

Challenges and Needs of the
Research Administrator Workforce

**Thank you for taking our anonymous survey.
It will take about 20 minutes to complete.**

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Demographic Questions

This information will help us identify needs and challenges unique to different roles and types of organizations.

1. What is your current title:

2. What research administration concentration(s) do you work in? Check all that apply

- ☐ Pre-Award
- ☐ Post-Award
- ☐ Regulatory Compliance
- ☐ Department Administration
- ☐ Other (please specify)

3. Which of the following organizational units best matches the primary setting of your employment?

- ☐ Department
- ☐ Central office
- ☐ Shared services
- ☐ No specific area (work cradle to grave in research administration)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

4. How many years have you been working in the field of research administration:

0

50

5. How many years have you been in your current position:

0

50

6. At what type of institution do you work:

- ☐ Academic institution
- ☐ Hospital or medical center
- ☐ Non-profit foundation
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Other (please specify)

- ☐ Unsure

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7. Which of the following best describes your academic institution?

- ☐ R1 research institution with medical school
- ☐ R1 research institution without medical school
- ☐ R2 research institution with medical school
- ☐ R2 research institution without medical school
- ☐ Predominantly Undergraduate Institution (PUI)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

- ☐ Unsure

8. What is the classification of your academic institution? Check all that apply:

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Land Grant
- ☐ HBCU
- ☐ Minority-serving, not HBCU
- ☐ Other (please specify)

- ☐ Unsure

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9. What were your institution's research expenditures in FY23?

- ☐ Less than \$10 million
- ☐ \$10 million to \$25 million
- ☐ \$26 million to \$50 million
- ☐ \$51 million to \$100 million
- ☐ \$101 million to \$250 million
- ☐ \$251 million to \$500 million
- ☐ \$501 million to \$1 billion
- ☐ Over \$1 billion
- ☐ Unsure

10. What work arrangement do you have?

- ☐ Full-time in office
- ☐ Fully remote
- ☐ Hybrid (specific schedule in office/on-site)
- ☐ Hybrid Flex (flexibility to come and go without a specific schedule)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

11. What region of the country is your organization?

- ☐ Northeast
- ☐ South
- ☐ Midwest
- ☐ West

12. Do you live in the same state as your organization?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. What is your current annual salary?

- ☐ \$20,000 - \$40,000
- ☐ \$40,001 - \$70,000
- ☐ \$70,001 - \$100,000
- ☐ \$100,001 - \$150,000
- ☐ \$150,001 - \$225,000
- ☐ > \$225,001

14. How many times have you been promoted in your career as a research administrator?

Write in a number:

15. How many job changes have you had in your career as a research administrator? Write in a number:

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Organizational Structure

Think about your organization as a whole, and how research administration responsibilities are embedded in that structure.

16. What is the reporting structure for Pre-Award and Post-Award functions at your organization?

- ☐ Pre-Award and Post-Award report to Research
- ☐ Pre-Award reports to Research and Post-Award reports to Finance
- ☐ Other (please specify)
-
- ☐ Unsure

17. How would you define the following situations in your institution?

	Not an issue	Somewhat of an issue	Significant Issue	Unsure	N/A
Lack of organization-wide consistency (re. adherence to research administration policies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of streamlined organizational structure and reporting requirements for research finances, procurement, metrics, etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor communication between teams responsible for Pre- and Post-Award	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
No central voice for research administration issues or vision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of research administration capacity to assist faculty with proposal development, submissions to sponsors, and managing awards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. If you were the president/chief research officer, what would be the one thing that you would improve in how research administration responsibilities are structured within your organization?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to provide their answer to the question above. It is positioned directly below the question text.

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Roles and Responsibilities

Think about your role, or what you know about what research administrators do across your organization.

19. To what degree do you agree with the following statements about research administrator roles and responsibilities?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unsure or N/A
Research administration roles are clearly defined in my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research administration roles are consistent across my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The role of research administrator is considered a specialized skill set within my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research administrators are respected for the work they do within my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research administrators are considered important team members within my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Are you aware that there is a Certified Research Administrator designation?

- ☐ Yes, I am certified.
- ☐ Yes, and I am not certified.
- ☐ No

21. Thinking specifically about the Pre-Award and Post-Award functions, what top 3 challenges occur in your organization concerning these roles? Select only 3.

- ☐ The role of Pre-Award Administrator is NOT considered a specialized skill set.
- ☐ The role of Post-Award Administrator is NOT considered a specialized skill set.
- ☐ There is overlap and confusion between the Pre- and Post-Award duties.
- ☐ There are inequities in resources and staff allocations between Pre- and Post-Awards teams.
- ☐ There is difficulty ensuring compliance responsibilities are met.
- ☐ The post-award unit is not sufficiently integrated with pre-award and compliance units.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

22. What aspects of the research administrator role are often overlooked or underestimated in your organization? Check all that apply.

- ☐ The need to deal with high-stress deadlines.
- ☐ The need for continuous learning to stay abreast of changing regulations.
- ☐ The strict compliance requirements.
- ☐ The “people-skills” required to manage complex interactions.
- ☐ The need to develop a variety of skill sets.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

23. It is the norm that research administration roles constantly change to meet new requirements. How do you feel about that? Please check the one statement that resonates with you the most.

- ☐ The variety of change is good, and I enjoy it overall.
- ☐ Change is stressful, I wish it were less.
- ☐ I would prefer more stability in my role, but I understand the need to adapt.
- ☐ Change doesn’t matter (it is what it is).
- ☐ Not applicable

24. To what degree do you feel job titles match the roles and responsibilities of research administration positions in your organization?

- ☐ Titles Never Match the Role
- ☐ Titles Rarely Match the Role
- ☐ Titles Sometimes Match the Role
- ☐ Titles Mostly Match the Role
- ☐ Titles Consistently Match the Role
- ☐ Unsure

25. What, in your opinion, is the most important role of a research administrator in your organization?

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Salary and Compensation

Think about your own research administrator role or the research administration roles across your organization, and the associated salaries, pay scales and job classifications.

26. What issues in terms of Research Administrator salaries and pay scales do you see in your organization? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Title and salary do not reflect the degree of risk. (e.g., financial, regulatory and accountability)
- ☐ Title and salary do not reflect staff supervision responsibilities.
- ☐ Inequities exist between different parts of the organization in terms of salary or compensation for similar research administration roles.
- ☐ Salaries and pay scales seem fair within the organization, but not competitive with the market.
- ☐ Lack of transparency around the salary structure for research administrators.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

27. To what degree are research administrator positions standardized across your organization?

	Not Standardized at All	Somewhat Standardized	Moderately Standardized	Mostly Standardized	Unsure or N/A
Titles of research administration positions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research administration job descriptions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research administration roles and responsibilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Research administration pay scales, pay categories, and job classifications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Union versus non-Union positions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28. To what degree do each of the following challenges prevent your organization from creating consistency around titles, roles, and pay scales for research administrators?

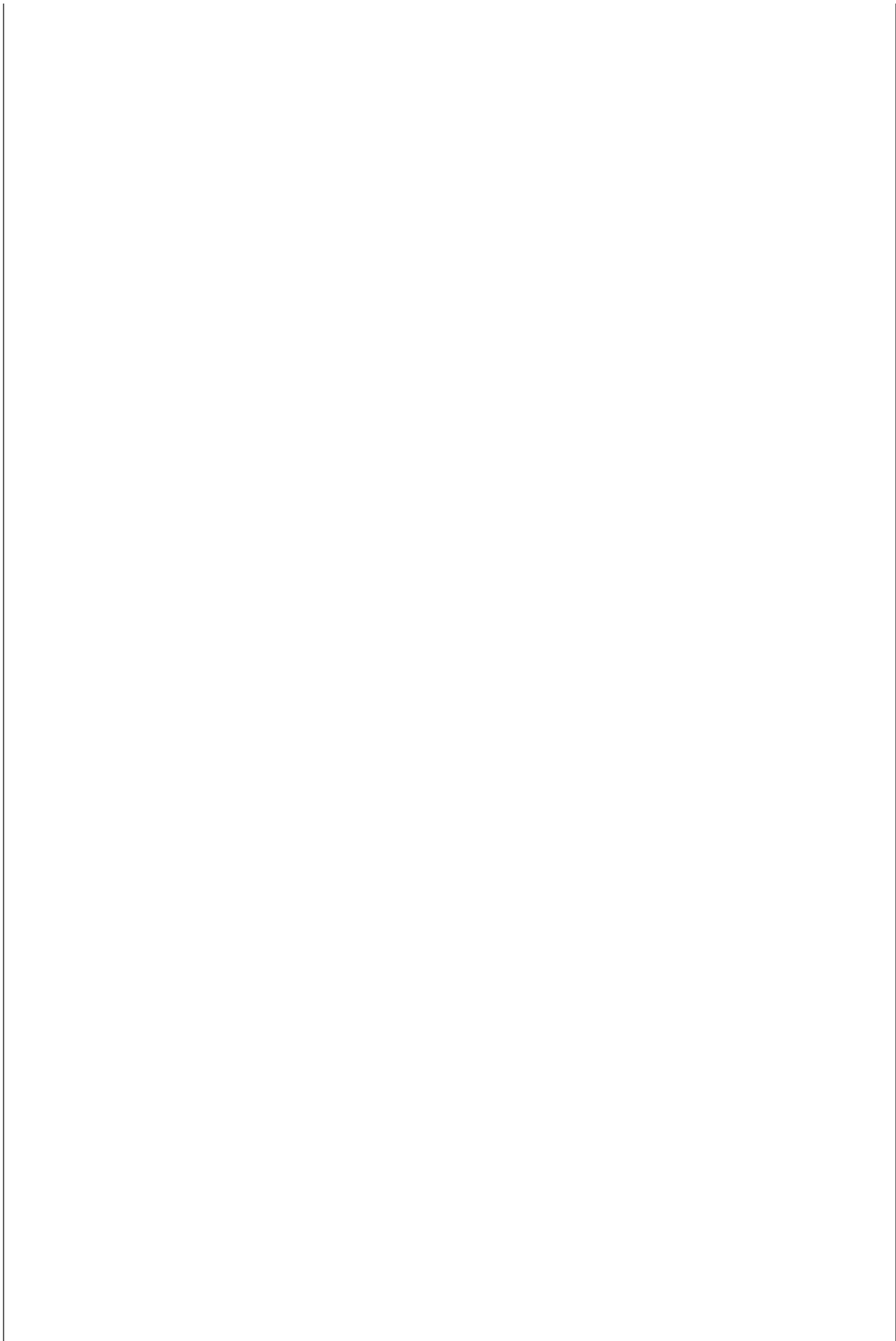
	No Challenge	Minor Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Major Challenge	Unsure or N/A
State institution designation requirements (re. job classification and salaries)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Union requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Departments want autonomy to decide job descriptions, salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The organizational structure enables differences in pay for similar roles/titles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of consistent leadership to create equitable job classification systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
HR department policies and inability to accommodate the nuances of research administrator roles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. Have you encountered issues at your organization around new hires coming in at a higher salary than current staff in research administration positions?

- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ To a minor extent
- ☐ To a moderate extent
- ☐ To a significant extent
- ☐ To a very significant extent
- ☐ Unsure

30. Have you observed any situations when your organization's fiscal restraints (like budget freezes), impacted salaries, pay increases, and the ability to hire sufficient numbers of research administration staff?

- ☐ Not at all (There have been no fiscal restraints.)
- ☐ To a minor extent (There have been times, but it hasn't caused problems.)
- ☐ To a moderate extent (There have been several instances, and it has resulted in some capacity issues.)
- ☐ To a significant extent (There have been many cases, and it has caused major capacity issues.)
- ☐ To a very significant extent (This is a major issue that is impacting the organization.)



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Recruitment and Retention

The following questions ask about the recruitment and retention of research administrators in your organization. Think about your own experience as a research administrator, hiring manager, or in another role.

31. Does your current role include benefits such as healthcare, retirement plans, etc.?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

32. Are you eligible for performance-based bonuses or incentives?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure


33. What are the top 3 biggest challenges for recruiting research administrators in your organization? Select only 3.

- ☐ We do not offer remote work opportunities.
☐ Our location is not appealing to candidates.
☐ Our salaries are lower than other opportunities.
☐ Position titles are confusing and do not adequately describe the role.
☐ Limited pool of high-quality candidates.
☐ Greater career advancement opportunities at other organizations.
☐ Our organization is not appealing to candidates. (Please explain in the comment box)


Comments

34. What are the top 3 most significant challenges for retaining research administrators?
Select only 3.

- ☐ Competition with other organizations
- ☐ Competition with other INTERNAL departments
- ☐ Limited career advancement opportunities within the organization
- ☐ Competitive salaries and benefits offered by other institutions
- ☐ Workload and stress
- ☐ Lack of recognition or appreciation
- ☐ Limited training and development opportunities
- ☐ Lack of management or leadership support
- ☐ Other (please specify)

35. What is the likelihood that you will be looking for other employment opportunities within the next 12 months? 

- ☐ Very likely
- ☐ Likely
- ☐ Somewhat likely
- ☐ Neither likely nor unlikely
- ☐ Somewhat unlikely
- ☐ Unlikely
- ☐ Very unlikely

36. Please select up to three reasons that will impact your decision to look for other employment. 

- ☐ Pay/salary increase
- ☐ Opportunity to work remotely
- ☐ More flexible work schedule
- ☐ Better benefits
- ☐ Promotion/more responsibility
- ☐ Want a new challenge
- ☐ Relocation to a different geographical region
- ☐ Want to work with different coworkers
- ☐ Want a new supervisor
- ☐ Something entirely different (please specify)

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Training

Research administration is a unique skill set, and on-the-job training and professional development are important. It is also a constantly evolving field.

37. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

[illegible]

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Final Question

As you know, the purpose of this survey is to identify challenges and needs in your organization and your role. Now it is time to think about possible solutions.

38. What is the most important strategy your organization should undertake to address the challenges around research administration?

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