

**University of New Mexico**

Report of the

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*This document can be read as a stand-alone report, but it is best read electronically so that the reader has easy access via hyperlinks to additional material and documentation on the RSG web site (<http://research.unm.edu/rsg/>). This document, together with all the linked material, should be regarded as constituting the final report of the RSG.*

**19 August 2007**

**(a few words regarding the ERAC have been changed from the 30 July version)**

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# 1 Introduction

Teaching and scholarship, including sponsored research, are the primary missions of a university. The University of New Mexico has a reputation for outstanding teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels and for programs of scholarship and research that add to humanity's store of knowledge, provide a highly visible face for the university, and make direct and indirect contributions to local and state economic development.

From an academic perspective, a major university's research office has two primary functions:

- To provide efficient administration of sponsored research, including submission of research proposals, award negotiation, fiscal management of sponsored projects, nonfinancial compliance functions, and closeout of sponsored projects
- To provide support and assistance in initiation, development, and management of research initiatives, especially large multi-investigator, multi-unit, and/or multi-institution research efforts. Research initiatives should draw on the expertise of the university's faculty and should contribute to the long-term health and viability of the university's research enterprise.

Both of these functions are critical to a vigorous research enterprise, but of the two, the first should always be the higher priority, since it is a prerequisite for the success of the entire sponsored-research effort, including the success of large research initiatives.

The primary conclusion of our study is that there are system-wide deficiencies in main-campus research administration at UNM. These deficiencies stem, we believe, from serious problems in management and structure in the senior research administration, which has allowed sponsored-project administration to fall into dysfunction and disrepair, with the inevitable consequence that faculty and staff are increasingly frustrated by their interactions with the central research administration. The situation is exacerbated by an inadequate number of research-support staff in what we call the units, i.e., Colleges/Schools, departments, and research centers/institutes. To deal with the resulting crisis in sponsored-project administration, it is imperative that main-campus research administration be restructured and redirected toward ensuring that administration of sponsored research at UNM works smoothly and efficiently, at a level consistent with national standards at major research universities.

Our report details, first, how we, as the Research Study Group, have come to this conclusion and, second, our recommendations for improvement of research administration at UNM. Our core recommendations are summarized immediately below in Section 2. They call for substantial, urgently needed changes in the *structure* of research administration, in the allocation of *resources* and *staffing levels*, in *organizational culture* and *attitude*, and in *communication* and *accountability*. These changes are necessary in order to provide the service needed by UNM's research community and to ensure growth of the research enterprise at UNM.

Section 3 gives a brief history of the Research Study Group and describes the mechanisms we have used to gather the information on which our findings and recommendations are based. Section 4 details our findings and the costs and consequences of the current problems in research administration and of inaction in addressing these problems. Of special interest is our description of the results of our faculty/PI and

staff questionnaires in Section 4.3; we give a selection of quotations from the responses to the open-ended questions and graphs that summarize the quantitative data that emerge from the questions that asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with research services. Section 5 gives an extended, narrative account of our recommendations. Section 6 briefly discusses implementation of the recommendations.

### **List of abbreviations used in this report**

- A&S            College of Arts and Sciences
- AVP/FS       Associate Vice President for Financial Services and Controller
- AVP/RA       Associate Vice President for Research Administration
- AVP/RI       Associate Vice President for Research Initiatives
- C&GA         Contract and Grant Accounting
- CoE            College of Education
- EVP            Executive Vice President
- HSC            Health Sciences Center
- ORC            Office of Research Compliance
- OVRP          Office of Vice President for Research
- OVPRD        Office of Vice President for Research and Economic Development
- PI             Principal Investigator
- RDS            Research Development Services
- RSG            Research Study Group
- SoE            School of Engineering
- SPO            Sponsored Projects Officer
- SPCO          Sponsored Projects Contract Officer
- SPS            Sponsored Projects Services
- VPR            Vice President for Research
- VPRED        Vice President for Research and Economic Development

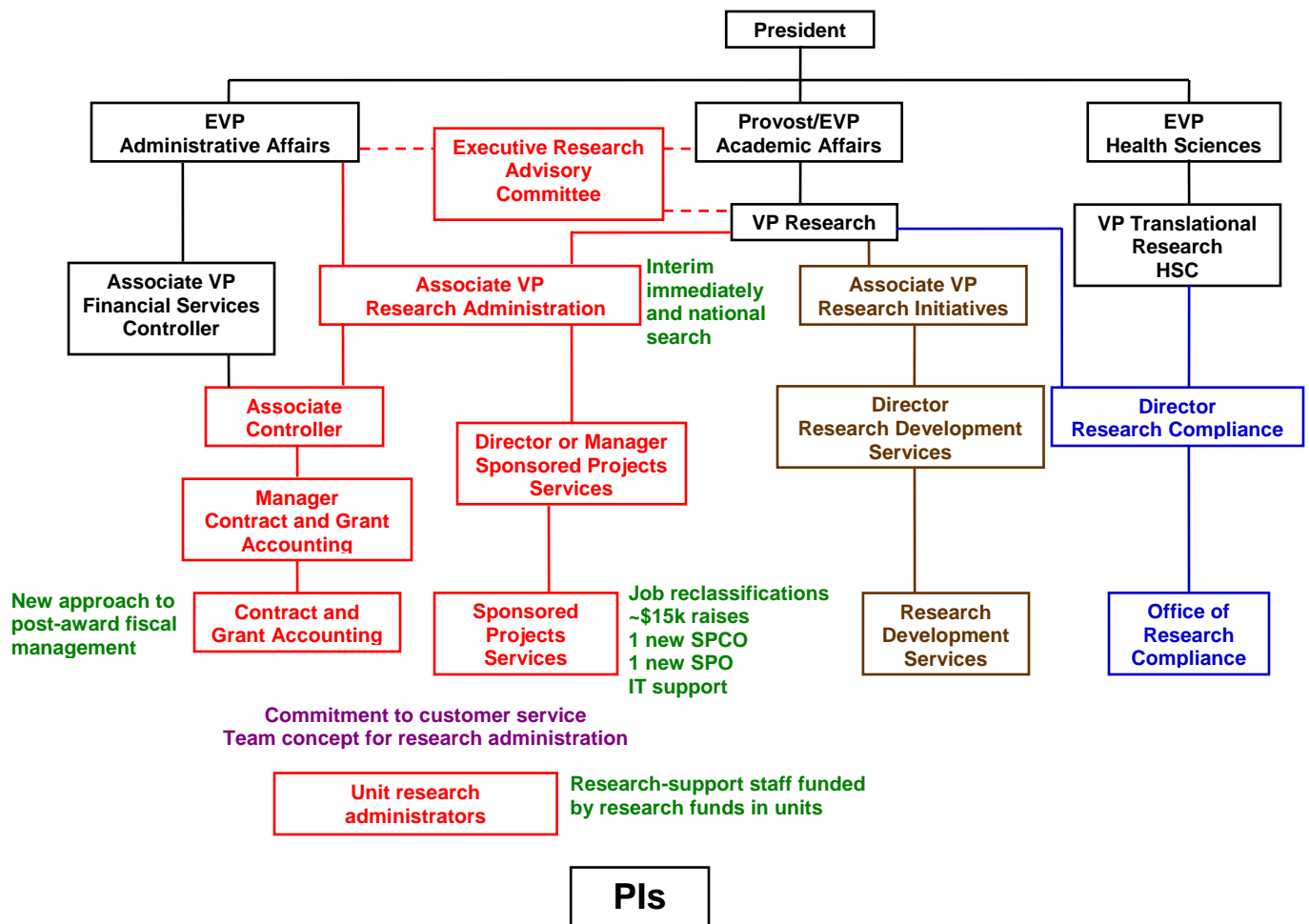
## 2 Summary of core recommendations

In this section we summarize our core recommendations, with references to the parts of Section 5 where each recommendation is discussed in full. We view these recommendations as a package, which needs to be implemented as a whole to move UNM's research enterprise forward. There are two recommendations, however, that we view as absolutely critical to achieving the necessary reform of UNM's research administration; these two recommendations appear in red in the list below and are highlighted in italics in Section 5.

- ***Restructuring of main-campus research administration***
  - *Managerial restructuring of Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development (OVPRED) around two major functions, sponsored-project administration and research development (5.1.1)*
    - Vice President for Research to report to the Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs
    - ***Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) to have two co-equal Associate Vice Presidents, one for Research Administration (AVP/RA) and one for Research Initiatives (AVP/RI)***
    - AVP/RI to organize resources for funding research investments, to support large research initiatives, assisted by the Director of Research Development Services, to supervise research centers that report to the OVPR, and to manage resources for cost shares and startup funds
    - AVP/RA to supervise main pre-award office, Sponsored Projects Services (SPS), assisted by a Director or Manager of SPS, and in this capacity to report to VPR
    - AVP/RA to supervise main post-award office, Contract and Grant Accounting (C&GA), assisted by the Associate Controller and the Manager for C&GA, and in this capacity to report to Executive Vice President for Administrative Affairs
    - AVP/RA to co-ordinate development of research-support staff in the units and to develop team concept for research administration
  - *University-wide rationalization of and participation in research-administration budget processes (5.1.2)*
  - ***Faculty-staff Executive Research Advisory Committee (ERAC) to monitor and advise research administration (5.1.3)***
    - ***ERAC to request and receive reports on OVPR plans and the status of research initiatives and sponsored-project administration***
    - ***ERAC to report to the Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Executive Vice President for Administrative Affairs***
  - *Other recommendations*

- University Counsel's office to assign at least 1.0 FTE attorney to advise OVPR on legal issues in research administration
- OVPR to be consulted for research perspective when internal University policies are being formulated
- ***Changes in sponsored-project administration***
  - *New leadership and additional resources for Sponsored Projects Services (SPS) (5.2.1)*
    - New leadership through the creation of two positions, the AVP/RA and a new Director or Manager of SPS, reporting to the AVP/RA, to supervise the office
    - New resources of personnel, compensation, training, and IT support
    - Institutional memory of written policies and procedures for pre-award administration
  - *More flexible approach to post-award fiscal management in Contract and Grant Accounting (C&GA) (5.2.2)*
    - Post-transaction review of financial transactions to remove delays in executing such transactions
    - Review of procedures for index-code assignment, budget revisions, invoicing of research sponsors, and close-out of sponsored projects to ensure timely performance
    - Review of policies and procedures of the Purchasing Department, including those for P-cards, to identify and remove bottlenecks
  - *Well-trained research-support staff members available in the units—Colleges/Schools, departments, and research centers and institutes—to interface between each faculty member and the central research administration (5.2.3)*
  - *Team concept for sponsored-project administration, involving SPS, C&GA, and unit research administrators (5.2.4)*
  - *Commitment to customer service in sponsored-project administration (5.2.5)*
    - New leadership for sponsored-project administration, working in partnership with dedicated and receptive staff in SPS, C&GA, and the units, to instill commitment to customer service throughout the operation
    - One-stop, up-to-date, accurate web page that includes both pre- and post-award and that includes all information for proposal development, submission, and award management
- ***Consolidation and streamlining of all nonfinancial compliance functions (5.3)***

These recommendations are summarized in the following organizational chart, which shows the structure of the resulting research administration and also tries to indicate the required changes in allocation of resources and staffing levels, in organizational culture and attitude, and in communication and accountability. The chart shows only the structure necessary for carrying out the two primary missions of the research office and does not include essential support positions in the OVPR, such as a Financial Officer. Our full set of recommendations is given in Section 5.



### Structures of research administration at other research universities

To calibrate our recommended structure for the OVPR, we examined the organizational chart of the research office at the six universities most recently invited to join the Association of American Universities, the organization of the leading research universities in North America. These six universities are the following (the year is the year of admission to the AAU, and the dollar figure is expenditures from the NSF document *Academic Research and Development Expenditures: Fiscal Year 2005*):

• Emory University	1996	\$334M
• University of California, Davis	1996	\$547M
• University of California, Irvine	1996	\$277M
• University of California, Santa Barbara	1996	\$165M
• State University of New York, Stony Brook	2001	\$212M
• Texas A&M University	2001	\$480M

The research office of each of these universities is headed by a Vice President (or Vice Chancellor). All are organized to do sponsored-project administration, and all have Associate or Assistant VPs or Directors to deal with one or more of research development, nonfinancial compliance, economic development and industrial relations, research centers and institutes, information technology, and graduate studies.

It is notable that UC Davis, with research expenditures of \$547M, has just four Associate VCs (2.5 FTE) in its Office of Research, 1.0 FTE to manage pre-award (post-award fiscal management is located outside the Office of Research) and nonfinancial compliance and 1.5 FTE for economic development, tech transfer, industrial relations, and the 44 organized research centers that report directly to the Office of Research. The Office of Sponsored Programs, which handles pre-award, has 26 sponsored-projects officers, and Associate VC Lynn Chronister reported in a phone conversation, "We've grown a lot, and we need more."

Emory uses a structure similar to what we are recommending: an Associate VP for Research Administration, reporting to the VP for Research Administration and the VP for Finance, manages both pre- and post-award administration; two other Associate VPs handle nonfinancial compliance and tech transfer. Emory's pre-award Office of Sponsored Programs has a Director and nineteen sponsored-projects officers.

UCSB's Office of Research is run by a VC for Research and a single Assistant VC, who handles pre-award, compliance, research development, and information technology. The pre-award Office of Sponsored Projects has a Director, who supervises thirteen sponsored-projects officers. Post-award fiscal management is located in the business office, outside the Office of Research.

For comparison, UNM's FY2005 R&D expenditures were \$179M, roughly half of which is administered in the HSC. Our main-campus pre-award office has four sponsored-projects officers and two professional interns. These comparisons suggest that UNM's research office could be administered effectively by two Associate VPs and that our pre-award office needs additional personnel.

### 3 Research Study Group: Mission and mechanisms

The Research Study Group (RSG) was commissioned by the Provost/Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs ([Provost's charge](#)) to examine UNM's main-campus research administration, from birth to close-out of a sponsored project, and to recommend measures for improvement. The Provost's charge emphasized that the RSG's activities and this final report should maintain the confidentiality of any material collected from individuals. The RSG's study has been supported by the Office of Vice President for Research and Economic Development (OVPRED) and by the Associate Vice President for Financial Services/Controller (AVP/FS).

The focuses of our study have been the following: (i) the primary main-campus pre-award office, Sponsored Projects Services (SPS), located within the OVPRED; (ii) the primary main-campus post-award office, Contract & Grant Accounting (C&GA), which reports to the AVP/FS; (iii) research-support staff and PIs in the units and their interactions with the central research administration; and (iv) overall management of sponsored-research administration by the OVPRED and the AVP/FS. In addition to these primary focuses, our study has considered the interfaces with nonfinancial compliance, the Health Sciences Center (HSC), and the University Counsel.

The RSG began its study in mid-February, shortly after receiving its charge from the Provost. The first task we set for ourselves was to construct a flowchart of the offices, processes, and procedures that are involved in the administration of a sponsored project. This flowchart, somewhat humorously dubbed [A Hitchhiker's Guide to Research Administration at UNM](#), was our attempt to understand the entire process from the birth of a research idea to the close-out of a sponsored project. It helped us to identify points in the process that would become the focuses of our study.

After constructing this flowchart, the RSG began putting in place mechanisms for communicating with and gathering input from the UNM research community. These mechanisms include the following:

- RSG web page (<http://research.unm.edu/rsg/>).
- On-line [survey questionnaires](#), one aimed at faculty/PIs and the other at research-support staff in the units. These questionnaires were available from 10 April to 8 May. The faculty/PI questionnaire garnered 203 responses, representing about 600 sponsored projects (since 1 January 2005), and there were 50 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- [Advisory Groups](#) in each College/School to gather input from faculty.
- A [Research Administrators Advisory Group](#) to gather input and advice from research administrators, both in the central administration and in Colleges/Schools, departments, and research centers.
- One-on-one and group interviews of central-administration research-support staff in SPS and C&GA.
- Interviews of senior administrators.
- Confidential input by e-mail to [rsg@unm.edu](mailto:rsg@unm.edu).

- [Study](#) of UNM research administration by a team of four consultants from the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA). The NCURA Review Team assessed UNM's research policies and procedures relative to national standards. During a site visit 15–18 April, the NCURA Team met with PIs, research administrators, and research-support staff. The NCURA Team submitted its [final report](#) at the end of May; it should be considered as a part of this report.

The scope of the RSG's activities is indicated by the [calendar of meetings](#) the RSG has conducted since beginning its work in mid-February. The RSG's aim from the beginning has been to conduct its study in as open and transparent a way as possible, consistent with the need to maintain the confidentiality of individual input.

During the course of the RSG's work, one member of the committee found it necessary to withdraw and was replaced by Monica Fishel, who had been providing support to the RSG and who had participated from the beginning in all the committee's work and deliberations. The RSG was fortunate that Ms. Fishel was available to bring the committee back up to full strength.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Summary of findings

Through the mechanisms summarized above, the RSG has developed a well defined perspective on research administration at UNM. This perspective includes several positive findings.

- We found dedicated research-support staff throughout the University, both in the central administration and in the units.
- The University has a highly motivated faculty, which is very successful in securing sponsored projects.
- We experienced a profoundly positive response to our study across the main-campus research community.
- There exists a strong faculty/staff constituency for positive, substantive, and structural change in research administration.

These positive aspects make us confident that the changes we recommend will be well received and that their implementation and the resulting improvements in research administration will be a matter of concern for faculty and staff across the main campus.

The RSG's primary finding is that there are system-wide failings in research administration at UNM, resulting in a crisis that requires the immediate attention of UNM's senior administration. In this subsection we describe the five major problems we have found. We summarize results from the survey questionnaires and other input to the RSG in Section 4.3.

#### 4.1.1 *Serious problems of management and structure in OVPRED*

To UNM's faculty and to the RSG, the focus of the OVPRED seems to have been on building relations with various external communities, including government at all levels, the nearby national labs, and the public, and on securing large, "target-of-opportunity"

projects based on these relationships. Although building such relations is of value to the University, it does not by itself contribute to the University's research enterprise. Moreover, the targets of opportunity are generally developed using a top-down approach, too often do not draw on the research expertise of UNM's faculty, and thus do not contribute to the long-term health and viability of UNM's research enterprise.

One consequence is that the OVPRED has a top-heavy administrative structure that is disproportionately focused on relation building and on securing large projects. Some of this is evident from the [OVPRED organizational chart](#), with its proliferation of Vice Presidents in charge of partnering with external communities and securing and administering special projects. The most serious consequence has been chronic neglect of the essential pre-award functions in SPS, about which we say more below.

Despite the focus of attention and resources on securing large projects, the OVPRED does not have effective mechanisms for ensuring the success of large projects once they are awarded. One faculty contribution to the RSG put it this way:

*Successful completion and operation of large projects requires an entirely different level of effort relative to smaller projects. ... Experience indicates that while administrators are often willing to work diligently towards establishing a large project, they then expect the same infrastructure that supports the \$100k grants and contracts to support the \$10M projects. This is inappropriate because of scale.*

Many of the functions of the OVPRED, especially nonfinancial compliance, are fragmented and thus not organized along the most efficient lines. In particular, the office of Research Development Services (RDS) has acquired a variety of functions not clearly related to its primary task of supporting large research initiatives. On top of all this, the lack of a research presence at the top of C&GA has meant that this office has a bias toward zero-risk financial compliance that is contrary to the University's research mission. Correcting all these problems requires a substantial restructuring and re-allocation of resources within OVPRED.

When the RSG looked at the OVPRED budget, we found that there is no integrated, transparent budget process for research administration. One line of evidence for this is that our discussions of budget issues with senior research administrators generally descended into reports of how other offices raid the F&A revenues that properly belong to the OVPRED. We did not find it possible to determine how the OVPRED budget is actually spent. There needs to be a university-wide commitment to appropriate funding of research administration. This commitment should be accompanied by a requirement for a transparent, accountable budget process for research administration, both within the research office and within the units.

#### **4.1.2 Dysfunction in pre-award administration in SPS as a consequence of lack of resources and absence of effective leadership**

The pre-award functions in SPS have been neglected to the point of dysfunction both for providers and for customers. The problem does not lie with the efforts of the staff of SPS, who are dedicated and hard working. The problems arise out of an absence of effective leadership from the OVPRED, which has left SPS understaffed, undertrained, and starved of the resources necessary to do its job. The result is that the staff of SPS is stressed and

unable to provide timely and efficient service to the research community. In addition, there is little, if any institutional memory of written policies and procedures because the staff does not have the time to devote to creating such a resource.

The NCURA consultants summarize the situation this way:

*Among the most urgent structural issues is the need to address the resources in the office of Sponsored Projects Services. ... In the years the office has existed without a strong leader at its head, SPS has lost its voice in the university. Without a leader, the staff members have tried to perform the critical activities of proposal review and contract negotiation, but they have come up short. Their resource needs are now extreme, and an experienced leader is essential to provide guidance in a number of areas, including staff training, adequacy of current staffing levels, directions for improvements, communications with the campus, and clarification of the role of the office in the research infrastructure.*

It is no exaggeration to say that SPS is in crisis and that urgent action is required to stabilize the office and address its problems.

#### **4.1.3 Crippling, risk-averse post-award fiscal management and need for better customer-service orientation in C&GA**

Fiscal management of awards, the primary post-award function, which is carried out by C&GA, is unnecessarily cumbersome and frustrating for PIs and their staffs. The staff of C&GA is dedicated and hard working, but operates within a straitjacket of rules and regulations aimed at zero-risk financial compliance. The NCURA Review Team concludes:

*The university has taken an extremely conservative, safe, and high-effort approach to control and manage all risk associated with sponsored program fund expenditures. This approach exceeds the norm of most research universities. The extensive internal controls result in delays and frustrations for researchers and they ultimately hamper the research process. ... While this high level of risk aversion may seem appropriate from an auditor's point of view, it creates real hardship in the conduct of research and is not the norm found with most research universities.*

The resulting delays in transactions, particularly in purchases of sophisticated laboratory equipment, are not just an inconvenience, but rather have a direct, highly negative impact on the research enterprise. A document submitted to the RSG from the faculty in Physics and Astronomy summarized the situation this way:

*Cutting-edge scientific research is, by its very definition, time sensitive. In many circumstances, we ... are competing against institutions that provide services, such as grant preparation and approval, and especially equipment acquisition, at a much faster rate. ... Based on responses from multiple table-top optical physics research groups, orders over \$2.5k require an average of 23 business days to be approved and submitted to the vendor. ... This delay is completely unacceptable, especially in the context of emergency situations where replacement equipment is needed to repair a failed apparatus. Every*

*day between a requested order and when the order is actually placed is lost time from the perspective of the research program.*

This bias toward zero risk, driven by a concern to protect the university from liability, comes from the senior administration in the AVP/FS's office. In our interviews with C&GA staff, we found a group of contract and grant accountants who are genuinely concerned about serving the needs of the research community. Yet frustration in administering contracts and grants is the number-one complaint of faculty in our survey. We believe that adherence to rules aimed at zero risk often leads to an adversarial relationship that gives the sense that serving PIs is a secondary concern. It is urgent that more flexible, PI-friendly methods for ensuring financial compliance be adopted at C&GA.

In addition to financial-compliance issues, other problems within C&GA include assignment of index numbers on the receipt of an award from SPS, invoicing of sponsors, and closeout of sponsored projects, all of which are often not carried out in a timely fashion. Banner, UNM's new business software, has not been configured in a user-friendly way and thus, despite its potential for making available timely and accurate account information, is essentially unused by PIs.

Addressing these problems at C&GA requires that the needs of the research enterprise be injected into the policies and procedures of the office and into its daily operation. We believe this requires that a professional research administrator supervise the office.

#### ***4.1.4 Insufficient specialized research-support staff in most of the units***

The primary interface between a PI and the central research administration is usually a college, department, or center administrator. Usually these staff members have primary responsibilities other than providing support to PIs, and they are often not trained in research administration. As a result, the interaction between unit research-support staff and both pre- and post-award staff is too often frustrating for both sides, exacerbating considerably the problems identified in Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 above. One notable result of our survey is that faculty in large research centers, which do have specialized staff to support PIs and to interface with the central research administration, generally report a more favorable experience in dealing with the central research administration. It is essential that all faculty have access to a trained research-support staff member, who acts as a buffer between the PI and the central research administration, and that the units invest suitable resources to make this service available.

The above four problems are the focus of our report. We also draw attention to a fifth problem, having to do with the organization and operation of nonfinancial compliance.

#### ***4.1.5 Cumbersome and inefficient operation of nonfinancial compliance***

There is an unnecessarily complicated and fragmented organization for nonfinancial compliance issues on the main campus and in the interface with the Health Sciences Center. A good part of the fragmentation is a consequence of having separate compliance offices on the main campus and at the Health Sciences Center. Considerable savings in time and perhaps some savings in money could be achieved by consolidating all nonfinancial compliance in a single office that serves the entire campus. Despite its being somewhat outside our charge, we include this finding—and a related recommendation—in our list, because (i) nonfinancial compliance was a prime topic for the NCURA consultants,

drawing their attention sufficiently to produce a series of recommendations, (ii) the operation of nonfinancial compliance is impacting researchers across the campus, and (iii) any recommendation for substantial restructuring of the OVPRED should address nonfinancial compliance.

## **4.2 Costs and consequences**

### **4.2.1 *Widespread faculty frustration and disaffection, across all ranks, sometimes contributing to faculty leaving UNM***

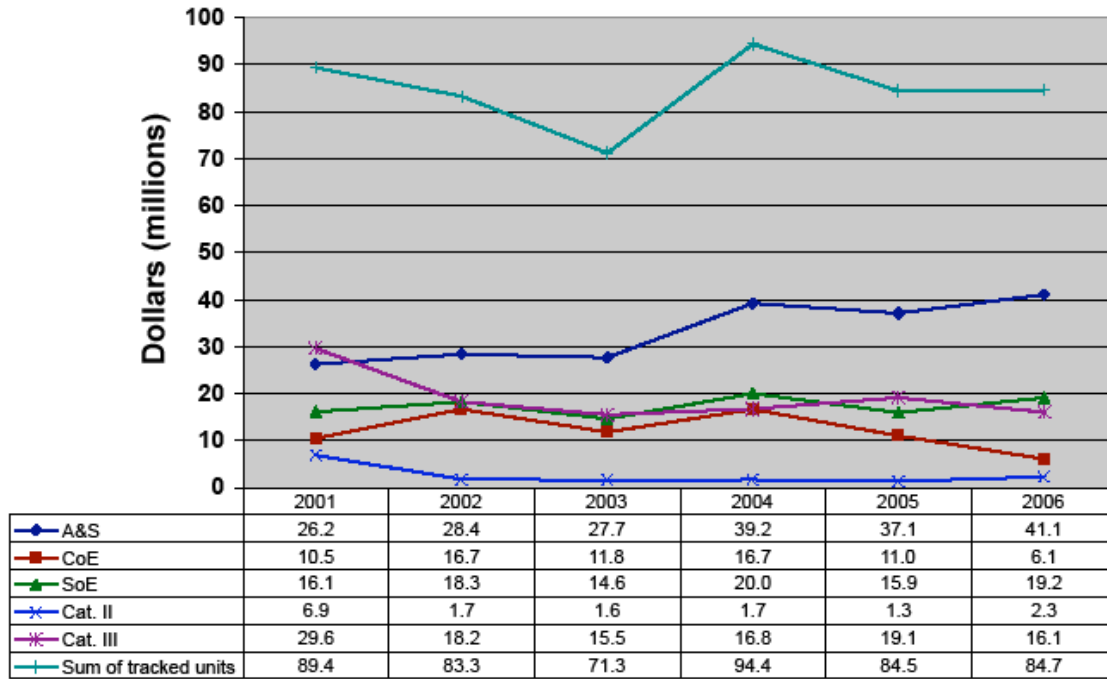
Management of sponsored research at UNM has become so frustrating for PIs that some faculty have left or are planning to leave, and others are forgoing the writing of proposals in favor of more productive pursuits or are getting out from under main-campus research administration through consulting or submission of proposals through HSC or other institutions, where that is possible. The ability to attract productive new faculty will suffer as knowledge of our research-administration problems percolates into the national and international research community. The focus of OVPRED senior administration on hitting home runs and the consequent neglect of the administration of pre-award research administration, together with increasingly cumbersome post-award fiscal management, is thinning out the minor leagues from which must come UNM's future home-run hitters.

### **4.2.2 *Stagnation of the main-campus sponsored research enterprise, leaving it short of its potential***

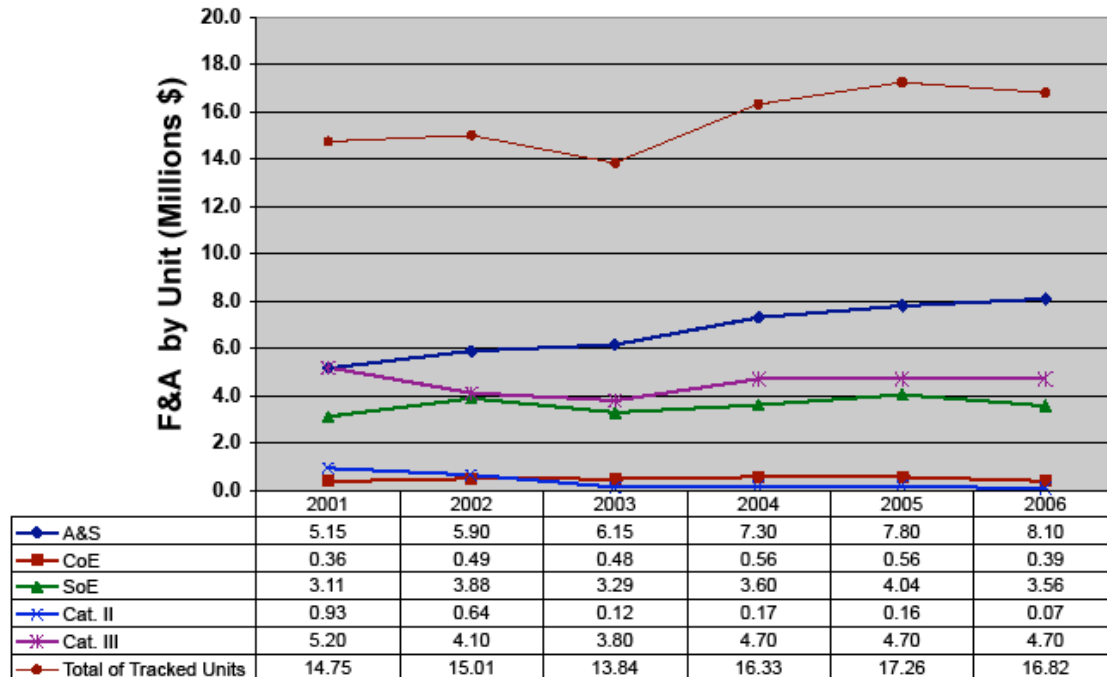
As shown in the Figure 1 below, main-campus research funding has stagnated since the beginning of the decade, with a sharp, largely A&S-driven increase between 2003 and 2004, followed by an overall decline to roughly the 2001 level in 2006. Figures 2 and 3, for F&A dollars generated and for number of proposals submitted, tell a similar story. Data for Figures 1–3 were derived from the Awards Annual Report for the years 2001 to 2006, which are available on the OVPRED web site.

Continued dysfunction in main-campus research administration will exacerbate these trends, with consequent negative impact on the university's reputation and ability to fulfill both its teaching and research missions. Although UNM's faculty have shown remarkable persistence and dedication in pursuing sponsored-research projects, persistence and dedication cannot and should not be expected to overcome systemic problems in the central research administration. In an increasingly competitive national environment for research funding, it is incumbent on the University to make sure that internal constraints do not stand in the way of faculty pursuit of sponsored research.

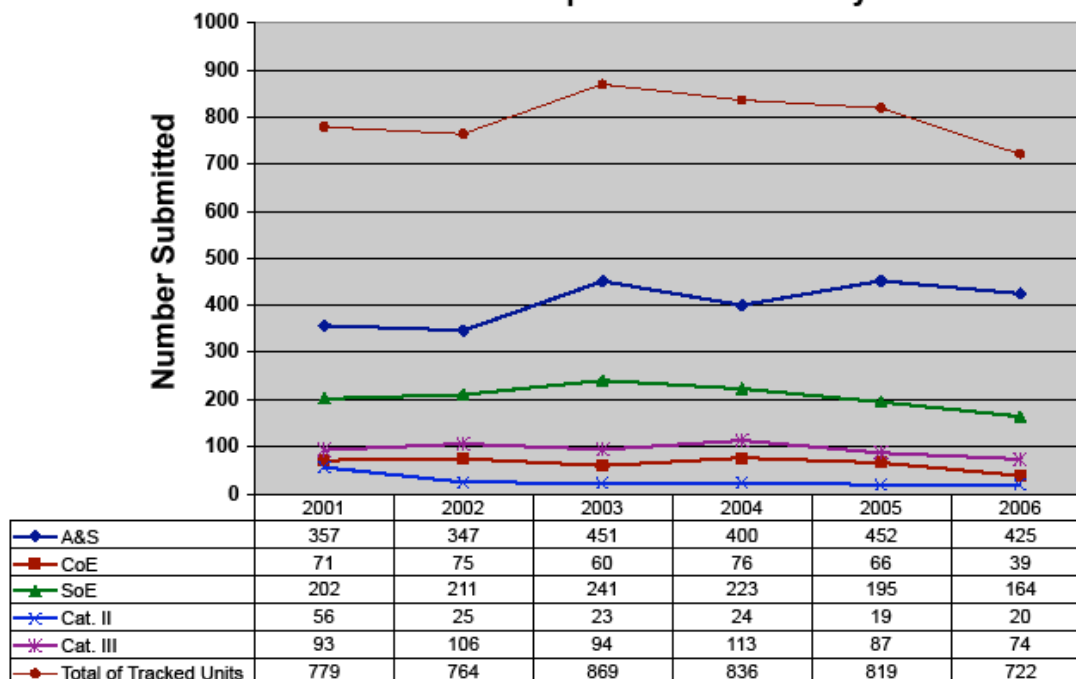
**Figure 1.**  
**Main Campus C&G Award Dollars by Unit including Totals**



**Figure 2.**  
**F&A Dollars Generated by Unit**



**Figure 3.**  
**Number of Proposals Submitted by Unit**



#### 4.2.3 Reactive, F&A-driven research agenda

The emphasis of the OVPRED on relation building and targets of opportunity has favored a top-down, reactive, F&A-driven research agenda that often does not advance the academic enterprise and does not enhance the long-term health and viability of UNM’s research enterprise. Resources in OVPRED need to be redirected to supporting sponsored-project administration and to identifying and facilitating research initiatives that are based on the expertise and talents of UNM’s faculty.

#### 4.2.4 Negative impact on UNM participation in economic development initiatives

Local and state economic development is one by-product of a well-run research enterprise at a public research university. As the flagship research university in New Mexico, UNM plays an important economic-development role for New Mexico and the greater Albuquerque metro area. Start-up companies based on university research and the availability of specialized faculty expertise are direct contributors to economic development. In addition, a university with a national and international reputation makes an intangible contribution to an attractive business climate within a community. Though the University makes its biggest impact locally and within the state through its teaching function, its national and international reputation is mainly founded on the visibility of its major research programs and scholarly activities. Stagnation of sponsored research at UNM will have a negative impact on all these economic-development activities, both tangible and intangible. By pursuing a research agenda for large projects that is mainly

reactive, UNM has diminished its capacity to participate in shaping the state and local economic-development agenda.

### **4.3 Results from survey questionnaires**

The on-line [survey questionnaires](#) that we prepared in order to consult faculty and unit-research-support-staff opinion were lengthy. (This observation is confirmed by several comments we received from faculty in the course of their responses.) The RSG anticipated this and chose to provide an opportunity for respondents to give any input they desired regarding UNM's research administration, by answering a "tell your story" question after the initial profile questions and then skipping the remainder of the questionnaire. Providing this option and thereby not sacrificing length turned out to be a good choice. Many more faculty and staff participants than we expected chose to provide in-depth responses to the open-ended questions and completed the questionnaire in its entirety. Two-hundred-three faculty/PI respondents answered the first part of the questionnaire, about 150 continued past the tell-your-story question, and the final questions of the survey drew between 110 and 115 respondents. Fifty staff members participated in the staff survey. Eight of the respondents chose to summarize their experiences without completing the entire survey, and most questions at the end drew from 35 to 40 responses.

#### **4.3.1 Profile of faculty/PI respondents**

Both the faculty/PI and the staff surveys were anonymous. The initial, profiling questions of the faculty/PI on-line survey asked respondents to identify their College or School affiliation, the number of years they had worked at UNM, their rank or title, the number and types of grants they received since 1 January 2005, and the sources of the grants received. The responses suggest that respondents constitute a major cross-section of PIs on campus. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the sample of staff respondents engaged in research-administration support.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the faculty respondents indicated they were affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences, and the largest subgroup among these was in fields of the natural sciences or mathematics (65). Thirty-seven respondents identified their affiliation as being in the social sciences and seventeen in the humanities, making for a total of 119 faculty respondents from A&S. The next largest Colleges/Schools are the School of Engineering (27), the College of Education (12), the College of Fine Arts (8), the Anderson Schools of Management (7), and the School of Medicine (7), with a scattering of faculty who identified themselves according to a center affiliation or who gave multiple college affiliations. Though the survey was aimed at main-campus faculty, the on-line survey did not block the participation of faculty from the School of Medicine, some of whom have joint appointments or affiliations with main-campus departments or who submit joint proposals with main-campus faculty through the main-campus research administration.

The largest single group of PI respondents by rank was full professors (67), followed by associate professors (51) and assistant professors (44). This distribution roughly approximates the distribution of PIs by rank on campus. It is noteworthy that a significant number of PIs who are not in the tenure-track ranks also participated in this survey: fifteen nontenure-track faculty (ranks assistant, associate, and professor), twelve persons who

identified themselves as adjunct faculty, lecturers, or visiting faculty, nine persons with the title Research Scientist, and five nonfaculty PIs.

Over half of the respondents (110 of 203) reported having been employed at least nine years at UNM; only 25 reported two years or less. The respondents in this survey are PIs who have a long-standing experience with UNM and have formulated their opinions about research administration as a consequence of an extended period of interaction with the University. Moreover, they have been active in applying for and receiving grants recently. This group of 203 faculty had received approximately 600 contracts or research grants since 1 January 2005, and about 500 of these came from sources outside the University.

#### *4.3.2 Profile of unit-research-support-staff respondents*

Seventeen of the staff respondents are affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences, thirteen with centers (categories II and III), seven with the School of Engineering, and seven with other colleges or with a branch campus. One respondent declined to identify his/her College/School affiliation.

The staff questionnaire was made available to staff in the central research administration so that they could provide anonymous input outside the individual and group interviews of SPS and C&GA staff, which were a central part of our study. Staff in the central research administration were asked to answer the first few questions, to provide anonymous input at the tell-your-story option, and then to skip the remainder of the questionnaire. Five respondents from the central research administration took advantage of this opportunity.

The duration of employment among the staff respondents is considerably lower than that of faculty/PIs. Fifteen (out of 50) staff respondents had been employed nine years or longer, ten between one and two years, and seven less than twelve months. The principal ranks include eleven program, operations, or business managers, eight department administrators (I, II, and III), seven administrators, and six accountants. The remainder reported a scattering of titles, from program coordinator to financial analyst, or did not report a job title. Of the 42 respondents who continued with the survey past the tell-your-story question, 40 indicated that their unit provides assistance to investigators in preparing and submitting proposals for sponsored research. The vast majority of these (between 35 and 39) reported they prepare budgets or review them, prepare forms (COI, PDS), and provide assistance in obtaining signatures; to a lesser extent (26 or 27 responses), they review proposal materials to ensure compliance with the RFP or BAA or input data in the case of on-line submissions such as Fastlane or grants.gov.

#### *4.3.3 Survey results: Quotes from open-ended responses*

The level of dissatisfaction that faculty/staff expressed with sponsored-project administration in this survey is sobering to any observer, regardless of the kinds of qualifications one might want to attach to the data. We present this information from both faculty/PIs and staff in two different ways below: first, in the two boxes in this subsection, we present a representative selection of quotations from the open-ended questions (a more extensive selection of [quotes](#) is available on the RSG web site), and second, in the next subsection, we summarize the quantitative data that emerges from the questions that asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with research services.

The open-ended responses provide important insight into the experiences and opinions that are the basis of the dissatisfaction that is apparent in the numerical data. In presenting

the quotations, spelling has been corrected, and names of offices and abbreviations have been made consistent with those in this report, without drawing attention to these changes. An emphasis in a quote by capitalization or enclosure in asterisks is rendered here in italics, and a deletion from a quotation is indicated by an ellipsis. Redactions have been made where necessary to protect the anonymity of respondents. Redactions and insertions made to clarify the meaning of a quote are indicated by square brackets.

### Selected quotes from faculty/PI questionnaire

UNM has declined significantly in the last several years. We may still qualify as a Research I institution, but the reality is that there is little support for research. The Banner system, plus a sense of increased distrust and accountability, have made us increasingly ineffectual. ... I spend on the order of 20% more effort to conduct the same types of research because of increased paperwork and denials of legitimate purchases. Over the last 10–15 years, the UNM faculty has acted with impressive success to gain external funding with little UNM support, but I expect this will steadily decline in the face of increased hindrances and decreased support for research.

The rules, rates, and regulations for proposal submission listed on the OVPRED website are frequently told to be “out-of-date” by OVPRED personnel. This makes preparing proposals overly time-consuming as they need to be redone several times to account for unpublished regulations. The level of consistency on these issues needs to be dramatically increased. Internal processing of paperwork relies on a slow and antiquated network of “runners” who send paper documents from one place to another. UNM should move to a system of proposal submission that is entirely electronic. UNM should be embarrassed that they have not. The staff that handles proposal preparation and submission is too small and overburdened. UNM needs to hire more people to handle proposals and grants if it wants to be a premier research university. The UNM proposal system frequently treats PIs who bring in money to the university as “the enemy” engaged in some sort of scheme to defraud the university. Research administrators should be given a clear mandate that their purpose is to serve and assist PIs, not to have an antagonistic attitude towards them. This antagonism is present not only in personal interactions but also in overly risk-averse internal UNM regulations enforced on everyone to prevent repeats of extreme isolated incidents that may have occurred years ago. The only truly zero-risk approach to research is not to do any at all.

This office [SPS] is under staffed and overloaded by the demands placed on it. More experienced personnel need to be assigned to this office. Also we do not have enough content oriented specialists available in either the pre-proposal or final submission process. We are all (staff and submitters) under-supported in this process. This is a critical issue to the future of our effectiveness and success.

The SPS office simply needs more staff, and a central manager, to function more effectively.

[In pre-award there are] too few staff to do the processing. Too many unnecessary people at the top.

Bottom line [for SPS]: allocate more budget money to experienced IP negotiators and contract negotiators and eliminate positions such as those occupied by [various VPs in OVPRED]. ... [These] are useless admin jobs that give minimal value to the people raising the research dollars and scavenge money from the kind of people we really need. Become *service* oriented at SPS. Don't tell me what I should be doing. Help make my job easier. *I am the customer!!!*

[The] “feel” of too many interactions with C&G Accounting seems to be oriented toward control and interference rather than facilitating efficient expenditure of funds for project goals and reasonable oversight of financial and management obligations. Thus, these interactions often communicate a sense of suspicion and control, rather than collaboration and appropriate correction when needed. I “get” the need for real oversight, given past abuses, but at present responsible PIs are paying the price of others’ past irresponsibility.

**Selected quotes from faculty/PI questionnaire (continued)**

I am more disturbed by post-award functions at UNM than by pre-award functions. The post-award organizations either do not understand that they are service organizations with respect to research, or they are understaffed or mismanaged.

Grants closing years after the end of the award, invoices being sent out months after the end of a grant (that were submitted on time), lack of follow-up, lack of interest. I don't know if it is lack of personnel or deficiencies in the personnel, but this is probably the largest problem from my perspective. Part of this is because, I can write the grant myself, I can formulate the budget, I can work with the pre-award folks, but this is completely out of my hands and we have to rely on C&GA completely.

[T]he institution I was at prior to UNM had lots of grant support—faculty pretty much did their research and someone else worried about the enormous amount of paperwork. I was shocked when I came here and found out that I was on my own. Also, in my discipline, being able to have cash on hand is an essential protocol component. Paying folks after the fact and only by check adds a whole nother dimension and ruins in many cases the saliency of the experiment. I am unable to do my work at UNM since the institution of the no-cash policy. As it is, I have stopped doing what I do.

It [Banner] is unintelligible, unusable, cumbersome and worthless to a PI.

[T]he problem is unevenness across departments and colleges. Larger research centers and a few departments are excellent and savvy, but many provide inadequate education, supervision and support for faculty investigators. Central Research Administration is unable to facilitate accounting and purchasing because these research functions do not report to the research administration.

We need to become a service organization. Rather than train people in each department to become pre- and post-award administrators, and expect that the faculty will develop their own independent accounting and grants management functions, we should be developing efficient and effective centralized structures with highly trained and valued individuals who will be able to provide service to the faculty and manage the grants properly.

At my previous university (in particular) the administration encouraged and fostered research, and they understood its importance to the university. In fact, research funding exceeded state funding by a large(!) factor—and was sustained at that level. My most vivid recollection: the VPR coming into our lab unannounced and uninvited, shirt-tail hanging out, hair tousled, asking how things were going, and did we need anything more from him or from his organization. He was supporting research, not “managing” it. This actually happened more than once. At the time, this seemed funny—now it seems vital.

[At three other universities]: much higher level of service and overall professionalism. Especially at [one of these universities], the staff have the attitude that they are there to do all they can to help research and grant getting activities. At the University level here, the staff often act like they are doing you a favor for just doing their job.

In an attempt to obviate the “grass is always greener” syndrome, I've stared at this question [about positive aspects of UNM research administration relative to respondent's previous institutions] while I had a cup of coffee. Honestly, the only things I've thought worth saving are certain individuals. Not very encouraging, I'm afraid.

### **Selected quotes from staff questionnaire**

UNM would be well-advised to put more resources into front-line offices. The structure of the research enterprise at UNM is extraordinarily top-heavy, especially in regard to staffing and salary levels.

I have worked with a couple of different administrators in the Sponsored Project Services office. I have always found them to be very helpful and responsive. However, they are also very short handed and need more staff.

SPS is extremely understaffed which prohibits significant assistance to principal investigators and their departments.

I would suggest that minor proposals be separated from large grants. Also, we need to recognize that many proposals are for events that increase community involvement. These proposals quite often require cost share and do not pay F&A. These proposals are no less valuable to the University, but their focus is different than the large grants.

The HSC uses a budget template that automatically calculates future year increases for fringe, COLA, and other standard incremental increases. This template would be very useful in developing complex, multi-year budgets and would provide accurate information to the researcher and administrative support before the information is submitted to pre-award. It also clarifies expectations and eliminates the need for constant revisions and adjustments. Although it may be difficult to learn to use at first, it would actually save time and effort for all sides.

There is another serious problem that I need to mention. Before Banner the Sponsored Projects Office assigned the account numbers or index codes when the award was received. That responsibility was reassigned to the Office of Contract and Grant Accounting when Banner was implemented. This has resulted in an additional delay of one to two days to several weeks between the time an award is received and the time the department/PI receives the index code. This is a disaster for small, fast turn-around contracts, especially field work projects.

Contract and Grant Accounting and Purchasing really need some customer service classes. These two offices really are difficult to work with.

C&GA has a very heavy workload, but most of the work is of their own making. They have put a heavy emphasis on compliance. They focus on little things in order to avoid any risk, at the expense of processing expenditure documents, invoicing and collection. The refusal to take risk is hampering the research mission at UNM. The accountants are slow to respond. They behave as if every faculty member and their staff are crooks just waiting to be discovered. Customer service is nonexistent. In fact, they fail to recognize the campus as customers.

I am sorely disappointed in the behavior of C&GA. They provide little customer service. They are slow to invoice and collect because a majority of their energies are focused on compliance. Close outs are years behind. We are currently struggling with them on a disputed transaction that occurred two years ago. C&GA approved transferring this expense to the account and the agency paid the final invoice. What will the agency think if they now receive a refund? Doesn't this delay tarnish the reputation of the institution?

**Selected quotes from staff questionnaire (continued)**

The one item that is most frustrating is that the majority of our awards are under expanded authority and C&GA seems to pick at all purchases by saying that it isn't in the award or there is no line item, when in fact through expanded authority we can purchase if it is reasonable, allocable, and allowable. We are then requested to go to the funding agency and we look foolish for asking for individual items when this should have been taken care of at the University. Another example was Dr. X order[ed] supplies and they would not approve them because "how do we know that it will be used for that award only." Mostly it is the questioning of our purchases and the tone of their questions. This office acts as if we are robbing the University or that our office is unethical.

I believe Banner is an improvement on the old FRS system although I still feel I need to keep a shadow system for accuracy and proper reconciliation of our accounts (indexes).

While Banner can be cumbersome, it does provide reasonably accurate and timely information on the status of accounts or index codes. However, it would be very helpful if the underlying IT support were more robust. Banner and Hyperion are too often down and this does affect our workflow.

Banner is a huge problem. Often more than five screens have to be viewed before full information is obtained on the issue being researched. It is not a user-friendly tool. Hyperion is off-line more than it is on-line. When approving a purchase I still have to call the originator of the paperwork to find out more information on the purchase. Everyone who works with Banner has experienced an increase in their workload by a factor of three. Everyone is weary and overwhelmed with the inadequacies of the system. It is under such conditions that mistakes are frequently made ... .

[The OVPRED webs]ite is not maintained in an up to date fashion. Not user friendly. Appears to be designed by people who have no experience outside their Central office. Does not meet the needs for Depts/Centers/Colleges very well. They need to get input from the staff who are needing to research information. It is difficult to follow and the site does not flow well.

[The C&GA website] doesn't seem to be very informative. It only has one screen and some forms. As important as this department is to research grants, it seems like there could be much more information pertaining to their activities.

We all have a role in this process and should take responsibility for our parts. PIs should be more considerate whenever possible by making an effort to avoid procrastination. Each time a proposal is submitted late it creates a time crunch for *everyone*—those at the department level who do the reviews, those who sign at the college level, and finally SPS who has to stop and drop everything to process that late proposal. ... Administrators like myself should focus on customer service and should be properly trained to assist in the processing of the proposals. SPS and C&GA should also focus on customer service and act as a knowledgeable guide in the proposal process rather than police creating "red tape." ... They should work on being positive and offer possible solutions to problems. ... PIs need to be reasonable in their demands and understand that there are things the University simply cannot do and may not want to do.

#### 4.3.4 Survey results: Indices of satisfaction with sponsored-project services

We summarize the numerical data by dividing the survey questions into two groups: the first group of questions has to do with respondent satisfaction with services provided by SPS or C&GA, and the second group contains questions that ask the respondent to compare the quality of services provided by the central research administration (without identifying SPS or C&GA or other offices such as Research Development Services or Research Ethics and Compliance Services) with services from the College/School and from the department or center. In the open-ended comments, some respondents made a sharp distinction between the services provided by their center and by their department.

Table 1 presents the text for the first group of questions asked of PI respondents and the number of respondents for each question. (The number varies because some respondents chose not to answer and others chose the not-applicable option.) Table 2 reproduces the text and number of respondents for the second group of questions.

**Table 1**

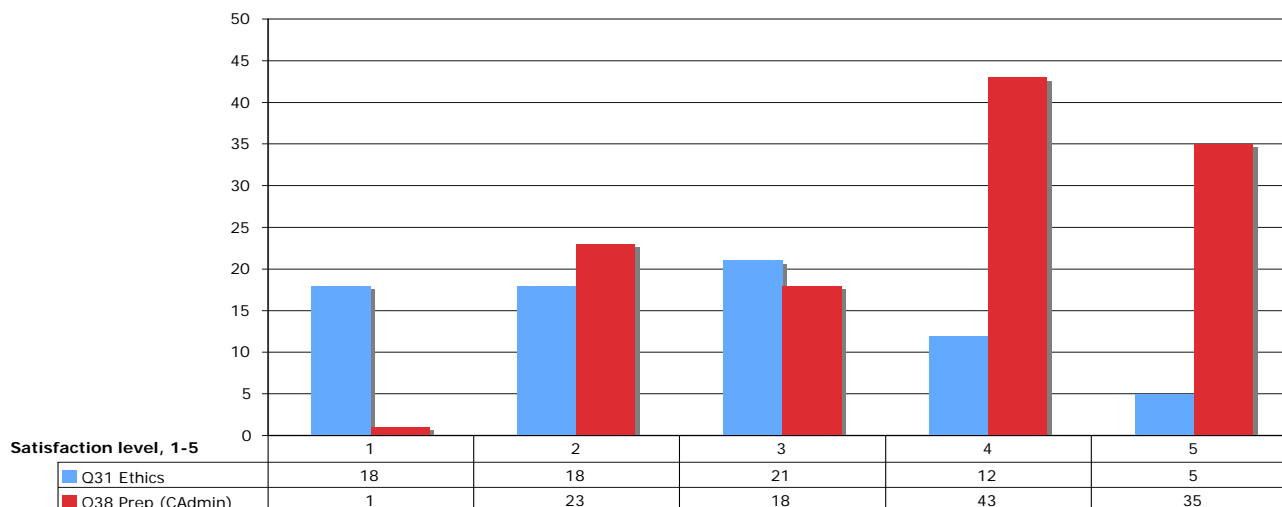
<b>Question</b>	<b>Abbrev</b>	<b>Text of question</b>	<b>n=</b>
Q28	SPS Prop	If you submitted at least one proposal since January 1, 2005, how satisfied are you with the proposal submission service provided by the staff of Sponsored Projects Services?	138
Q31	Ethics	If you submitted at least one of the above since January 1, 2005, how satisfied were you with your interaction with Research Ethics and Compliance Services? Check the appropriate number where "1" indicates very satisfied and "5" indicates not at all satisfied.	103
Q34	SPS Cting	If you had at least one active project since January 1, 2005, how satisfied were you with the contracting services provided by the staff of Sponsored Project Services (SPS)?	86
		<i>If you had any interactions with Contract and Grant Accounting (CGA) since January 1, 2005, how satisfied were you with the following services or interactions?</i>	
Q56	Balances	Status of account balances and transactions	89
Q57	Trans Cert	Transaction corrections	81
Q58	Effort	Effort certification (distribution and collection)	93
Q59	Regs	Clarification of federal and other funding agency regulations	78
Q60	Rev Fin	Review of financial transactions to ensure compliance (award provisions, regulations, etc.)	75
Q61	Close-outs	Account close-outs and financial report(s)	82
Q62	Invoicing	Vendor and consultant invoicing	71

**Table 2**

<b>Ques- tion</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Abbrev</b>	<b>Text of question</b>	<b>n=</b>
Q36	Dept		[unit] provides general support for researchers in	132
Q37	Coll	Prep Prop	preparing, processing or submitting proposals	132
Q38	Cadm			132
Q39	Dept		[unit] establishes a process for proposal review	130
Q40	Coll	Timely	and submittal that facilitates timely submission of	128
Q41	Cadm		materials	126
Q42	Dept			130
Q43	Coll	Budget	[unit] assists in the preparation of a budget	128
Q44	Cadm			129
Q45	Dept		[unit] provides administrative assistance,	129
Q46	Coll	AdminAsst	including helping with communications among	128
Q47	Cadm		project participants and filling out application	128
Q48	Dept		forms on paper or on line	125
Q49	Coll	Seed \$	[unit] facilitates efforts to obtain larger grants by	129
Q50	Cadm		providing seed monies to develop proposals or	127
			pilot studies	
Q65	Dept		[unit] handles communications with funding	117
Q66	Coll	Comms	agency and other relevant parties professionally	117
Q67	Cadm		and efficiently	115
Q68	Dept			117
Q69	Coll	Purch	[unit] processes purchasing needs and	117
Q70	Cadm		expenditures in a timely and efficient manner	114
Q71	Dept		[unit] handles the accounting process, including	115
Q72	Coll	Avoid PI	using the Banner system to minimize unneeded	117
Q73	Cadm		interventions by the PI	114
Q74	Dept			114
Q75	Coll	Deadlines	[unit] monitors reporting and other post-award	113
Q76	Cadm		deadlines and assists when needed	113
Q77	Dept		[unit] helps address unexpected issues that arise	114
Q78	Coll		in the execution of a project or administration of a	114
Q79	Cadm	Unexp	grant	112

For each of these services, respondents were asked to rank their level of satisfaction between 1 (very satisfied) and 5 (not at all satisfied). Respondents who chose 1 and 2 were satisfied, those who chose 3 were noncommittal, and those who chose 4 and 5 were dissatisfied with that particular service. Figure 4 reproduces the distribution of faculty responses for two questions, Q31 and Q38 in the tables above. Respondents were far more satisfied with their interaction with Research Ethics and Compliance services (Q31) than with the preparation, processing, and submission of proposals services by the central administration (Q38). Indeed, for Q31, 36 (18 + 18) respondents rated the service 1 or 2, and only 17 (12 + 5) chose 4 or 5, though 21 were noncommittal—a number that is high if one takes into account that satisfied respondents were a minority of the total (36, as compared to 38 noncommittal plus dissatisfied respondents).

**Figure 4**  
**Illustration of faculty satisfaction with research services:**  
**QQs 31 (interaction with ethics and compliance),**  
**38 (Preparation, processing, submission of proposals, C Admin)**



Source: Research Study Group, Faculty on-line survey, April-May 2007. Definitions: 1= very satisfied; 5 = not at all satisfied with this service provided by this unit. See tables 1 and 2 for definitions of service and units. Responses include 9=not applicable. Total Q31 n= 103; Q38 n= 120.

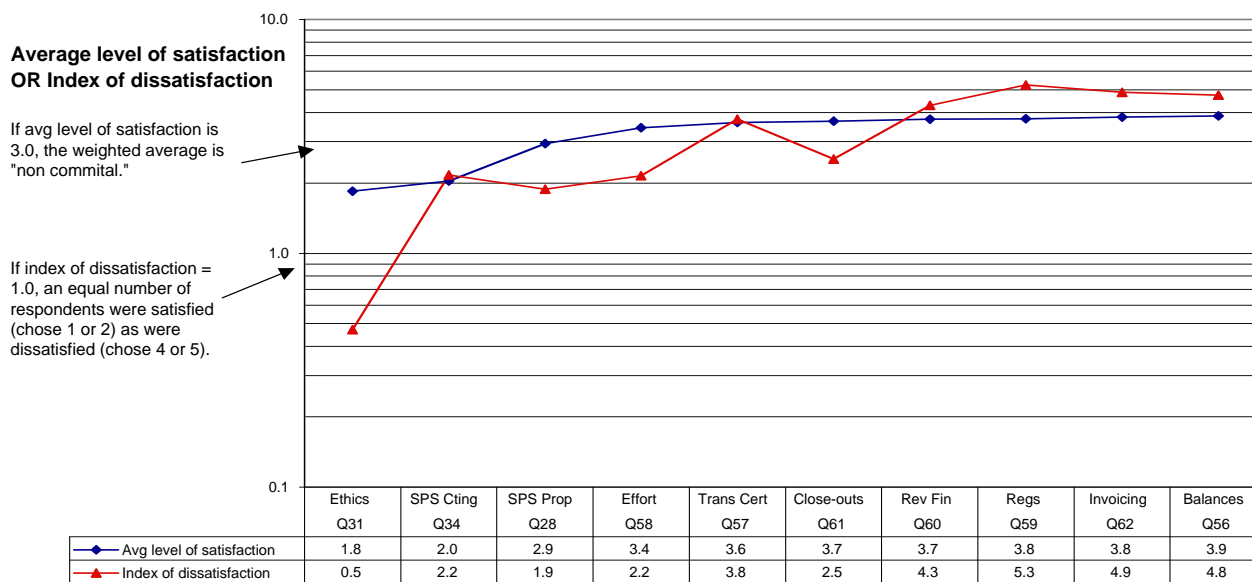
We will use two indicators to measure levels of satisfaction. One is the average of the responses, calculated in the same manner one might a grade-point average. Using this indicator, the average level of satisfaction for Q31 was 2.6, closer to “noncommittal” than to “satisfied.” The level of dissatisfaction for all the other 39 questions was higher. To characterize these levels of dissatisfaction, we find it useful to introduce another measure of dissatisfaction. We term this the index of dissatisfaction and define it as the ratio of dissatisfied respondents (4 and 5) to satisfied respondents (1 and 2), i.e., leaving out noncommittal responses altogether. For Q31, this index suggests a relatively low level of dissatisfaction, since the ratio is 17/36, i.e., 0.47. Put another way, twice as many respondents were satisfied as were dissatisfied with their interaction with Research and Compliance Services.

A different story emerges from the responses to Q38. Here only 24 respondents expressed satisfaction, as compared to 78 who expressed dissatisfaction. In this case, the ratio of dissatisfaction is high, with 3.25 as many respondents indicating dissatisfaction as did satisfaction. The average level of dissatisfaction also was high, standing at 3.7, closer to dissatisfied than noncommittal. For the remaining 38 questions in the PI survey that address levels of satisfaction, we do not report here the detailed distribution of responses for each of the five levels of satisfaction. Instead, we report the averages and/or the index of dissatisfaction as defined above.

Figure 5 below presents the average levels of satisfaction and indices of dissatisfaction for the questions in Table 1, in order from the lowest to highest average (highest to lowest satisfaction). Because of the significant number of noncommittal respondents, the index of dissatisfaction follows a zigzag path from a low of 0.47 to a high of 4.8. Since for this index the distance between 0.5 and 1.0 is the same as between 1.0 and 2.0 (in both cases

one group is twice the size of the other), Figure 5 and subsequent figures use a logarithmic scale.

**Figure 5**  
Indicators of PI satisfaction with SPS and C&GA services



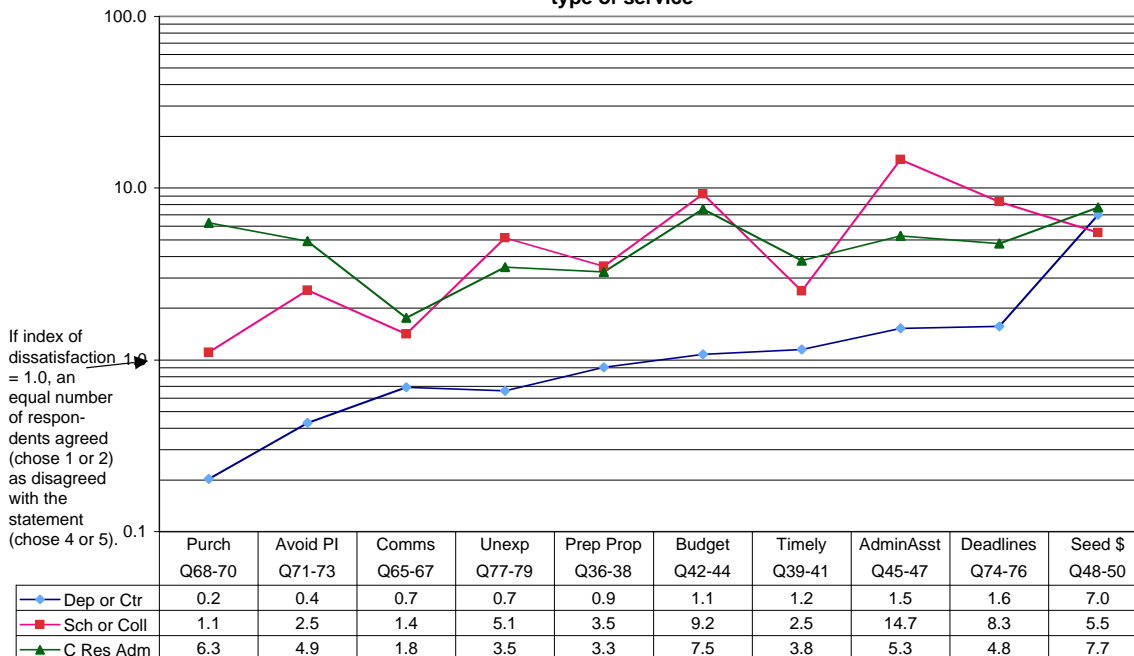
Source: Research Study Group, Faculty Survey, April-May 2007. Definitions: average satisfaction = average of responses from 1 to 5; Index of dissatisfaction = (respondents that chose 4 and 5) / respondents who chose 1 and 2. Smallest n=71 (Q62); highest n=138 (Q28). Three central administration units: Research Ethics & Compliance Services (Q31); SPS (QQ 28 and 34); and C&GA (all remaining questions).

For the second group of questions, the levels of dissatisfaction are so high that we only present data for the index of dissatisfaction (Figure 6). Generally speaking, PIs were more satisfied with the services provided by their department or center, though only for two questions (Q68 and Q70) were the number of satisfied respondents more than twice as large as the number of dissatisfied respondents. For the remainder of the questions, PIs did not evaluate their departments or centers well. Their highest index of dissatisfaction was with a service that few departments or centers are equipped to supply, i.e., seed money to initiate pilot studies for new proposals and projects.

The index of dissatisfaction was an order of magnitude higher, more or less, with respect to the same services provided (or not provided) by Colleges/Schools and by the central research administration. The differences between the level of the index from one question to another or between central research administration and Colleges/Schools are less important than the extremely high level of dissatisfaction. To get a sense of how extreme this is, we can return to Figure 4 and note that in response to Q38, 3.8 times as many respondents were dissatisfied as were satisfied (a result that also appears toward the middle of Figure 6). This high ratio, it turns out, is the *median* level of dissatisfaction when the ratios for all forty faculty/PI questions are calculated.

In the unit-research-support-staff survey, only one question was asked from the battery of questions in Table 1, above. This question (Q13 in the staff survey) was identical in text to Q28 in the faculty survey, and it obtained a mixed response: 1.1 times as many staff (as opposed to 1.9 as many faculty) were dissatisfied as satisfied with the proposal-submission service offered by SPS.

**Figure 6**  
Indices of dissatisfaction (PIs), by level of unit and type of service

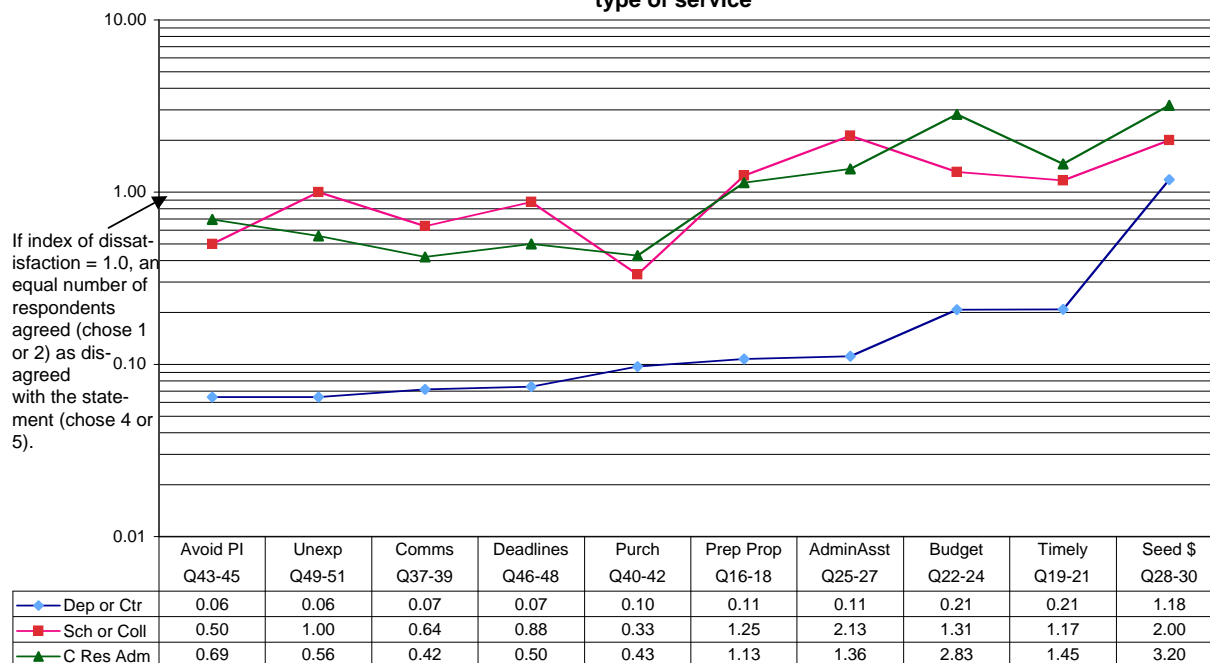


For the questions directed at comparing the three levels of administration, the same questions were asked in the staff survey as in the faculty/PI survey. The text of these questions is given in Table 2. (The numbers were different in the staff survey; for example, Q36 in the faculty/PI questionnaire was numbered Q16 in the staff survey.) The indices of dissatisfaction for the staff regarding these services appear in Figure 7.

Two striking patterns emerge when the staff responses are compared to the responses of faculty/Pis. First, the level of dissatisfaction of staff is much lower than that of faculty/Pis. Second, both sets of data suggest that both faculty and staff are more satisfied with the services provided by departments (or centers) than by central research administration or Colleges/Schools. Indeed, the distance between departments on the one hand and central research administration or Colleges/Schools on the other are greater in the staff survey than in the PI survey.

The different levels of dissatisfaction evident from the greater extent that faculty expressed disagreement with the statements in QQ36–50 and QQ65–79 compared to staff responses to identical questions reflect, we believe, the different positions that each has relative to staff support services and the different perspectives associated with their experiences. Faculty and other PIs see themselves as the customers of research-support services; their research enterprise is directly affected by the level of service in each of the areas. Staff see themselves as providing these services and working with staff in other units and levels of administration to achieve a common goal.

**Figure 7**  
Indices of dissatisfaction (staff), by level of unit and type of service



Source: Research Study Group, Staff Survey, April-May 2007. Definitions: Index of dissatisfaction = (respondents that chose 4 and 5) / (respondents that chose 1 and 2). Smallest n=38; largest n=42. Several questions had an n of 38 at each level to 42.

Four of the services that PIs were *most* satisfied with from departments and centers (Purch, Avoid PI, Comms, and Unexp; see Figure 6) were among the five services that staff expressed most satisfaction with (the sole exception was Deadlines; see Figure 7). Of the four services PIs were *least* satisfied with (Timely, AdminAsst, Deadlines, Seed\$; see Figure 6), three were also on the list of services that staff were least satisfied with (the exception was Budget). There is, therefore, general agreement between faculty and staff on the upper and lower levels of services provided by departments and centers.

The responses that both PIs and research-support staff gave to questions regarding services provided by both Colleges/Schools and the central research administration suggest that improvement (or better communication regarding responsibilities) is needed in five areas: preparation of proposals, administrative assistance, budget, a process for the timely submission of materials, and seed dollars.

Two of these merit special mention. Though the response to the question regarding the unit or office providing seed money for pilot studies or the development of proposals received the highest level of disagreement in both PI and staff surveys for nearly all levels of administration, not all levels are equally equipped to assist in this respect, nor is it clear that all levels of administration have a responsibility to address this. Similarly, many PIs and staff disagreed with the statement that Colleges/Schools and the central administration provide administrative assistance, including help with communications and filling out applications on paper. Not all levels of administration have the same responsibility in this area; this suggests a need for improved communication regarding which units should provide this type of assistance and under what circumstances.

## 5 Detailed recommendations

Our recommendations are along the same lines as those of the NCURA Review Team. The main differences are that we recommend a high-level restructuring of the OVPRED, something that was not within the purview of the NCURA Team, and we do not recommend consolidating pre- and post-award in a single office, although we recommend changes aimed at achieving the same objectives as a consolidation. In the following, we draw attention to differences between our recommendations and those of the NCURA report. We do not repeat all of the NCURA recommendations: where we do repeat a recommendation, it is to reiterate its importance; where we do not repeat a recommendation, it does not mean that we disagree with it, but rather that we think the NCURA report is sufficient for that case.

In this section we present our recommendations in narrative form. A telegraphic summary of our recommendations constitutes Section 2.

### 5.1 *Restructuring of main-campus research administration*

Teaching and scholarly activity, including sponsored research, are the primary missions of a university. A university's research office must be structured to promote all aspects of the research enterprise. It is critical that UNM's main-campus research office be restructured so as to define functions clearly, to provide transparent lines of responsibility and communication, to avoid the confusion associated with the current fragmented structure, and to ensure that resources are deployed optimally to serve the research community.

The University's primary economic-development function is currently housed within OVPRED. Economic development is one by-product of a successful university research enterprise, and there are good arguments for including it in a research office's portfolio, *provided* the office's main tasks in research administration are carried out smoothly and efficiently. That not being the case presently at UNM, as our findings indicate, we believe that the economic-development function is a distraction from the office's main tasks. To free the research office to concentrate on its core functions, we recommend that economic development be moved elsewhere. Accordingly, in the remainder of this report, we refer to the research office as the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR).

The primary missions of the university, teaching and research, should be organized under the Provost/EVP for Academic Affairs, with the service functions that support these primary functions under the EVP for Administrative Affairs. Thus we recommend that the VPR continue to report to the Provost.

#### 5.1.1 *Managerial restructuring of OVPRED around two major functions, sponsored-project administration and research development*

From an academic perspective, the two main functions of the OVPR are, first, to provide efficient administration of sponsored research, including submission of research proposals, award negotiation, financial management of sponsored projects, nonfinancial compliance functions, and closeout of sponsored projects, and, second, to provide support and assistance in initiation, development, and management of research initiatives, especially large multi-investigator, multi-unit, and/or multi-institution research efforts. Although both these functions are critical to a vigorous research effort, the first should always be the

higher priority, since it is a prerequisite for the success of the entire sponsored-project enterprise, including the success of large research initiatives.

Because the OVPRED has focused its efforts on building relationships with external communities and on securing targets of opportunity, the Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Economic Development has acquired substantial responsibilities for research development and sole responsibility for supervision of sponsored-project administration. The RSG believes this is too big a job for any one person, especially since there is presently no administrator between the Senior Associate VPRED and the staff of SPS. We strongly recommend that the OVPR be restructured around its two primary functions. The VPR is ultimately responsible for *both* of the primary functions. In recognition of the primacy of these two functions, there should be two—and *only two*—Associate Vice Presidents, one for Research Administration and one for Research Initiatives. These two AVPs must be on an equal footing.

The AVP for Research Initiatives will be responsible for assisting and supporting the development of new, large-scale multi-investigator, multi-unit, and/or multi-institution research initiatives, funded by public or private sources. Bottom-up initiatives, which draw on the expertise of UNM's faculty in strong, existing research programs, should be favored. The AVP/RI will be assisted in these endeavors by a Director of Research Development Services. The AVP/RI will also be responsible for designing effective mechanisms for ensuring the success of large research programs, something that has heretofore been missing at UNM, and for supervising new and existing research centers and institutes that report directly to the OVPR. The new AVP/RI position will have a more reasonable, better focused set of responsibilities than the currently overburdened position of Senior Associate VPRED and will serve a vital role in working with the VPR to advance UNM's research agenda.

#### **Responsibilities of Associate Vice President for Research Initiatives**

- Organize resources for funding research investments
- Support and assist development of large research initiatives
- Design effective mechanisms for ensuring the success of large research projects
- Supervise research centers that report to OVPR
- Manage resources for cost shares and startup funds

The AVP for Research Administration must be a professional research administrator, brought in from the outside and charged with the urgent task of making main-campus sponsored-project administration work. The AVP/RA must have the authority to obtain the resources required for efficient functioning of sponsored-project administration. The AVP/RA will be responsible for all the pre-award functions concentrated in SPS, assisted by a Director or Manager of Sponsored Projects, who will be the immediate supervisor of SPS. In addition to supervising pre-award administration, we strongly recommend that the AVP/RA be responsible for the primary post-award office, C&GA, with the present Manager of C&GA reporting through the Associate Controller to the AVP/RA. The AVP/RA will have a dual reporting structure, to the VPR for pre-award responsibilities and to the EVP for Administrative Affairs for post-award functions. Only by having this dual responsibility and reporting structure can the AVP/RA acquire the independent authority and ultimate responsibility necessary to effect the changes we recommend, especially the required changes in financial-compliance philosophy at C&GA.

The AVP/RA, the Director or Manager of SPS, and the Manager of C&GA will make up the team that puts our recommendations for sponsored-project administration into place. They should all be located within the UNM Business Center, at the current joint office site of SPS and C&GA. The AVP/RA will also be in charge of implementing the team concept for sponsored-project administration that is outlined in Section 5.2.4. Implementing this team concept will be both difficult and time-consuming, involving a campus-wide effort to build effective relationships between the central research administration and the units. To make it happen, it is essential that a single individual supervise both pre- and post-award functions.

The new AVP/RA position is the linchpin of our recommendations, the person on whom we pin primary responsibility for implementing our recommendations. Given the urgency of our recommendations, UNM cannot afford to wait for the completion of a national search for a person to fill the AVP/RA position. Thus we follow the NCURA Review Team in strongly recommending that an experienced, perhaps retired research administrator be retained immediately on a temporary basis to begin the process of reorganization and reform outlined in this report and to smooth the transition to the new AVP/RA.

All nonfinancial compliance services, including human/animal subjects and conflict of interest, should be consolidated within a single Office of Research Compliance (ORC), headed by a nonacademic Director. This recommendation is discussed further in Section 5.3.

Research Development Services (RDS), headed by a Director who reports to the AVP/RI, will have as its primary task encouraging and assisting in development of large multi-investigator, multi-unit, and/or multi-institution research initiatives, with other functions now assigned to this office, but not related to this primary task parceled out appropriately. The RDS will be the central point for development of private and foundation funding and for internal competitions for limited funding. The rules for such internal competitions and the processes for decision making should be clear and transparent to all involved. The functions of assisting PIs in developing and preparing modestly sized or small proposals should be incorporated within SPS under the Director or Manager of Sponsored Projects Services. Other functions currently within RDS, such as conflict of interest, should be transferred to the appropriate offices in the restructured research administration or, as in the case of the educational outreach programs in Science, Technology, Education, and Math (STEM) in New Mexico, elsewhere in the University's administration.

### **Responsibilities of Associate Vice President for Research Administration**

- Supervise Sponsored Projects Services through SPS Director
- Supervise Contract and Grant Accounting through Associate Controller and C&GA Manager
- Develop institutional memory of written policies and procedures for sponsored-project administration in SPS and C&GA.
- Provide and develop IT support and business software for SPS and C&GA.
- Co-ordinate development of unit research-support staff and develop team concept for research administration.
- Train and cross-train central-research-administration and unit research-support staff
- Review and monitor Purchasing Department and other University policies and procedures for impact on management of contracts and grants
- Develop one-stop, up-to-date, accurate web resource that includes all information for pre- and post-award sponsored-project administration

With the OVPR restructured to carry out its two primary functions, there will be no need for any other Vice Presidents of any sort in the office. For example, the interface with research centers and institutes, currently handled by a 0.5 FTE Assistant Vice President should be handled directly by the AVP/RI. Where a need emerges for additional senior personnel to handle particular initiatives or projects, either temporarily or permanently, these personnel should be styled as Directors or Assistants to the VPR or the AVP/RI, not as Vice Presidents. After an initial, well-defined period to get a special project started, the portion of salary associated with the special function should come from the source that leads to the need. An example is the current Associate Vice President for Advanced Studies, who is in charge of UNM's relationship with the Institute for Advanced Studies and whose 0.5 FTE salary comes from the IAS. We would retitle this position the Director of UNM/IAS Relations, with the 0.5 FTE salary continuing to come from the IAS. The intention from the inception of a research initiative should be to transition the project out of the OVPR into an appropriate academic unit or research center as soon as possible. In some cases this will occur right at the inception of the project, and it should certainly take place by the time the project is mature. The primary test of the viability of a research initiative is its ability to sustain itself outside the OVPR.

*The restructuring of the OVPR to have two co-equal Associate Vice Presidents, with the AVP/RA given the task of making sponsored-research administration work, is one of our two critical recommendations.* The resulting structure of the OVPR is shown in the organizational chart in Section 2, which also summarizes our other core recommendations. The chart shows only the structure necessary for carrying out the two primary missions of the research office and does not include essential support positions in the OVPR, such as a Financial Officer. The box following the organizational chart in Section 2 compares our recommended structure for research administration with that at the institutions that have most recently been invited to join the Association of American Universities. The comparison indicates that the structure we recommend is reasonable in terms of the number of high-level administrators needed to run the office and in terms of the number of personnel required to make sponsored-project administration work smoothly.

The two AVPs should be charged with the task of developing performance measures for their operations. On the sponsored-project side, there are a number of obvious performance metrics having to do with the timeliness of sponsored-project administration: proposal-submission times, contract-negotiation times, time needed to assign an index number to an award, processing times for purchase orders, and close-out times. Data for such performance measures should be made available to the Executive Research Advisory Committee (see Section 5.1.3) and to the main-campus research community.

### **5.1.2 University-wide rationalization of and participation in research-administration budget processes**

Our estimates of costs and of re-allocation savings suggest that the new positions and additional compensation we recommend in OVPR will require roughly \$500k and that savings of significant magnitude can be achieved by eliminating high-level positions in the office. Beyond crude estimates, however, it is hard to go, because there is no integrated, transparent process for budgeting in the OVPRED. We urgently recommend that such a process be established, overseen by the two EVPs, carried out by the senior research administrators in the OVPR, and monitored by the Executive Research Advisory

Committee. This could become a model for a university-wide rationalization of budget processes, with comparably wide participation by the campus community.

### 5.1.3 Faculty-staff Executive Research Advisory Committee to monitor and advise research administration

We recommend that the Provost and the EVP for Administrative Affairs jointly appoint a high-level standing faculty/staff Executive Research Advisory Committee (ERAC), to monitor and advise on the plans and operations of the OVPR and, through the AVP/RA, the post-award functions in C&GA.

The ERAC should be empowered to meet at any time and to request and receive information from the OVPR and other contributors to main-campus research administration. At least twice a year the ERAC should receive a formal briefing from the VPR on the OVPR's plans and on the status of research initiatives and sponsored-project administration. The Committee should participate in the preparation of the OVPR budget and in the formulation of priorities for the office. The ERAC should assist the OVPR in formulating performance measures for research administration in both of its primary functions and should receive regular reports that summarize performance relative to these measures. In addition, the ERAC should review and assess the effectiveness of the research-support services provided by the units, in view of the recommendations in Sections 5.2.3 and 5.2.4.

Although the ERAC will not have executive authority, it will be empowered to request and receive information as noted above and to submit reports and recommendations directly to the EVPs for Academic Affairs and Administrative Affairs. The ERAC will participate in the annual performance reviews of the senior research administration, submitting its input to the two EVPs.

The Committee's membership should include eight regular members: three senior faculty members, the Associate Deans for Research in A&S, the CoE, and the SoE, a unit research administrator, and a research administrator with accounting expertise. This membership should be representative of and familiar with the main-campus research enterprise. None of the members should be from within the central research administration. In addition to the regular members, the Committee should include two *ex officio* members who represent the two EVPs. The ERAC should maintain regular communications with the Faculty Senate's Research Policy Committee. To facilitate this communication, one member of the ERAC should be chosen from the Research Policy Committee.

The ERAC will elect a Chair from its membership, and the Chair will have the authority to convene the committee, set its agenda, request information from the research

#### Executive Research Advisory Committee (ERAC)

##### Objectives

- Accountability of research administration
- Communication with main-campus research community

##### Powers and responsibilities

- Request and receive reports on OVPR plans and status of research initiatives and of sponsored-project administration
- Participate in preparation of OVPR budget and formulation of OVPR priorities
- Request and receive reports on performance measures for research administration
- Review and assess effectiveness of unit research support
- Participate in annual performance reviews of senior research administrators
- Submit reports to EVPs for Academic Affairs and Administrative Affairs

administration, and submit its reports. The Committee should have independent mechanisms for communication with the campus community, including its own web site.

*The establishment of the ERAC, reporting to the EVPs for Academic Affairs and Administrative Affairs, with responsibilities to monitor and advise on the operations of the OVPR, is one of our two critical recommendations.* Given the complexity of the reforms we are recommending, the ERAC will play an essential role in holding the research administration accountable and in providing an avenue for communication with the campus research community.

#### **5.1.4 Other recommendations**

The University Counsel's office should assign at least 1.0 FTE attorney to the important legal issues that arise in research administration, including negotiation of contracts for sponsored awards and the legal aspects of financial and nonfinancial compliance. This attorney should be available on a full-time basis for consultation and advice, but should not be inserted as a required point of review in the processes involved in research administration. In addition, this attorney should aid the AVP/RA in the training of SPS personnel in relevant legal issues, especially contract negotiation, and in developing such resources as template contracts (see Section 5.2.1).

The RSG is aware of considerable and inexplicable disparities in salaries across the staff positions within the OVPRED. We recommend a rigorous desk audit to determine and address these disparities and thus to ensure optimal use of resources within the OVPR.

UNM interpretation of government regulations sometimes results in internal policy that has a serious negative impact on research. Examples include policies for extra compensation and those that prohibit the payment of cash stipends to human subjects and the requirement for collecting Social Security Numbers for any sort of payment to human subjects. The research perspective should be consulted when such policies are being formulated. The AVP/RA should review existing policies and procedures that impact the performance of research, and it should be standard University practice for the OVPR to be consulted for the research perspective when such policies are being formulated.

## **5.2 Changes in sponsored-project administration**

### **5.2.1 New leadership and additional resources for SPS**

Our chief recommendations for SPS can be summarized in two bullets:

- New leadership through the creation of two positions, the AVP/RA and a new Director or Manager of Sponsored Projects Services, reporting to the AVP/RA, to supervise the office. This new leadership and its roles were discussed in Section 5.1.1.
- New resources, of personnel, compensation, training, and IT support, which we describe now.

We recommend that the staff positions within SPS, currently called Contract and Grant Administrators, be retitled and reclassified to reflect the functions and responsibilities of these positions (and to eliminate the confusion that arises from thinking that a Contract and Grant Administrator surely must work within C&GA). We recommend three levels of positions: Sponsored Projects Officer, Senior Sponsored Projects Officer, and Sponsored

Projects Contracts Officer. The first two positions would be the two standard levels of SPS officers. An SPCO would be the most senior position, with responsibilities for negotiating the most complex contracts handled by the office. With this retitling and reclassification should come a substantial increase in salary, approximately \$15k above the comparable positions in the present scheme. This increase in compensation is necessary to recognize the important responsibilities of the sponsored-project officers and the leadership role we want them to undertake in sponsored-project administration and to allow the University to compete effectively in hiring personnel into these positions.

The NCURA Team recommends new staff positions in SPS:

*There is an immediate need for an additional two FTE (in SPS), not interns, to support the functions of proposal review and award negotiation. Those two FTE's should be people with some work experience, some knowledge of the campus if possible, and hopefully some experience in sponsored programs.*

We endorse these NCURA recommendations and strongly recommend that one SPO and one SPCO be added to the office, this in addition to a new Director or Manager of SPS. The additional personnel will allow the office to serve the main-campus research community appropriately.

The new Director or Manager will provide needed and long-missing focus to SPS. In particular, the Director or Manager, backed up by the AVP/RA on site and the AVP/RI, will give the office immediate, on-site decision making and signature authority, thereby streamlining the entire process of pre-award administration.

Sponsored-project administrators should have an attractive career path and opportunities for professional development that allow them to take advantage of that path. The structure we have suggested provides a career path—SPO to SPCO to Director or Manager of SPS and even AVP/RA—which will allow UNM to grow its own sponsored-project administrators. Opportunities for professional development, including attendance at national meetings of research administrators, should be made available to all the personnel in SPS.

Training and cross-training of SPS staff must be a high priority of the AVP/RA and the Director or Manager of SPS. With the present number of sponsored-project officers, cross training is nearly impossible, making it difficult for the office to cover its responsibilities when a staff member is unavailable or leaves. The additional staff we recommend will make it possible to have substantial levels of cross training.

SPS needs to have its own IT support on site, shared with C&GA. The required support is of several types: (i) managing and maintaining the computers used by SPS and C&GA staff; (ii) managing and optimizing the use of InfoEd and Banner and developing an interface between them so as to mesh pre- and post-award functions; (iii) designing internal electronic procedures for all aspects of proposal submission and award management; and (iv) developing and maintaining a one-stop web site for sponsored-project administration (see Section 5.2.5). The required IT support can be obtained, we believe, by drawing on existing personnel and resources in other parts of the OVPRED and in C&GA.

The new resources we recommend for SPS, in leadership, personnel, compensation, training, and IT support, will raise morale at SPS, thereby improving the quality of the services it provides.

SPS should take over from RDS the responsibility of providing assistance in preparation of proposals of modest or small size. Perhaps the most useful resource of this sort, one that

is often mentioned in responses to our faculty/PI and staff questionnaires, would be a set of template spreadsheets for preparing budgets for the standard federal funding agencies. This would allow PIs and unit research-support staff to submit proposal budgets that are automatically in compliance with funding-agency rules, thereby saving time in reviewing and correcting budgets.

A high priority of the AVP/RA and the Director or Manager of SPS will be to codify the institutional memory of the office in written standard policies and procedures for pre-award administration. The staff of SPS has no time to devote to such a process now, but with the additional staff we recommend, it will become a high priority to pursue it. The process of codifying policies and procedures will provide a much needed opportunity for reviewing them, changing those that are no longer appropriate, and adding new policies and procedures that can make pre-award administration more efficient. A good example of the last is template contracts for funding agencies such as the state and private industry, where it would definitely serve UNM's interests to have standard contracts in place.

Special attention should be paid to obtaining and recording the information and expertise necessary to deal efficiently with smaller funding agencies and private industry. Presently, small contracts and grants and those with private industry seem to be scrutinized more carefully than those with standard funding sources, discouraging faculty from pursuing such opportunities. Since the need to deal with such sponsors is often concentrated in one or a few units, a possibly optimal way to proceed would be to make the research-support staff in those units the repository of the required expertise.

Although we do make quite detailed recommendations in some areas, this report does not address all the details of how tasks should be distributed among SPS, C&GA, RDS, and other units within the University. This kind of workload distribution must be left to the consideration and decisions of administrators in the OVPR and other units.

### *5.2.2 More flexible approach to post-award fiscal management in C&GA*

It is urgent that a more flexible, more service-oriented, and less risk-averse philosophy toward fiscal management of sponsored awards be instilled at C&GA. Fiscal management of sponsored projects is a separate function from ordinary accounting, because shifting, varied, and often vague external financial compliance requirements must be weighed against the needs of PIs for efficient and flexible administration of contracts and grants. It thus requires different expertise and a quite different perspective from other accounting functions within the university. Fiscal management of contracts and grants often does not lend itself to the practices of standard accounting, but rather requires a complex exercise of judgment. The NCURA Review Team describes the situation this way:

*When information is so frequently inadequate and subject to interpretation, there may be a tendency to simply say, "No." We want staff to develop the skill set to say, "We can't do it the way you want, but I might be able to suggest an alternative course of action." That is a sophisticated process of reasoning. It requires sound training programs and repeated, consistent experience in making decisions.*

The required expertise and perspective to bridge these differences in accounting functions do not currently exist within the Controller's office. In our view, they will come only from bringing in from the outside a professional research administrator with experience in how

to make post-award management work in the current environment of increasing financial-compliance requirements.

Even as we recommend a new philosophy of fiscal management at C&GA, we also acknowledge the importance of maintaining good working relationships with other accounting departments within the AVP/FS's office. Thus we do not go as far as the NCURA Review Team in recommending that C&GA be combined into a single research office with SPS under the VPR. Instead, we recommend that the new AVP/RA be made the supervisor of C&GA, above the present Associate Controller and office Manager, in this capacity reporting to the EVP for Administrative Affairs.

Though our recommendation is different from the consolidation recommended by the NCURA consultants, it seeks the same end. Given the neglect and consequent dysfunction of SPS within the OVPRED, it would be unwise to transfer a well-run, although overly risk-averse, office like C&GA to the OVPR, yet we cannot ignore the manifest need for a new approach to post-award fiscal administration. We believe that the structure we suggest, with the AVP/RA in charge of both the primary pre- and post-award offices, is well suited to producing the best results in the shortest time. The question of consolidating pre- and post-award within the OVPR should be reconsidered at a later date. The broader question of a campus-wide consolidation of sponsored-project administration, involving both the main campus and the HSC, should also be considered.

The most important change that could be made at C&GA would be to move away from the present practice of reviewing and pre-approving all transactions to a system of post-transaction review. The NCURA Review Team reports:

*Large amounts of resources are being spent reviewing transactions that pose little risk in terms of financial compliance. ... An attempt should be made to move away from a "one-size fits all" model for financial compliance. ... (S)erious consideration should be given to the possibility of completely eliminating the pre-audit review by CGA. Accounting systems, such as Banner, have the capability for providing sophisticated reports that could efficiently provide information on a post-audit basis. Because of the increased reporting capabilities and frequent use of procurement cards, many large research institutions recognize the diminished effectiveness of pre-auditing transactions. Institutions are finding that it is not worth the cost of review or the time delays in processing transactions. Effective transaction review can be accomplished through accounting reporting tools on a post-audit basis.*

Even if post-transaction review cannot be instituted for all funding sources, that is no excuse for requiring all transactions to undergo such review. In our view, the flexibility involved in this kind of accounting and in abandoning a "one-size fits all" model for financial compliance is not going to come from the current accounting philosophy in the AVP/FS's office. This is why it is indispensable to inject a research perspective into C&GA by putting a research administrator in charge of the office. A switch to post-transaction review, in addition to being the key to more customer-friendly fiscal management, would reduce the workload in C&GA, thus allowing it to provide better service with the existing level of personnel.

Existing written standard operating procedures and policies in C&GA will need to be revisited and reworked in view of the changes in post-award fiscal management recommended here.

A variety of processes should be reviewed by the AVP/RA, the Director or Manager of SPS, and the Manager of C&GA, to remove bottlenecks in these processes and thus to ensure that they are carried out in a timely fashion. Prominent among these is the assignment of an index code as an award is handed off from pre-award to post-award. Failure to assign index codes in a timely fashion leads to expenditures being charged to the wrong code and thus to the need for subsequent transaction corrections. Other such processes include budget revisions, invoicing of research sponsors, and close-out of sponsored projects. Post-award policies and procedures for administration of small contracts and grants should also be examined, with the aim of simplifying administration of small awards in a way consistent with their size.

Attention should be paid to optimizing the use of Banner for fiscal management of sponsored projects and to providing a user-friendly interface that will make Banner reports easily accessible to unit research-support staff and tempt even PIs to make use of Banner as a resource for contract and grant management.

A loud and persistent complaint from PIs regards unnecessary delays and annoying demands for justification in the processing of purchase orders. A new philosophy for handling financial transactions in C&GA should go far to addressing these complaints, but the RSG believes that significant additional bottlenecks exist in the Purchasing Department. We recommend that the AVP/RA, working with the leadership of the Purchasing Department, undertake a systematic review of how Purchasing Department policies and procedures impact the administration of sponsored projects, with the aim of substantially reducing the time necessary to approve purchases. Consideration should be given to delegating authority to approve transactions to Associate Deans for Research and department Chairs when appropriate, especially in emergency situations.

The use of P-cards should make purchases more convenient, but faculty and staff input to the RSG indicates just the opposite: demands for justification in many situations make the use of P-cards more of an annoyance than a convenience. P-card policies and procedures should be a prominent part of the review of the impact of Purchasing policies on sponsored projects.

C&GA should participate in the development of a one-stop web page for sponsored-project administration (see Section 5.2.5).

### *5.2.3 Well-trained research-support staff members available in units to interface between each faculty member and the central research administration*

Every potential PI needs an identified staff member, well trained in both pre- and post-award and aware of special needs in the PI's unit, to act as interface between the PI and the central research administration. How this should best be organized will vary considerably across the University. Sometimes this staff member will serve an entire College. Departments and research centers with a large sponsored-research presence will need such a person just for the department or center. Sometimes several Colleges/Schools will have to band together to make such a position available. Sometimes a College or department administrator can fill this role on a part-time basis, although we stress that this job cannot just be dumped on a College or department administrator without careful attention to the administrator's other responsibilities.

We recommend that Deans set aside sufficient resources to make this service available. We estimate that six new positions might be required university-wide, costing perhaps \$450k. The AVP/RA should be charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating the creation of this resource, in co-operation with the Deans, and of providing feedback to Deans and Chairs regarding the effectiveness of the service within their units. Research centers that have a special arrangement for research funds from the OVPR will be expected to maintain an effective research-support staff out of those funds.

#### *5.2.4 Team concept for sponsored-project administration, involving SPS, C&GA, and unit research administrators*

We recommend an explicit team concept for administration of sponsored projects. The team, consisting of a sponsored-projects officer, a unit research administrator, and a contract and grant accountant, should be put together as a sponsored project goes from an idea to a proposal to an award. The team will be a collaboration among equals, although the sponsored-projects officer will formally be the head of the team. Although most PI questions would run initially through the unit research administrator, the team would give each PI a set of contacts for addressing and resolving problems in administration of contracts and grants.

The AVP/RA will be charged with putting this team concept together, in co-operation with the unit research administrators. The formation of teams will aid in removing bottlenecks in the interfaces between SPS and C&GA, such as in the assignment of index numbers and in budget revisions. We see it as providing an “in-the-trenches” channel for communication and feedback that improves sponsored-project administration, paralleling the upper-level channel that we hope to see develop between department Chairs, Associate Deans for Research, and the AVP/RA.

The team concept also provides an avenue for dealing with the faculty aversion to becoming sufficiently familiar with sponsored-project administration to do the job properly. Classroom training tends not to work well with faculty, and the existence of a research-support staff member assigned to each faculty member invites a more one-one-one approach. Although some formal training of faculty is almost certainly required, unit research-support staff, assisted by the other team members and backed up by the authority in department Chairs, Deans, and the AVP/RA, can help faculty acquire the skills and practices for submitting proposals and managing contracts and grants.

#### *5.2.5 Commitment to customer service in sponsored-project administration*

A strong customer-service orientation in the central research administration is needed to make the entire process of sponsored-project administration work smoothly. Too many faculty report an adversarial relationship with the central research administration to think that this is not a real effect. A stronger customer-service orientation in the central research administration will require changes in attitude. Making such changes, which necessarily involves changing the organizational culture of an office, is often difficult and requires a consistent, long-term commitment. We rely on the new leadership for sponsored-project administration, working in partnership with dedicated and receptive staff in SPS, C&GA, and the units, to instill a commitment to customer service throughout the operation.

One important aspect of customer service is making useful and necessary information easily accessible. The web is now the method of choice for such information distribution.

We recommend the development of a one-stop, up-to-date, accurate web page that includes both pre- and post-award and that includes all information for proposal development, submission, and award management. In a well designed web-based format, this dauntingly large amount of information can be organized so that all of the information is easy to keep updated and consistent, information is presented at different levels of detail for different audiences, and PIs and unit staff find it easy to get to a desired piece of information at the appropriate level of detail without getting lost in irrelevant information. Keeping this information in just this one place can ensure accuracy of all information over time and across offices. The resulting web-based documents could be the basis for the training recommended in this report. This single-stop web-based shopping for research-administration information should be a high priority for the new AVP/RA.

### **5.3 Consolidation and streamlining of all nonfinancial compliance functions**

All nonfinancial compliance services, including human/animal subjects, conflict of interest, scientific misconduct, health and safety, and export control, should be consolidated within a single Office of Research Compliance (ORC). The ORC should be headed by a Director who is a professional research administrator with compliance expertise and who co-ordinates all nonfinancial compliance activities. Since nonfinancial compliance policies and procedures are required to be uniform across the campus, the ORC should be a true joint entity of the main campus and the HSC, and its Director should have dual reporting responsibilities, to the VPR and the Vice President for Translational Research in the HSC. The details of how this is worked out should be left to the VPR and the HSC's Vice President for Translational Research, with the ultimate decision coming from the Provost and the EVP for Health Sciences. As an example of the kind of efficiencies that can be achieved, we note the NCURA recommendation that conflict-of-interest should be organized through individual PI profiles, rather than by research project, thereby considerably streamlining the process and avoiding duplicate reviews.

## **6 Implementation of this report's recommendations**

With the submission of this report to the Provost, the RSG formally fulfills its charge, but will be available to answer questions regarding its findings and recommendations and to participate in disseminating these to the campus community. The responsibility for implementing the recommendations in this report lies with UNM's senior administration. The RSG recommends that the senior research administration provide a written response to these recommendations, detailing plans for improving research administration, with this response to be distributed to the university's senior administration and the university community.

Responsibility for monitoring and assessing implementation and maintaining communication with the campus community should be vested in the newly constituted ERAC, which should be appointed immediately.