



## Message from VPRA: Dr. Robert Nobles



Happy Spring Semester! Despite the continued extraordinary circumstances of managing the pandemic and anticipating vaccine roll out to all that desire to receive it, I hope that you enjoyed a restorative winter break and start of 2021.

At the conclusion of 2020, we were busy collecting feedback through our annual ORA survey and crafting a set of goals that reflect and address what our research faculty and staff shared with us. We are grateful that more than 400 faculty and staff contributed your thoughts and experiences. We are in the process of assessing the responses and identifying focus areas for our continued quality efforts. We were encouraged to learn that 79 percent of faculty and 92 percent of staff reported overall satisfaction with ORA. Yet we strive for excellence and are attentive to the less than satisfied 21 percent faculty and 8 percent of staff who responded. It is clear that we have made some significant progress in many areas and have greater opportunities to build infrastructure and streamline processes. Additionally, we continue spearheading efforts to improve transparency, communications, and turnaround time on projects.

Guiding our next steps is our strategic action plan, which we will release shortly in conjunction with the SVPR Research Plan for Emory. The ORA plan merges our intent to be collaborative while building up our team capacity to serve, streamlining administrative processes, and strengthening our infrastructure. Achieving these goals will facilitate impactful organizational improvements, making it easy for our community to conduct research and change the world.

Our 2021 quality improvement initiatives are interwoven into ORA's departmental goals. They are derived from the feedback received from campus recommendations generated by recent reviews from external organizations, including McKinsey and Huron. We highlight within this newsletter how these items were organized into workstreams around distinct processes, including award setup and expenditure monitoring.

We are grateful to our faculty members whose terms expired (Hannah Cooper, Janet Cummings, Cindy Derdeyn, Khalid Saleita, Aaron Siegler, David Wright) on [ORA's Faculty Advisory Board](#) and the new Chairperson, Tamara Caspary, and new members (Larry Boise, Mandy Ford, Matthew Freeman, Jen Heemstra, Octavian Cosmin Ioachimescu, Steve L'Hernault, Mi-kyung Song, Miriam Vos, Bill Wuest) who have committed to serving on the board for the next 24 months. Their insight into the faculty research experience provides priceless guidance as we ensure that ORA achieves continued quality and process improvement within the research environment.

Finally, we are proud to announce the restructuring and launch of the Office of Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs. As shared in a campus memo by Chris Agostini and Deb Bruner, this new office will consolidate functions around research-related regulatory compliance, including: research misconduct, clinical trial compliance, responsible conduct of research, conflict of commitment, and research compliance training and awareness. This unit will be led by Dr. Kimberly Eck, Associate Vice President for Research, will serve as the Interim AVP for Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs until a search can proceed.

I am truly excited for 2021 and turning the page on the social and environmental challenges of 2020. I commit to you that we will continue to listen, mobilize our actions around support for our researchers, and deliver outcomes that enhance efficiency. I look forward to sharing progress with these plans and initiatives throughout the year.

Thank you all for your dedication and partnership.

Robert

Robert Nobles, DrPH, MPH, CIP  
Vice President for Research Administration

## RAS Triannual Partnership Meetings

As part of continuous efforts to increase communication and transparency between the research community and administration, Office of Research Administration has launched a series of Triannual Partnership Meetings. These meetings will facilitate continuous communications between individual ORA units and their stakeholders, widening the flow of information and allowing all stakeholders to understand and enact their roles in smooth research administration operations.



Thrice-annual meetings provide the opportunity to share expectations, news, and achievements between the schools/units and ORA leaders. Topics include departmental accomplishments and goals from multiple ORA units. The meetings also allow RAS leaders to disseminate mutually beneficial information, such as changes in research regulations or updated business processes. School and department representatives have the opportunity to learn how their research activities compare to others within the university, and the workload of their specific RAS, as well as to provide their perspective on process and policy issues. Relevant process improvement initiatives may be discussed. Each meeting culminates in a faculty feedback and partnership discussion, allowing all participants to share thoughts and generate ideas for more effective partnership.

While the [Faculty Feedback Form](#) remains online to receive ongoing communication, we encourage community members to engage with their unit leads regarding feedback they would like shared during partnership meetings.

---

## Phase II Faculty Facing - Mission Metrics

This project is tasked with establishing a reporting process for faculty facing metrics. The goal is to supply meaningful metrics to faculty to measure performance of ORA's department and units. This data-driven dashboard will seek to improve ORA's transparency and identify areas for improvement.

Please view the Phase 2 Dashboard overview [here](#).

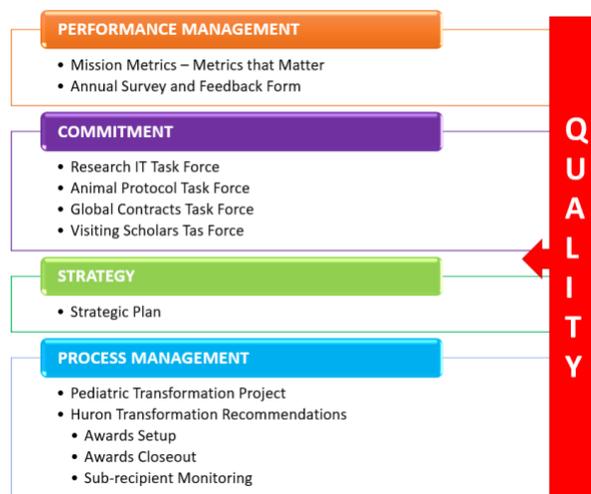
If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either Inger Garnett, Dr. Robert Nobles, or Sharon Jones. Again, thank you for your continuous support for the Office of Research Administration and Emory's Research Community.



## ORA Process Improvement Update

The Office of Research Administration subscribes to a philosophy of continuous improvement that informs our mission, vision, and values and improves the quality of service.

We are enthusiastic to report progress that has occurred with ongoing initiatives. Of more than 160 individual recommendations arising from external reviews from expert consultants, 32 have been implemented. The full list of recommendations was reviewed to assess priority, timeline, cost, and challenges before being categorized into individual workstreams.



Within ORA, process improvement efforts have tackled some of the initial recommendations from both Huron and McKinsey consulting groups. Some recommendations included adding Navigators to the RAS structure to serve as a central point of contact for the research community. Other recommendations seek to improve our business processes. For example, the contracting process has been streamlined by developing a library of clauses and language, as well as defining signatory authorities for individual roles. These efforts, and others, were undertaken to enhance the faculty's and the Emory research community's experience.

As 2021 begins, ORA is launching additional cross-functional teams to address the remaining recommendations that impact the faculty experience. Dedicated workgroups have been established to examine Award Closeout, Subrecipient Monitoring, and Award Setup. The workgroups have held kick-off discussions of improvement. They will be working together closely over the next six months to implement, optimize, and improve these three workstreams. We are off to a great new year and a great start, with more improvement to come!

## Significant Information

Environmental Health and Safety Office

- **Do You Protect Your Eyes and Face?**
- **Update to the Hazardous Waste Guidelines**

Office for Clinical Research

- **Register- February 18: OCR Research Matters Educational Event**

Office of Sponsored Programs

- **NIH Application Policy- Quick Reminder on Hyperlinks**
- **New eRA Commons Login and Landing Screens Have Arrived**

We welcome your questions, comments or concerns.  
Please email Dr. Robert Nobles at [robert.e.nobles@emory.edu](mailto:robert.e.nobles@emory.edu).  
Share your ORA experience with us using the [Faculty Feedback Form](#)

*Partnering with Researchers to Change the World*

