NORDP
National Organization of Research Development Professionals
Attracting & Retaining Top Talent: Models for Career Progression in RD

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Tisha Mullen, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Gay Cookson, University of Utah
Gretchen Kiser, University of California San Francisco
Goals

- **Leaders:** Establish a suite of RD positions
- **Early Stage RD Professionals:** Understand avenues for advancement
- **All:** How to develop a career progression model at your institution (that works for you!)
Rationale

The Path Matters

• For recruitment
• For retention

Going Off a Path has Consequences

• Poor career progression model
• RD as “Everything and The Kitchen Sink”
Issues We’ve Encountered

• New Field – no (or limited) benchmark
• What ARE the appropriate skill sets
• Every campus structure is different
• Most RD unit structures are themselves constraining

Photo Credit: Simon Zhu via Unsplash
Sense of the Room

- Where are you in your RD career trajectory?
- Is your RD career part of a longer career journey?
- Are you satisfied with the promotion opportunities available?
- Does a career advancement model exist on your campus?
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Organizational Overview

- Nebraska's flagship public, land-grant research university
- Total research expenditures: $308M
- Faculty/Staff: 6,513; Students: 26,079
- Carnegie classification: R1 Doctoral Universities, Highest Research Activity
- Affiliations: Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, Big Ten Academic Alliance, Big Ten Conference, EPSCoR
Office of Proposal Development

- Centralized unit created in 2001 with two on-call editors
- Evolved into a team of seven that provides a full suite of RD services (i.e., "Everything and The Kitchen Sink")
- Proposal Development > Associate Vice Chancellor for Research > Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development
- Other units in the Office of Research and Economic Development: Industry Relations, IP and Commercialization, Research Responsibility, Sponsored Programs
Development of Career Progression Ladder

• Discussions around retention/career progression began in 2007

• Primary challenge – convincing HR that RD goes beyond line editing of grant proposals (i.e., hourly vs. salaried debate)

• Progression structure formalized and approved by HR in 2012

• Utilized a tiered structure already approved by HR for other units across campus and massaged RD positions to fit within the structure
Current Career Progression Ladder

- Director (1)
- Senior Coordinator (2)
- Coordinator (1 + opening)
- Specialist (3 + opening)
Current Career Progression Ladder

Entry Level

Specialist (hourly): Work with single investigator/small group proposals and support more experienced team members in the development of large, complex proposals

Mid-Level

Coordinator (salaried): Specialist duties plus large, complex proposals and involvement in other RD services
Current Career Progression Ladder

Senior Level

**Senior Coordinator (salaried)**

- Coordinator duties with a focus on large, complex proposals plus faculty development initiatives and special projects

**Director (salaried)**

- Leads and manages office; large, complex proposals; faculty development initiatives; and special projects
Benefits of Career Progression Ladder

- Offers staff a career pathway
- For leadership, the ladder
  - makes promotion easy within the unit,
  - provides flexibility in hiring (i.e., can hire at various levels depending on applicant qualifications),
  - supports future growth
  - is not static and can be revised as needs evolve
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Proposal Development Team

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Organizational Overview

- Arizona’s Land-Grant
- Total Research Expenditures: $687M
- Faculty: 1,646 (T/TE); 1,555 non T/TE (clinical, research, other instructional)
- Students: 44,831 total / 35,123 undergraduate
- Carnegie Classification: R1 Doctoral Universities, Highest Research Activity
- Medical School
- Affiliations: Association of American Universities (AAU), Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
• Brief History of the Central Office
• Focus on large/complex & early career
• Federal, Foundation, & Industry

Collaboration with: UA Foundation & Corporate Engagement

Fall 2014
- Director
- 3 Associates
- 1 Graduate Student

Fall 2015
- Director
- 3 Associates
- 1 Graduate Student
- 0.5 Program Coordinator

Fall 2016
- Director
- 4 Associates
- 1 Graduate Student
- 0.5 Program Coordinator

Fall 2017
- Associate Director
- 4 Associates
- 1 Program Coordinator

Fall 2018 (Today)
- Director
- 7 Associates
- 1 Program Manager
- 1 Program Coordinator
UA Career Architecture Project

- Functions & Families
- Career Streams
- Career Levels

CAREER STREAM DEFINITIONS

Manager & Leader (M1 – M7): oversee area of responsibility, plan, prioritize and/or direct responsibilities of employees and/or manages strategy and policy development for a major UA function. Typically have 3+ direct reports.

Professional Contributor (PC1 – PC6): oversee the design, implementation or delivery of processes, programs and policies using specialized knowledge or skills typically acquired through advanced education or equivalent advanced learning attained through experience. Typically salaried positions, though entry levels may include hourly jobs.

Organizational Contributor (OC1 – OC4): provide organizational related support or service (administrative or clerical OR operate in a "hands-on" environment in support of daily activities (e.g., technical, craft, etc.). Typically hourly positions.
RESEARCH
Explores and discovers answers to challenging questions. Develops, facilitates, implements, evaluates, performs, administers and oversees a wide variety of research programs or initiatives.

Grant and Contract Administration
Provides pre-award and post-award services related to grants management, proposal review and preparation, administration and financial activities, including reporting, financial projections, financial reconciliation, procurement, and accounting services. Collaborates with principal investigators and other research staff to ensure compliance with regulations, terms and conditions and sub award/subcontracting issuance and administration.

Research Compliance
Support, promote and ensure legally compliant and ethical research practices. Reviews research protocols, assists in writing and reviewing protocols, and provides advice and counsel to ensure compliance with federal, state, and University mandated laws, regulations and policies.

Research Program Administration
Manages and administers research programs and centers. Represents the institution in working with funding agencies, and developing financial resources and programs. Collaborates with faculty and staff members on developing and implementing research programs and agenda.
UCAP Research Development

Where we started:

- Develops prospect recommendations
- Searches award programs and funding interests, and matches them to University needs
- Writes profiles and reports, and maintains information on corporations/foundations and their history of contact with the institution
- Manages RFP dissemination program and proposal submission tracking

Career Levels: Professional Contributor 1 – 4, Manager 1 & 2

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Navigating the Changes

NORDP Community

• Definition of Research Development
• Current Job Postings
• 2015 Salary Survey
• Previous Conference Presentations

UA – used the new unit to our advantage

• Current Position Descriptions for ALL Existing Positions

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Where we ended:

Includes a broad spectrum of strategic, proactive, and capacity building activities designed to enable and enhance the competitiveness of research programs and proposals for extramural support. Activities may include:

• funding opportunity identification and targeted dissemination
• grant and contract proposal development
• research team building
• interaction with funding agencies, institutional research and leadership
• interaction with institutional federal relations
• outreach activities and training

Career Levels: PC 1 – 6 and M 1 – 3
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Thank You NORDP!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity of Work</th>
<th>Rsrch Develop Pro VI (PC 6)</th>
<th>Rsrch Develop Pro V (PC 5)</th>
<th>Rsrch Develop Pro IV (PC4)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues faced are highly complex and uniquely challenging, requiring extensive consideration of variables that impact multiple areas outside of the job area. Is expected to make improvements to existing professional standards or protocols, and create new professional standards or innovations.</td>
<td>Issues are highly complex and without clear precedent. Problems require extension investigation and span a wide range of difficult and unique issues, requiring a significant degree of innovation and creativity.</td>
<td>Issues are complex. Problems require the development of new approaches, methods or techniques, requiring a high degree of innovation and creativity.</td>
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| Communication | Requires the ability to communicate and influence leadership and other key stakeholders regarding matters of strategic importance to the institution and beyond. Frequently conducts briefings to leaders and other key stakeholders both within and outside of the job function. Represents the organization externally as a thought leader in professional discipline or specific job area. | Works to influence others to understand and accept job function's practices and accept new concepts, practices, and approaches. Requires communication with leadership regarding matters of significant importance to the institution. May conduct briefings with leaders and other key stakeholders. | Works to influence others within and outside of the job function regarding policies, standards and processes. Communication may occur across colleges, divisions or departments and externally as well. Requires the ability to communicate with management and leadership, and other key stakeholders. |

| Operational Latitude and Impact | Works independently toward long-range goals and objectives, and professional standards. Assignments are often self-initiated. Virtually self-supervisory. Might supervise 1 - 2 individuals. | Works independently guided by objectives, expected outcomes and professional standards. Establishes goals and objectives. Work receives limited review, if any. Might supervise 1 - 2 individuals. | Work is performed without appreciable direction. Exercises considerable latitude in determining objectives and approaches to assignments. Work may be reviewed at a high level. |

| Knowledge | Mastery knowledge of industry best practices and job functions. Is considered a renowned subject matter expert within the organization and externally, and contributes to the development of new concepts, techniques and standards within the profession. | Mastery knowledge of one or more related professional disciplines. Is considered a subject matter expert within the organization, and in some cases externally. Uses knowledge to establish internal techniques and standards. | Thorough knowledge of all job functions and broad industry best practices, techniques and standards. Exhibits ability to transfer knowledge and application of complex principles, theories and concepts to peers. |

| Education & Experience | Bachelor's degree or equivalent advanced learning. Minimum of 12 years of relevant work experience. | Master's degree or equivalent. Minimum of 10 years of relevant work experience. | Bachelor's degree or equivalent advanced learning. Minimum of 8 years of relevant work experience. |

Level Criteria (Job Family-Specific): Generally requires a Master's degree.
<table>
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<th>Complexity of Work</th>
<th>Rsrch Develop Pro III (PC3)</th>
<th>Rsrch Develop Pro II (PC2)</th>
<th>Rsrch Develop Pro I (PC1)</th>
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<td>Issues are strategic in nature, are varied, and involve evaluation and interpretation. Problems may require the development of new approaches, methods or techniques, requiring significant innovation and creativity.</td>
<td>Issues are varied, and involve some evaluation and interpretation. Problems are typically solved through drawing from prior experiences, with analysis of the issue, requiring innovation and creativity.</td>
<td>Issues are routine and involve little evaluation and interpretation. Problems are typically solved through drawing from prior experiences, following established policies and procedures with analysis of the issue, requiring moderate innovation and creativity.</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Works to influence others within and outside of the job function regarding policies, standards and processes. To perform role, communication typically occurs within the college, division or department and may occur externally as well. May require the ability to communicate with management and leadership, and other key stakeholders.</td>
<td>Obtains or provides information requiring some explanation or interpretation. To perform role, most communication occurs within the department or other work units within college or division.</td>
<td>Obtains or provides information requiring minimal explanation or interpretation. To perform role, most communication occurs within the department.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Operational Latitude and Impact</td>
<td>Work is performed independently except for new assignments. Work is reviewed to ensure objectives were met.</td>
<td>Work is performed with moderate guidance. Work is reviewed for soundness of judgment and overall adequacy and accuracy.</td>
<td>Normally receives detailed instructions to perform work. Work is reviewed closely for accuracy.</td>
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<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Extensive knowledge and application of principles, theories and concepts. Complete knowledge of all job functions and the broad industry best practices, techniques and standards.</td>
<td>General knowledge of principles, theories and concepts. Is competent in all job functions and has general understanding of the industry practices, techniques and standards.</td>
<td>Limited use and/or application of basic principles, theories and concepts. Limited knowledge of job functions, industry practices and standards.</td>
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<td>Education &amp; Experience</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree or equivalent advanced learning, Advanced degree preferred. Minimum of 5 years of relevant work experience (advanced degree may compensate for work experience).</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree or equivalent advanced learning. Minimum of 3 years of relevant work experience.</td>
<td>Bachelor's degree or equivalent advanced learning. Minimum of 1 year of relevant work experience.</td>
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University of Utah

Overview

$515
Million in Research Funding
FY 2018

2326
Awarded Grants
FY 2018

#1
in Technology Venture
Milken Institute 2017

963+
Thousand square feet for research space on campus

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Vision Statement

“To help the research and scholarly community cultivate a national and international leading research presence through the facilitation of federal funding that enhances excellence, innovation, and interdisciplinary research at the University of Utah.”
The VPR Office oversees approximately 250 employees on campus.
University of Utah

Research Development Team

Gay Cookson
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Jesse Morris, PhD
Manager
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Melanie Steiner-Sherwood, PhD
Manager
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Vacant
Officer

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History

Collaborative Research Support Program (CRSP)
- Large Center Grants
- Three staff
- Report to OSP

New Investigator Team for Research Opportunities (NITRO)
- New Investigators
- Three staff
- Report to OSP

Research Development Office (RDO)
- Supports all proposal development
- Four staff
- Reports to VP for Research
RDO Services

- Interdisciplinary team building
- Identification of funders
- Proposal development & management
- Research development workshops
- Assistance in accessing campus resources
- RFP review

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RDO Structure

- Centralized Unit
  - Serves main campus and health sciences campus

- Created in January 2018

- 75% funded by F&A
  - Stable, covers salaries, needs to increase

- 25% funded by partner colleges
  - Non stable, non-personnel, needs to increase
  - Equal-payment structure needs to adapt to user-fee rather than flat-fee
RDO Career Progression Ladder

Officer, Research Development
- Early career
- Three years professional experience in higher education and/or non-profit environment
- Some experience in grant development
- Bachelor’s degree minimum, graduate degree preferred

Manager, Research Development
- Mid career
- Four – six years of progressively more responsibility
- Three years experience in grant development
- Master’s degree minimum, PhD preferred

Director, Research Development
- Senior career
- Six - 10 years of progressively more responsibility
- Eight – 10 years experience in grant development
- Eight – 10 years experience in managing personnel and finances
- Master’s degree minimum, PhD preferred
Overview

• Exclusively graduate/professional; R1 institution
• Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, and Dentistry, plus Graduate Division
• ~2400 research faculty members, 3,300 Students, 1,600 Residents, 1,100 Postdocs
• Part of a 10 University of California system, 5 of which have Medical Centers
• Collaborative and entrepreneurial culture
  • 1,800+ active inventions; 185+ start-ups
  • >100 Community Engagement Programs
Research Facts & Figures

• Primarily biomedical research focused

• $1.41 billion R&D expenditures (NSF Academic Institution Profiles; 2017)

• Strongly NIH-funded; top public institutional recipient of NIH funding - $593,909,890 (2017)

• In 2018: NIH funded SOM- $578 million, SOP- $28.9 million, SOD- $24.4 million, SON- $9.1 million
UCSF Research Development Office (RDO) Overview

- Centralized Office
- Established in July 2012
- Serving all UCSF research faculty
- RDO>VCR>EVCP>Chancellor
- Funding through EVCP Office, NOT F&A recoup
- Many other decentralized ‘research development’ staff across campus
RDO Services

- Team Science Program (TSP)
- T32 Trainee Tracking Program (3TS)
- Limited Submission Program (LSP)
- Large Grant Development Program (LGDP)
- Resource Allocation Program (RAP)
- Special Strategic Projects (SSP)
CAREER TRACKS JOB STRUCTURE: CATEGORIES AND LEVELS

Categories:

- Professional
- Operational & Technical
- Supervisory & Management
UC CAREER TRACKS JOB STRUCTURE: CATEGORIES AND LEVELS

Categories:

1. Professional – individual contributor
   • ENTRY (LEVEL 1): Entry-level with limited prior experience; minimal independence
   • INTERMEDIATE (LEVEL 2): Acquired job skills, policies, and procedures to complete substantive projects; works in partnership with other experts
   • EXPERIENCED (LEVEL 3): Experienced; knows how to apply theory and put it into practice; in-depth understanding of the professional field; works independently
   • ADVANCED (LEVEL 4): Technical leader with high degree of area knowledge; significant problem-solving skills; may manage programs; high degree of autonomy
   • EXPERT (LEVEL 5): Recognized organization-wide expert. Has significant impact and influence on organizational policy and program development
Categories:

2. Supervisory & Management

• SUPERVISOR: primarily a supervisor of a unit, at least 2 FTEs; performs individual tasks related to the unit as well; ensures good unit/program function, accountability and stewardship
  • LEVELS 1 and 2

• MANAGER: spends >50% achieving organizational objectives through the coordinated achievements of subordinate staff; ensures good unit/program function, accountability and stewardship; advisor to unit and leadership
  • LEVELS 1 – 4

3. Operational & Technical
**UC CAREER TRACKS JOB STRUCTURE:**

**JOB FAMILIES AND FUNCTIONS**

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**UC CAREER TRACKS JOB STRUCTURE: JOB FAMILIES AND FUNCTIONS**

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- Product Development
- Project and Policy Analysis
- Records Management
- Regulatory Policy and Intel Property
- University Management
- Vendor Relations Management

**Oversees moderately sized academic or research program operations, finance, HR, facilities; assists in developing research; reports to PI AND no entry levels**

**Reviews grant/contract proposal budgets, awards; assures compliance of grant proposals; negotiates T&C; submission sign-off BUT this does have entry level**

**Technical consultant for academic or research programs, including on proposal dev and post-award activities; no entry levels**

**Supports strategic planning and compliance through analysis of institutional related research data. NO mid-levels**
The “Soft” Benefits of RD

- Flexible work schedules
- Academic environment where learning opportunities abound
- Community, mentoring, and team-building activities
- “Everything and The Kitchen Sink” has advantages – one-off projects for those that are interested in growth
- Pride in position – demonstrated impacts
The “Soft” Benefits of RD

• Many professional development opportunities ($2,200 - $6,000/year per person), including management and leadership training, professional membership (e.g., NORDP, GPA, APMP)

• Location, Location, Location

• Internship programs
Evolving Needs & Challenges

• Operationalizing growth
• Demand for additional services that require specific skill sets
• Developing support infrastructure (e.g., copy editors, graphic designers, workshop coordinators)
• Growth opportunities for senior members of the team (including the director)
• To Ph.D. or not to Ph.D.?
• “Poaching” of good staff
• The new gold = campus resources (including space!)
Evolving Needs & Challenges

Evolving leadership
Ask the Audience

• What does the landscape look like in decentralized units or at a PUI?

• For those in leadership, what are your progression/promotion opportunities?
Best Practices in Defining Structure

- Be involved early in the discussion
- Survey the landscape
- Engage with RD staff
- Ensure appropriate levels:
  - Entry / Mid / Senior
- Tie progression to functional skills and experience
- Salary bands are broad enough to accommodate time in office
- Develop clear job descriptions associated with career levels
- Consider your office environment
- Develop and maintain metrics
  - Helps with expansion and recognizing change over time
• HR is your friend!
• No one-size-fits-all solution
• Engage existing staff
• Be careful about too much change, too quickly
• Since the landscape is evolving/changing, acknowledge that once the ladder is in place you will need some revising
• Take advantage of all potential “soft” benefits
Questions?

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