Session IX:
Large Proposal Development

Moderator: Janet Nelson
Panelists: Faith Kirkham Hawkins
           Michelle Popowitz
           Mridul Gautam

CoR 2017 Summer Meeting
Our goals today

• Spark discussion and reflection on strategies, best practices for supporting “large proposals”

• Draw on multiple resources
  • APLU survey of CROs
  • Penn State/Huron Consulting Group survey
  • Particular “large proposal” experiences at Indiana University and UCLA, especially via internal Grand Challenge programs
  • Particular strategies used at UNR
About Janet Nelson

• Serve as VPRED at University of Idaho since September 2016
• Prior to UI, served as AVCRD at University of Tennessee, Knoxville
• Experience with large proposal development from corporate experience (URS Corporation)
• Extensive experience managing scientific review and administering research grants (NIH, ACS)
About Faith Kirkham Hawkins, PhD

• Prior to Indiana University, faculty member and program director at Emory University

• At IU since 2009, first as Chief of Staff to VPR, since 2016 as AVP for Research Development and Strategic Initiatives

• In addition to coordinating IU’s Grand Challenges program, leading university effort to increase success with large-scale proposals and more diverse funding portfolio
About Michelle Popowitz, JD, MPH

• Serve as an Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research
• Before UCLA, worked as a lawyer and in hospital administration
• 9 years experience in UCLA professional school as senior staff administrator
• Moved to Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research in 2011.
• Mixed portfolio – Research Enhancement Office
  • Advise VCR on misc. matters
  • Manage variety of programs to enhance & strengthen campus research portfolio (newsletters, seed grant programs, brainstorming sessions)
  • Oversee limited submission process
  • Founded UCLA Grand Challenges as a pilot project with colleague Jill Sweitzer in 2012 and continue involvement with 2 Grand Challenges as strategic partner
About Mridul Gautam

- Our fabulous host this week
- Vice President for Research and Innovation at UNR since 2013
- Previously at West Virginia University
- More than 25 years experience managing and initiating large interdisciplinary and multi-institutional programs
APLU Survey of CRO’s re: large proposals

- 21 respondents, a few more from large universities than mid-sized
- 5 question sets:
  - How many large proposals does your institution support at one time? How large are they? How large is your support staff? What is your proposal success rate?
  - Experience and lessons learned developing multidisciplinary teams required for success in a large multidisciplinary proposal?
What internal support does your proposal team need (such as F&A incentives) to be successful?

Experience building relationships with state, local and industrial stakeholders? Ways to leverage large proposals to build relationships?

Key things required to execute and sustain a large, multidisciplinary grant?
How an institution defines “large” depends on context and a number of factors: award amount, interdisciplinary, prestige, and complexity.

While there are limited data, initial evidence indicates that dedicated professional support (whether centralized or at unit level) may enhance success. (e.g., “success rate on proposals handled by our office’s proposal development team was 36% compared with 33% overall”)

APLU Survey Initial Highlights
APLU Survey Initial Highlights

- Leadership and institutional support (which may come through proposal development/project management support; cost-share; negotiating with units re: cluster hires or F&A; specific and targeted letters of support, etc., etc.) are critical to success – both in proposals and in post-award execution.

- Would be useful to identify other questions, or other ways of getting at these topics, to get more actionable information.
Trends in Large Proposal Development at Major Research Institutions

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Abstract: Research administrator interest in large research proposal development and submission support is high, arguably in response to the bleak funding landscape for research and federal agency trends toward making more frequent larger awards. In response, a team from Penn State University and Huron Consulting Group initiated a baseline study to determine how research-intensive academic institutions are structured to provide large proposal support, with the aim of identifying support factors that are impactful on proposal success as defined by funding being awarded. The first step in this process was the development, administration, and analysis of a survey on large proposal support and success rates. This first survey of large proposal support structures, support services, and associated metrics was completed by 20 of the top 100 research institutions as determined by rankings from the 2013 Higher Education Research Development Survey (HERD) as reported by the National Science Foundation. Conclusive findings are: 1) A decentralized College/Department/Center model is the most commonly used large proposal support model; 2) Different large proposal support models have similar criteria in selecting proposals to be supported, the most common of which is awards equaling or exceeding $1Ms; and 3) Institutional setting is a factor in success rates for larger proposals more than smaller proposals as evidenced by greater variability in these rates.

Keywords: Large Proposals, Proposal Success Rates, Proposal Administrative Support, Research Development, Research Administration Organizational Structure, Team Science
Focus: Trends in Large Proposal Development at Major Research Institutions

- Survey completed by 20 of the top 100 research institutions (2013 NSF HERD)

- Findings:
  1. “A decentralized College/Department/Center model is the most commonly used large proposal support model;”
  2. “Different large proposal support models have similar criteria in selecting proposals to be supported, the most common of which is awards equaling or exceeding $1M;” and
  3. “Institutional setting is a factor in success rates for larger proposals more than smaller proposals as evidenced by greater variability in these rates.”

_Huron-Penn State University Study_
Six Models of Large proposal Support – which are by no means mutually exclusive

1. **VPR** staff members give special attention to “large” or “strategically important” proposals; support may be partial.
2. **General Staff in Sponsored Program Office (G-SPO)** handle such proposals just as they handle other proposals.
3. **Colleges, Departments, Centers (CDC)** handle proposal development; SPO reviews and certifies final submission.

_Huron-Penn State University Study_
Six Models of Large proposal Support (cont.)

4. **Specialized staff in Sponsored Program Office (S-SPO)** handle the development and submission of large or strategic proposals.

5. **Independent Large Proposal Office (LPO)** handles development of large or strategic proposals; may have authority to submit proposals or may use SPO.

6. **External Consultant** hired specifically for large or strategic proposals.

_Huron-Penn State University Study_
Each model has strengths and challenges

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VPR</td>
<td>Alignment w/ institutional priorities; potential grantsmanship expertise; broad view for broad partnerships</td>
<td>Lack of disciplinary expertise; may neglect local priorities; partial support may be insufficient; limited capacity;</td>
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<tr>
<td>G-SPO</td>
<td>Consistent attention to all proposals</td>
<td>Lack of disciplinary expertise; wholly reliant on faculty (who are likely overburdened)</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Disciplinary expertise; proximity; close alignment with unit priorities; with SPO aid, balance of disciplinary and other expertise;</td>
<td>Variable alignment with institutional priorities; limited view of potential partners; limited capacity; may not have grantsmanship expertise</td>
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_Huron-Penn State University Study_
Each model has strengths and challenges (cont.)

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S-SPO</td>
<td>Potential grantsmanship expertise; broad view;</td>
<td>Lack of disciplinary expertise; limited capacity</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPO</td>
<td>Grantsmanship expertise; broad view;</td>
<td>Lack of disciplinary expertise; limited capacity;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Consultant</td>
<td>Grantsmanship expertise; potential agency intel; neutrality</td>
<td>Lack of institutional knowledge; limited capacity</td>
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_Huron-Penn State University Study_
UCLA Context

• ~$1B in research funding each year
• Compact campus
• “Large” - 28 Proposals for over 10M submitted in FY16
• UCLA has not had central Proposal Support Team
  • CTSA now leading effort
  • Environment & Sustainability FTE
  • Others
Indiana University Context

• IU has centrally-led (VPR), campus-led (Vice Chancellor for Research at IUPUI, Vice Provost for Research at IU Bloomington) and unit-led (Associate Deans) research development efforts.

• “Large” can refer to the complexity of the proposal or to the monetary value, and is also shaped by the institutional/disciplinary home of the proposal.

• IU uses – intentionally or not – 5 of 6 Penn State/Huron survey models for supporting large proposals.
Sharing Lessons Learned

1. Team Building and Proposal Development
2. Stakeholder Engagement
3. Execution and Sustainability
Team Building & Proposal Development

Top 5 Tips
Group knows why its convened

Shown appreciation
1. Know your Strengths & Unique Characteristics

Team Building & Proposal Development Tips
2. Communication

Team Building & Proposal
Development Tip
3. Be Intentional with Structure and Approach
4. Engage Internal Support Team Members Early

Team Building & Proposal Development Tip
5. Don’t be Afraid to Test/Challenge the Team

Team Building & Proposal Development Tip
RECAP: Top 5 Lessons
Team Building & Proposal Development

1. Know your strengths and unique characteristics
2. Communication is key
   • Shared goals
   • Different disciplinary languages or dialects
3. Decisions about structure/approach affect group dynamics later down the road
4. Engage participation of internal support team members from the very start
5. If you want the strongest proposal, you may need someone to challenge the team
Stakeholder Engagement
Top 5 Tips

Stakeholder Engagement

1. Think broadly about stakeholders – internal and external
2. Recognize that external stakeholders (industry, government, community, NGOs, foundations) likely have varied or limited understanding of how university research works - and university researchers likely have varied or limited understanding of how other stakeholders work
Top 5 Tips

Stakeholder Engagement (cont.)

3. Engage early and often with emphasis on iterative nature of proposal development process
4. Be intentional in establishing partnerships
5. Be clear about what you need and hope to achieve with relationship
Execution & Sustainability
Top-5 Tips

Execution & Sustainability

1. Effective leader is essential
2. Consider hiring a project manager
Top-5 Tips

Execution & Sustainability (cont.)

3. Ensure sufficiently porous boundaries
4. Forge strong partnerships both inside and outside university and explore supporting structures to ensure continued alignment
5. Don’t forget to celebrate each success
Common Themes Across the Topics

• Know ourselves and our places
• Decide with intention
• Communicate fully and then again
• Retain flexibility
• Progressively widen the circle of insiders
Multi-PI Team-Building Strategies at UNR

• Networking events based on RFPs and Dear Colleague Letters
• Networking events based on specific topics
• Open topic networking events (AVPR lunches)
• Campus Conferences on specific topics
• Seed grants for collaborative interdisciplinary proposals
Proposal Development Support Strategies at UNR

- External proposal review
- Proposal capture manager
- Editing services
- Graphic designer
Discussion Questions
Q1: What methods might be used to define a multidisciplinary research problem and build a faculty/staff team to address it?
Q2: What are effective methods for engaging external stakeholders in these problems?
Q3: What best practices has your campus implemented for large, multidisciplinary proposal development?
Q4: What is most needed to execute and sustain a funded large multidisciplinary grant?
Q5: How do you engage philanthropy effectively for support of multidisciplinary research?
Large Proposal Development Questions for Discussion

- What best practices has your campus implemented for large, multidisciplinary proposal development?
- What is most needed to develop, execute, and sustain a funded large multidisciplinary grant?
- How has your campus engaged and built support with state, local, and industrial stakeholders?
- How do you engage philanthropy effectively for multidisciplinary research?