions. The conference will also feature information and demonstration sessions led by our sponsors.

### How can you get involved?

- Register for the conference and start planning your trip to Austin! Visit [www.nordp.org/annual-conference](http://www.nordp.org/annual-conference).

- If you need financial assistance to attend the conference, we will be offering a limited number of scholarships. Visit [www.nordp.org](http://www.nordp.org) for more information.

- Volunteer to help at the conference! Contact Susan Carter at [scarter3@ucmerced.edu](mailto:scarter3@ucmerced.edu) if you would like to volunteer.

## Current NORDP member statistics

Member count:  
493

Countries  
represented: 8

States  
represented:  
44 plus  
Washington DC  
and Puerto Rico

Members with a  
PhD: 193

Average years in  
Research  
Development: 9

# Member Transitions & Announcements



“When I finished my postdoctoral fellowship at the Hebrew University, I knew two things: I wanted to return to the States

and I wanted to get out of the lab,” says **Erin M. Bank, Ph.D.**, Research Development Specialist in the Research Development Office at University of California San Francisco. Serendipitously, upon moving to San Francisco last year, she met a woman associated with the new Research Development Office at UCSF. She was hired on a contract basis to add bandwidth to the developing office and quickly found a niche in the development of large, complex grant proposals. “I love interacting with scientists during the creative process that goes into writing a grant. I am now a permanent member of the office and look forward to discovering where this new career path will take me.”

**Anthony Carpi, Ph.D.**, took on the position of Associate Provost for the Advancement of Research at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in August 2012. Dr. Carpi is an environmental scientist who has spearheaded multiple efforts to professionalize faculty and student research in STEM disciplines at John Jay and now will apply this experience college-wide.

**A. Susan Clarke, MA, MA, LPC**, has been promoted from Grants Development Specialist to Assistant Director for Re-

search Development at Loyola Chicago.

**Jeannie Kim-Han, MA, GPC**, moved from being the Director of Research Development at California State University, Fullerton to being the Special Assistant to the President at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Part of her new job is to identify funding opportunities appropriate for discipline-based or institutional level activities as it relates to the president’s agenda. She provides leadership in coordinating the partnerships, facilitating idea development and helps writing the proposal as necessary.



**Gretchen L. Kiser, Ph.D.**, has enthusiastically taken on the challenge of developing a new Research Development

Office for University of California San Francisco. Dr. Kiser and her team are developing several new research resources while folding-in existing support programs, all to promote, support, strengthen, and grow the research enterprise at UCSF. Currently, UCSF’s resources include: 1) the Resource Allocation Program, managing the dissemination, submission, review and award of intramural funding of close to \$5M annually, 2) the Limited Submission Program, managing the dissemination, solicitation and selection of proposals for limited submission funding opportunities, 3) facilitated

team-building activities to foster innovation and scientific collaborations between internal and external research teams, and 4) proposal development for large, multi-investigator project grants. She is also actively engaged with campus partners to support faculty and student development, strategic planning, stronger government relations, and more efficient grant preparation.

**Jacob Levin, Ph.D.**, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Development, at University of California, Irvine, has been elected a AAAS Fellow “for helping establish the emerging profession of research development and or outstanding leadership in the National Organization of Research Development Professionals.” In addition to this being an exciting accomplishment for Dr. Levin, it’s an honor for NORDP, too! “This really goes to show the level of legitimacy [research development] has achieved in the scientific community.”



**Suzanne M. Lodato, Ph.D.**, had eight years of experience as a grantmaker with a private foundation and the federal

government, and knew faculty and staff at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) through her grantmaking. She was recruited to IUB in mid-2009 as part of a broader effort by the Vice Provost for Research to develop a professional research



development staff. In fall 2011, the Vice Provost started a formal Proposal Development Services unit, and she became part of that team, which assists not only with proposal submission, but strategic research development as well.

On October 15, 2012, **Kevin McCannon** began working as Grant Officer at the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation and the Institute for Educational Research and Public Service at The University of Kansas, where he facilitates and administers grant proposal development by leading project teams to complete cohesive grant proposal submissions and meet deadline objectives, and identifies new funding opportunities specifically targeting faculty and center strengths and expertise. His duties include creating an efficient proposal process, and developing functional databases, templates, and forms that streamline and ensure consistent proposal development. This was a newly created position.

**Jasmin Patel** recently began a new new position as Director for Research Program Development at the University of Chicago.

In January, **J.C. Ross** joined the Smithsonian's National Science Resources Center in a new position that is a hybrid of research development and grant writing. This is their science education arm, which is staffing up to grow its work developing innovative curriculum (it has a \$10 million Department of Education grant and is running test sites in three states), and training teachers through their summer academies, which brings K-12 teachers to the Smithsonian to

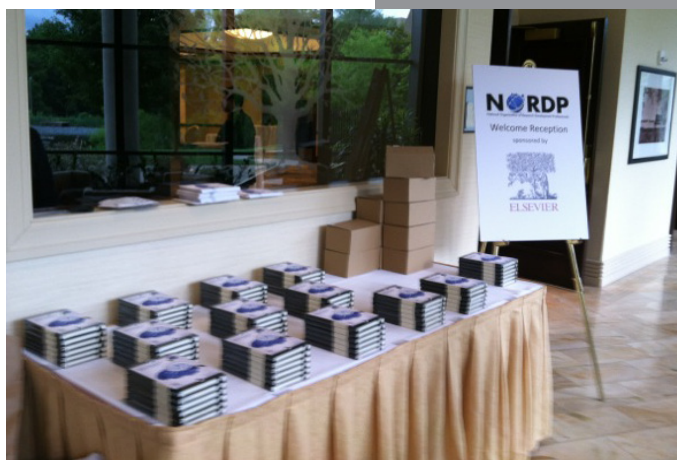
work with SI researchers and other scientists in the greater Washington, DC area.



**David M. Tralli, Ph.D., MBA**, has joined Institute Corporate Relations at the California Institute of Technology in the

newly created role of Program Manager for Research Development. He is responsible for formulating and implementing a research development model between the campus and Jet Propulsion Laboratory (managed by Caltech for NASA) to develop and capture corporate and government-industry funding opportunities for strategic research initiatives. He holds an MBA in Strategic Management from the Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management, Ph.D. in Geophysics from UC Berkeley and B.S. Summa Cum Laude in Physics from the University of Southern California.

In July, the University of California, Berkeley formed the Berkeley Research Development Office, which reports to the Vice Chancellor for Research. **David Trinkle, Ph.D.**, director of the office, comes with a background in federal science policy, having spent several years at OMB overseeing budget and policy development for NSF and interagency research initiatives. **Erica Whitney** is applying her background in proposal development and science editing in her role as Senior Research Development Analyst. Dr. Trinkle expects to hire another analyst in February.



Did you get a new job in Research Development? Did you assume a leadership position in an organization related to Research Development? We want to know! Tell us about your new roles, including full name, title, and organization, in 100 words or fewer. Photos are welcome and encouraged!

Send your "Member Transitions" info to [wilkes@ohsu.edu](mailto:wilkes@ohsu.edu).

## Day-to-Day Best Practices in Academic Communication

By Jacob Levin, Ph.D., Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Development  
University of California, Irvine



“Research development professionals act as interlocutors between disparate parties, including faculty, administrative staff, campus leadership, on and off-campus partners and funders. They are often relied upon to translate from the language of one discipline or culture to another.”

Effective communication is critical to the success of any effort involving multiple individuals, which in research development encompasses almost everything we do. Communication issues can be pervasive, impacting the success of research efforts, yet few truly master the art. Indeed, the politics, personalities, and difficulties of interpersonal interactions are often the greatest challenges to overcome in the planning and performance of research projects. Establishing a core set of effective practices, and abiding by them whenever possible, can increase one's chances of success in research administration, and all professional activities.

Academics, however, receive essentially no training in communication or the intricacies of working as a team, nor do academic administrators receive any training in the unique demands of interacting with academics. But by and large, we all need it.

Academics (faculty, in particular) are an odd group. They want to be left alone to think, but sulk if no one talks to them – or worse, no one listens. They are used to challenging one another on their subjects of expertise, but are too often challenged by matters of tact and diplomacy. Many work constantly, but are challenged to find the time to respond to an email. They can be brilliant, delving into some of the most challenging intellectual pursuits mankind has confronted, yet be unable to fill out the simplest paperwork. Yet for research to be planned, organized, funded and performed, researchers and

research administrators must engage in a continued dialogue, communicating on a variety of issues, and working as a team. Setting a few simple ground rules for our daily interactions can vastly improve the chances of sustained functional interaction, and help lead to project success.

For the past 8 years, I have led a university research development office<sup>1,2</sup>, an office focused on supporting the efforts of faculty to structure, fund and execute their research programs, facilitate research excellence and enhance interdisciplinary collaboration. Research development professionals act as interlocutors between disparate parties, including faculty, administrative staff, campus leadership, on and off-campus partners and funders. They are often relied upon to translate from the language of one discipline or culture to another.<sup>3,4</sup>

The following advice draws upon my experience leading this office, time spent as President of the National Organization of Research Development Professionals ([www.nordp.org](http://www.nordp.org)), and several decades in academia generally. During this time I have wished I could take back more than a few emails or flippant comments, endured more fruitless meetings than I can count, and have managed to be frustrated in most every way imaginable. I will attempt here to describe some prevalent missteps and pitfalls I have encountered, draw out some common principles, and suggest some useful practices to deal with them.

Many of these recommendations may seem obvious or

simply matters of common sense at first, but time and time again, I have seen them overlooked, or ignored, to the detriment of the relationships involved and the project as a whole. I encourage new staff members in my office to consider and be mindful of these issues, and suspect that if we all did, academic interchange would be more pleasant, productive and proficient for us all.

### Guiding Principles

These overarching principles represent a few common themes that pervade the more specific advice that follows and are worth imbuing into every interaction.

•**Always treat everyone with professionalism, respect, and as positively as possible.** Ok, this one is just good common sense. You will likely need to work with these people again, and even if not, you are far more likely to get what you want/need out of them if they feel that you are on their side, working together towards a common goal.

•**Be helpful, not combative.** Though it may actually be true that you can attract more flies with vinegar than honey<sup>5-6</sup>, the same is not true for people. If you want someone to accommodate a request or provide you with information, being combative or accusatory will only put them on the defensive, reducing the chance that you will get what you need from them easily and in a timely fashion, now or the next time you ask.



•**Be a problem solver.** Whether or not something is your job or responsibility, if you can solve a problem, strive to do so. This only reflects well on you in the minds of others, and benefits the effort as a whole.

•**Don't assume everyone knows.** People move in and out of group efforts at different points, and may be more or less familiar with its background or progress. Take the time to make sure everyone involved is up to speed and on the same page.

•**Expect the unexpected.** If there is one thing that's certain in life, it is uncertainty. Glitches, human and technological obstacles, and other surprises inevitably arise. Build in time in every process to deal with the unforeseen, and accommodate it with acceptance and serenity whenever possible.

## Meetings

Meetings are the lifeblood of progress in academe, famous for its culture of "all decisions by committee". They are where discourse, brainstorming, strategy and interchange between differing perspectives leads to innovation and action. Implementing a few rules of thumb regarding meetings can help keep people focused and productive during the meeting, and ensure the time is well spent, rather than "two hours of my life I'll never get back."

•**All meetings should have agendas.** Best if they are sent around beforehand, so people get a chance to think about their input, but even if distributed at the beginning of a meeting, it helps to keep the discussion productive and on track, give people a sense of what needs to be done, and

helps increase the likelihood that important topics aren't overlooked, or not addressed due to time. No one likes a rambling, unfocused meeting, and agendas, however simple, are the number one way to avoid that.

•**Focus on strategies and outcomes, not gripes or finger pointing.** This doesn't seem like something that needs to be said in order to have a productive and effective meeting, yet what percentage of the meetings you were in this week consisted of mainly complaints?

•**Take notes during the meeting.** This has been a lifesaver for me, especially on days when I have back-to-back meetings. Much as everyone may seem pleased and onboard during a discussion, and consensus apparently reached, if no one documents it, all your group brilliance can soon be forgotten, as attentions move on to other topics and concerns.

•**End meetings with action items – distribute them in writing** (email is best) at the end of the meeting, or at latest that evening. I can't tell you how many meetings I have been in that felt like great progress was made, and everyone was happy with, but no one does any of the items that were discussed, and later can't even remember what they were, since there was no follow-up or back-up.

## Email Etiquette

Email is the primary currency of almost all professional interactions these days, so prioritizing and practicing email etiquette can accomplish volumes when it comes to moving projects forward and keeping relationships functional and

productive. Many of these recommendations also apply well to other forms of interaction, including verbal.

•**Answer emails in a timely fashion** (within 24 hours whenever possible). Best if you can deal with things in their entirety at first "touch" (immediately upon reading the email), but for the tasks that take longer, an acknowledgment email will be greatly appreciated.

•**Respond to people in the manner they write to you.** If they start with "Dear Dr. X", it's often best to respond in kind. If casual in tone "Hey, Joe", then they are likely broadcasting that they are fine with the same in return. Sometimes I employ two or three styles with the same person, depending on the topic, time of day, and who else is cc'd. (A Dean may wish to be addressed as "Dear Dean X" if there is a specific resource request or other involved, but may not even include a salutation or your name when asking a quick question late at night.)

•**Make three attempts to contact people, spread out over at least a week.** Everyone is busy. Faculty in particular have a diverse set of demands on their time: teaching, research, grant writing, student mentoring, committee meetings, travel. Many of these tasks can carry great urgency, and require extended dedicated attention. Just because someone doesn't respond to your first request for information doesn't mean they are ignoring you, they may have missed it, perhaps are traveling without email access, or are busy dealing with some other crisis. Be persistent, without attitude, but not pestering. Three requests over the course of a week is reason-

able. If you receive no response then, maybe just drop by their office.

•**ALWAYS assume that your emails could be forwarded to others.** It can happen, so you may as well not say anything you wouldn't want circulated. Cyber-ink is forever, kids. That said, it is fine to say confidential things in emails, when they are in the appropriate context. The onus is then on the recipient to use sound judgment. If you email your colleague "Joe - I was not impressed by today's job candidate, or his uninformed answers to your questions. What was he thinking?!" and your colleague accidentally forwards it to the job candidate, that may hurt some feelings, but it is your colleague's gaffe, not yours, so they should deal with the consequences.

•**Ensure that your emails are grammatically correct and accurate.** Academic documents such as grants and papers are evaluated critically, and minor errors can be cause for removing them from consideration. Have the attention to detail and accuracy necessary to ensure that these high standards are met, and maintain that level of professionalism in all of your communications. It will instill confidence in those you work with that you are capable of doing so, and potentially raise their game as well.

•**Read every email through from start to finish just before you send it.** This one simple trick will spare you hours of headache. I still do this every time, and I can't remember a time I didn't find at least one thing worth changing. The simple omission of one or two letters, or a key word that you

*Continued on page 10*

## So, What Exactly Do You Do?

**Research Development is not always easy to describe to colleagues, relatives, or people you meet at cocktail parties. Here are some of the answers our members give when someone asks them: “So, what exactly do you do?”**



“For an elevator speech on Research Development, even in an academic building, I would not expect familiarity with the structure of the academic research ecosystem beyond the recognition that it is based on creative talent. So I try to establish the analogy to other, more visible industries, such as music or acting, which also rely on creative talent development. Within this context, Research Development services aim to help researchers become more successful in their careers; specifically, I facilitate the transformation of their original research ideas into competitive, externally funded projects.” -**Ioannis Konstantinidis, Ph.D.**, Research Development Officer, Texas Learning & Computation Center University of Houston



“I tell people that our office works with faculty and university leadership to attract research funding, and participates in research team building and strategic planning in support of the overall research effort on campus. Our core business is facilitating all aspects of grant development and submission, including opportunity identification, project management, technical writing and editing, budgets, interactions with funders, partners, senior campus leadership, and campus offices such as Sponsored Projects, Tech Transfer, Corporate and Foundation Relations, and Graduate Division. We are also active in a range of other strategic initiatives, and host campus trainings, visitors and events.” -**Jacob Levin, Ph.D.**, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Development, University of California, Irvine



“I tell people that I help college and university faculty and administrators plan research and development, find external funding for their projects, and complete the projects – all in an easier manner than they would without me.” -**Linda Mason, Ed.D.**, coordinator of grant writing, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

*What’s your story? How did you become involved in research development? If you’d like to see your answer in the next edition of NORDP News, email your answer and a photo to [wilkes@ohsu.edu](mailto:wilkes@ohsu.edu).*





“I help faculty identify, create, and pursue research opportunities that are typically beyond the scale of what any individual faculty member can pursue on their own. This means I’m finding ways to package our research assets so that we can go after both more and larger research projects. I often try to do this with industry partners, where the University is the “R” and Industry is the “D” and together we create new collaborative research opportunities with funding agencies. Essentially, it is R&D Sales.” -**Brian C. Ten Eyck**, Director of Research Development, College of Engineering, The University of Arizona

“I tell people, ‘Basically, I help faculty get money for their research.’ This sounds very informal, but it is essentially what I do. For people who know very little if anything about either research at a university or grant development, it suffices. I go into more detail if need be.” -**Kevin McCannon**, Grant Officer, The University of Kansas

“In the world of Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions, Research Development takes on a new meaning. Not only do we bring faculty together to see an opening between their disciplines where they might meet and research a topic from different perspectives, often we come up the research topics! We feed them, cheer-lead them, provide them with funding opportunities, find them collaborators, edit, budget, review, seek resources and institutional buy-in for them. We promote their efforts and never see failure. We find ethical ways to “yes” and aid with the interpretation between disciplines. PUIs are very lucky, because we are small and can fit everyone in one room!” -**Anne M. Pascucci, MPA, CRA**, Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, Christopher Newport University

“I tell people, ‘Basically, I help faculty get money for their research.’ This sounds very informal, but it is essentially what I do.”  
-Kevin McCannon



*cont. from page 7*  
thought in your head, but neglected to incorporate into your email, can change the meaning of a message completely, and lead to misunderstanding. This also helps ensure adherence to the previous advice.

## Project Management via Email

Email is the primary driver of project management tasks once the initial in-person meetings have occurred (and as noted above, even during said meetings.) Maximizing your impact and effectiveness through thoughtfully constructed and delivered emails will reap huge rewards in moving your project forward, and keeping it on track.

### •Open with a positive statement; be supportive and oriented towards mutual goals.

As my mother used to say – if you can't say something nice... Starting with positives sets a collegial tone, and engenders a feeling of working together. "Looks great. The new section really drives home what an exciting project this is. Attached are my minor edits."

•**Make things easy.** Don't force people to hunt through long email threads to find the topic of discussion. Include direct links to referenced items. Put dates of meetings or deadlines in email headers or near the beginning. Use bold and underline to draw attention to key items. Read the entire email stream first to avoid confusion and duplication.

•**Start with impact.** To facilitate the last point, highlight your main items at the beginning of long emails or those with attachments. People are

busy, and the longer and more complicated your email, the less chance that they will read it all the way through. If your main point is made up front, then they are much more likely to attend to it.

### •Make what you want known.

"Please reply to this email with your availability in the following time slots" rather than "we should discuss that" or "George wasn't happy."

•**Cut thoughts into short paragraphs,** not long rambling run-on diatribes with no clear purpose or import. Are you imparting or asking for particular information, or just complaining or fishing for an apology? One thought per paragraph, as we were taught in middle school. Much easier to read and digest, and much more likely to be read when first received.

•**Be inclusive.** "You need to send me that information immediately!" is unlikely to be favorably received, or engender goodwill. Better would be "Proposal's looking great, Judy. If you could please send me those budget numbers for FY'12-13, we should be all set. Thanks." Also in this category, be sure to cc: everyone involved or affected, so that they are in the know, and feel included and valued.

•**Specific suggestions are more likely to be incorporated than vague comments.** "I suggest that you use the following language in paragraph 3" is far more helpful, and likely to be heeded, than "The middle part is weak."

•**End with thanks, whenever appropriate.** Just a matter of common courtesy. How many

of these did I learn from my mother?

### •At least be entertaining.

Okay, perhaps this is just my particular style point. But when all else fails, if you can crack a smile on one team member's face, at least you've done something good in this world.

## Conclusion

Structure imposed upon chaos can lead to creativity, innovation, and progress. The fundamental laws of physics constrained the fierce interactions of subatomic particles and energy in the early universe, allowing the unbridled, disorganized maelstrom of the Big Bang to progress into the ordered universe of today, filled with galaxies, stars, and our own planet teeming with life. Similarly, the structure of research practice and administration, mediated through the mechanism of academic communication, allows the rampant ideas, drive, and enthusiasm for research to be channeled into the practice of research, and towards its successful outgrowth, discovery.

The goals of research are often difficult to define, and the path to successfully achieving them, especially when multiple individuals or diverse project components are involved, can be murky and impossible to predict. Regardless of the sophistication of the equipment or techniques employed, however, the key components of any such enterprise are the people. Clear and effective communication between them is both the glue that holds the project together, and the lubricant that allows it to function.

This article by no means presents a definitive set or comprehensive standard of

academic communication etiquette and practice, nor would I suggest that every recommendation listed is a necessity, or that there aren't even better practices out there. I do believe, however, that were everyone to strive towards practices of this sort, it would engender a kinder, gentler, more productive environment, one in which effective research development leads to effective research being done.

## Citations

- 1 Levin, J.E. (2011). "The Emergence of the Research Development Professional", *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 57:30 (Apr 1).
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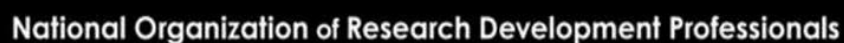
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# Photos from last year's conference in Alexandria, VA







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