

# Charting & Expanding Needed Trails to Research Administration & Leadership (CENTRAL)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE NSF CONFERENCE

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BY THE CENTRAL COLLABORATION



ASSOCIATION OF  
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**NORDP**  
National Organization of  
Research Development Professionals

**ARIS**  
Advancing Research Impact in Society

# Executive Summary

Senior research officers (SROs; e.g. Vice Presidents/Chancellors/Provosts of Research) are university leaders responsible for leading the strategy and compliance of sponsored research. Prior studies find a high turnover rate and lack of training. In response, the Charting & Expanding Needed Trails to Research Administration & Leadership (CENTRAL) Conference Report identifies the pathways to, and the skills required by, SROs for the 2020s.

## Skills for Successful SROs

SROs are servant leaders who must have emotional intelligence, research enterprise knowledge, and problem-solving skills to support their institution's unique research mission.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	RESEARCH ENTERPRISE KNOWLEDGE	STRATEGY & PROBLEM SOLVING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Put aside ego to serve the community.</li><li>Understand faculty culture.</li><li>Manage stakeholders with conflicting priorities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Research funding models and partners.</li><li>Regulatory compliance and research administration.</li><li>Local and national research and creative priorities.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Institutional planning</li><li>Data driven critical thinking.</li><li>Flexibility during crises</li><li>Ability to connect multidisciplinary interests.</li></ul>

To learn more about the CENTRAL Workshop findings, read the full report available at [APLU.org](http://APLU.org)

## Benefits of Differing Pathways

While often selected from faculty with a strong history of service, numerous other SROs have been selected from research development & administration, industry, and government backgrounds. Every path yields differing specializations:

<b>Research Faculty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understanding research implementation and faculty culture.</li><li>Existing reputation with faculty.</li></ul>	<b>Research Development and Administration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Understanding how to build research capacity and advise faculty.</li><li>Research compliance knowledge.</li></ul>
<b>Industry</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Knowledge of tech transfer and commercialization.</li><li>Different definitions of risk.</li></ul>	<b>National or State Government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Knowledge of sponsor priorities and programs.</li><li>Broad view of the stakeholder landscape.</li></ul>

## Barriers in Hiring

SROs are often selected by committees or leaders that are not guaranteed to have research backgrounds. This leads to several barriers and miscommunications:

- A candidate's high research proposal acceptance rate does not translate to success for the entire institution or success in leading teams.
- The committee may not have direct experience with the depth of research administration knowledge required.
- The candidate must be assessed for the diplomatic and emotional intelligence skills needed for the institution's unique goals and team.

Senior research officers require not only an understanding of research and research compliance but have a holistic sense of their institution's unique needs, the diplomacy acumen to negotiate among many stakeholders, and strategic thinking. **Institutions benefit by identifying these talents from across the research ecosystem, not just from research faculty.**



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