



## Message from VPRA: Dr. Robert Nobles



We have entered an unprecedented time in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in the implementation of social distancing protocols and telecommuting whenever possible. ORA, like many of you, have planned and implemented techniques to stay productive during this public health emergency. Research teams are encouraged to increase their research planning, proposal writing, research team coordination, quality checks, data maintenance, and manuscript activities. In order to continue to serve you, ORA grants, contracts and clinical trials team members have implemented their continuity plans; many offices have transitioned IRB, IACUC, Biosafety, and Radiation Safety committee reviews to a Zoom platform; all faculty coordinated advisory committees have been transitioned to remote conversations and Zoom; and our Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHSO) has been busy helping groups with proper personal protective equipment (PPE), assisting with the disinfection activities across campus, and creating guidance for everyone on disinfecting work and laboratory areas. The research community can remain assured that ORA remains open, available, and committed to providing the necessary activities to move our research enterprise forward.

Prior to the recent pandemic, I was prepared to share with you that we are making great progress in enhancing our culture of collaboration, continuous improvement, and transparency. Over the past two months, we have shared the McKinsey and Huron consulting reports, resulting in many conversations with our academic and administrative partners and focus internally to implement process improvements and system enhancements based on the recommendations. We have made “mission metrics” a priority across all ORA offices. In consultation with our faculty advisory boards/councils and academic leadership, we are identifying key measures of performance across all research administrative offices that can be routinely shared. We have a goal of establishing a dashboard of relevant metrics that will increase transparency and enhance partnerships.

Over the next few weeks and months, we will continue to listen intently, provide support to our research community, assess and enhance processes in award setup and expenditure monitoring. Please stay safe and reach out to my team and I if you have any questions. We stand with you in solidarity.

Respectfully,

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

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## The Office of Research Administration’s Response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic and ORA COVID-19 Webpage

The Office of Research Administration (ORA) has taken steps to provide researchers and research staff with the latest information regarding ORA and Emory’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A dedicated ORA [webpage](#) is in place for researchers and staff. This webpage is updated daily with the latest COVID-19 pandemic information and resources as it pertains to research at Emory. Some sections of interest for researchers on this dedicated webpage are:

- [Emory Research Guidance During COVID-19](#): This section will provide helpful guidance to researchers regarding COVID-19.
- [Sponsored Research](#): This section is a compilation of information on impacts to Sponsored Research



from COVID-19.

The ORA is establishing plans to mitigate any interruption of the research support provided to the Emory Research Community and colleagues across our many campuses. We encourage research personnel to visit Emory's centralized COVID-19 webpage, which contains travel guidance, steps to follow if a member of your research team thinks they may have contracted the virus, and potential cancellations of activities on campus.

Messages to the research community providing more detail of ORA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found [here](#).



## EHSO's Preparation and Response to COVID-19

In preparation and response to the global outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHSO) is collaborating with University and Healthcare partners to provide support from bench research to the bedside to prepare for the study of this new virus and to care for potential patients. EHSO has joined with researchers, Campus Services, Center for Preparedness and Emergency Response, Emory Police Department, Emory Emergency Medical Service, Office of Compliance, Emory Healthcare, Oxford College, Student Health Service, Office of Injury Management, and Serious Communicable Disease Unit in these efforts. More information on EHSO's efforts during this time can be found [here](#).





## Continuous Improvement: Spotlight on RAS

In January, the Office for Research Administration released the [Huron report](#) to the Emory community: an in-depth assessment of the research life cycle at Emory. The major strengths identified by the Huron team reflect the strength of ORA's biggest asset: its people. As a whole, leaders and staff are committed to identifying areas for improvement and change in their work. The organization is well-positioned to implement processes to augment current operations.



Huron identified challenges that largely center on inconsistency across ORA offices. These include inefficient processes, varying levels of expertise among staff, and data integrity. Furthermore, siloing among Emory's various offices and schools hinder the implementation of unified systems. This creates opportunities to examine current practices within the institution, comparing them to best practices both on campus and among peer institutions. Current areas of active consideration include award setup and expenditure monitoring, with cross-functional leadership teams actively working towards solutions.

Consistency in RAS is an ongoing topic of conversation. Many projects are underway to improve operations across RAS units. To read more about the projects, click [here](#).

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## Significant Information

### Conflict of Interest

- **All research faculty should [complete](#) eCOI certification for 2019.**

### Environmental Health and Safety Office

- **Step up your knowledge of [Ladder Safety Month](#) with EHSO's helpful guide to best practices.**

### Finance

- **[Prepare](#) for April's upcoming changes to financial systems.**

### Institutional Review Board

- **New [IRB researcher guidance](#): COVID-19 and IRB review.**

### Office of Sponsored Programs

- **New [NIH "FORMS-F" grant application forms and guidelines](#) coming for due dates on/after May 25, 2020.**

### Research Grants and Contracts

- **Learn more about [RGC Post Award Setup \(PAS\) Kick-Off Meetings](#)**

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We welcome your questions, comments or concerns.  
Please email Dr. Robert Nobles at [robert.e.nobles@emory.edu](mailto:robert.e.nobles@emory.edu).

*Partnering with Researchers to Change the World*

