



Council of Principal Investigators

Mail Stop 2403 • College Station, TX 77843-2403 • (979) 458-1861 • cpi@tamu.edu

Texas A&M University - Texas A&M Health Science Center – Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station -
Texas A&M AgriLife Research – Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Texas A&M Transportation Institute

CPI Meeting Agenda

October 14, 2015 (11:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.)
Rudder Tower, room 601

(11:30 – 11:45) Lunch

Call to order/Opening remarks – Dr. Helene Andrews-Polymenis, CPI Chair

Update and Discussion on Sponsored Research Services (SRS) and the Division of Research – Dr. Glen A. Laine, Vice President for Research, Texas A&M University

Other business – Helene Andrews-Polymenis, CPI Chair

(1:15) **Adjournment**

Attachments: *October CPI newsletter;*
SRS presentation slides;
PI Questions/Comments for SRS Speaker

2015-16 CPI roster: *Chair* – Helene Andrews-Polymenis, *Medicine* • *Vice Chair*— James Batteas, *Science* • *Past Chair* — Mary Bryk, *COALS* • *AgriLife* – *Non-COALS* — Ambika Chandra, Jamie Foster, Dou Fugen • *AgriLife Extension Service* — Juan Anciso • *Architecture* — Ergun Akleman • *BCD* — Jay Groppe • *Bush School* — Laurie Paarlberg • *Business* — Romana Paetzold • *COALS* — Fuller Bazer, Martin Dickman, Micky Eubanks, Craig Kaplan, Penny Riggs, Heather Wilkinson • *Education* — Jeffrey Liew • *Engineering* — Jorge Alvarado, Ulisses Braga-Neto, Tahir Cagin, Arum Han, Tony Hsieh, Daniel Jiménez, Lawrence Rauchwerger, Victor Ugaz • *Geosciences* — Steve DiMarco, Brendan Roark • *IBT/PHARM/RCHI* — Julian Hurdle • *Liberal Arts* — Jim Grau, Richard Street, Teresa Wilcox • *Medicine* — Vytas Bankaitas • *Science* — Darren DePoy, Alexei Safonov, Michael Smotherman, Frank Sottile • *SRPH* — Eva Shipp • *TEES Non-COE* — Margaret Hobson • *TAMU at Galveston* — Tim Dellapenna • *TAMU at Qatar* — Othmane Bouhali • *TTI* — Lance Bullard, Nauman Sheikh, Joe Zietsman • *University Libraries* — Heather Moberly • *Veterinary Medicine* — Sanjay Reddy, Loren Skow

The CPI is sponsored annually through equal funding from Texas A&M University Division of Research, Texas A&M Health Science Center, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station, and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute



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CPI Newsletter – October 2015

Included in this issue:

- Update from Dr. Helene Andrews-Polymenis, CPI Chair
- Summary of CPI Executive Committee meetings
- Texas A&M Research Compliance and Biosafety
- Texas A&M University Institute for Advanced Study (TIAS) New Faculty Fellows for 2015-2016
- Upcoming Agency Deadlines from SRS
- Sign up for notifications about Limited Submission Proposal (LSP) opportunities
- Bulletin for Principal Investigators – Issued weekly by the Division of Research, Texas A&M University
- Upcoming Seminars and Workshops for Texas A&M Researchers
- Upcoming Deadlines for Seed Grant Programs



Update from Dr. Helene Andrews-Polymeris, CPI Chair

On September 9, 2015, the CPI Executive Committee held its annual closed session planning meeting to review the results of the 2015 PI Interest Survey and singled out those priority issues identified by our constituents to focus on for the coming year. Top priority areas include improvement to Sponsored Research Services and graduate student support although additional areas were also singled out as priorities.

We have disseminated the results of the 2015 CPI survey. A summary of the survey and the closed session meeting (*including a summary of the CPI [Executive Committee](#) meeting with President Young and Provost Watson that followed the full closed session meeting on September 9th*) have been distributed to the PI community through their respective [CPI representatives](#) and are available at http://cpi.tamu.edu/archives/CPI_9.9.2015.pdf. In addition, the compliance related questions, answers, and comments have been disseminated to the appropriate compliance personnel so they are aware of issues raised by the PI community, and can act to improve their services. The CPI will remain engaged with administration on various levels throughout the coming year to identify problem areas and suggest improvements to the research environment.

One of the top priority areas identified in the PI survey was improving the services of the Texas A&M System Sponsored Research Services (SRS). As many of you are aware, SRS was brought back to the TAMU Division of Research on September 1, and is undergoing a rapid evolution to better serve the research community. Dr. Glen Laine met with the CPI Executive Committee on October 7, and will provide an SRS and Division of Research update at the October 14th CPI meeting. A transition services and operations committee (TSOC) has been appointed by Dr. Laine and is working hard to recommend and implement specific changes at SRS. Three faculty members represent you and your research (myself, Wolfgang Bangerth from Mathematics, and Les Morey from Psychology) on TSOC.

Several important changes have been recommended and implemented at SRS that will be discussed at the October 14 CPI general meeting- and many other recommendations are pending. I ask for patience from the PI community while SRS undergoes this critical transition. This transition process is complex and will not be without hiccups. In addition, we must be sure that we are thoughtful and thorough about each change as we strive to improve this essential part of our grants administration process.

B. Don Russell (Engineering) has kindly agreed to provide leadership of SRS during this transition, until a national search can be completed to identify suitable permanent leadership for SRS. A search committee has been formed to identify new leadership for SRS, and Dr. Loren Skow is serving on this committee for the CPI.

Thank you for your participation in the survey! You have provided us with very valuable feedback on the research environment, and we are bringing these issues to the attention of the administration. It is beneficial when PIs are willing to inform the Council of broad issues affecting their ability to perform research. If you have any issues the Council should be aware of, you can send an email to cpi@tamu.edu or call or email me at handrews@medicine.tamhsc.edu or 979.436.0340.

The CPI meeting on Wednesday, October 14th, 2015 will be webcast live at tvn.tamu.edu/webcasts on Channel 20, and videos are stored on the "[Archives](#)" section of the CPI website.

CPI Executive Committee Meeting Summaries

The CPI EC met for its monthly coordination meeting on October 7th with invited research administrators from the Texas A&M Health Science Center, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, TTI, and TEES.

The group discussed nominations for the search committee for the leadership position in Marketing and Communications for TAMU and potential nominees for the Dean of Faculties and Associate Provost position; continued discussion on pursuing the 2015-16 priorities; update on the Division of Research and progress on SRS;

discussion on upcoming meeting with Congressman Flores; and suggesting topics for the November and December meetings.

The EC met with President Young and Provost Watson on September 9th and discussed CPI survey; administrative organizational changes; SRS; HSC; Dean of Faculties Search Committee; Campus Carry Task Force; emergency power testing and Research Development Fund update. The EC will meet with Chancellor Sharp on October 20th.

Texas A&M Research Compliance and Biosafety

Texas A&M University's Division of Research publishes a Research Integrity and Compliance Newsletter providing updates about research compliance hot topics, guidance and best practices, educational opportunities, and changes to relevant System policies, regulations and University rules and procedures. This issue highlights-- significant federal changes proposed in the human research and export control arenas; a new review process for dual use research of concern; and an outreach initiative for animal welfare — among other topics. For the link to the current edition [click here](#).

Texas A&M University Institute for Advanced Study (TIAS) announces 2015-16 Visiting Faculty Fellows

Thirteen world-class scholars from throughout the nation and abroad have accepted invitations to serve as Faculty Fellows of the Texas A&M University Institute for Advanced Study for the 2015-2016 academic year. These Faculty Fellows, each of whom is recognized as a trailblazing scholar in chemistry, computer science, economics, engineering, genetics, law, literature or physics. Among the new Faculty Fellows are nine members of the nation's National Academies, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a member of Germany's National Academy of Sciences, a founder of legal critical race theory, and a recipient of France's *Palme Académiques*.

Each Faculty Fellow will partner with one or more of the departments offering graduate degrees housed in Texas A&M's colleges or schools, or the Texas A&M Health Science Center. TIAS has been granted resources to provide fellowships for graduate students to work with the incoming Faculty Fellows, as well as funding to support visiting graduate students and post-doctoral researchers affiliated with the Faculty Fellows.

More information about the members of the 2015-2016 set of Faculty Fellows, and the academic areas in which they will serve, is available from the Texas A&M TODAY September 23, 2015 story at <http://today.tamu.edu/2015/09/23/tias-announces-2015-16-faculty-fellows/>.

Contact:

Dr. John L. Junkins, Director, TIAS – junkins@tamu.edu, 979.845.3912

Dr. Clifford Fry, Associate Director, TIAS - cfry@tamu.edu or 979.458.5723

Upcoming Agency Deadlines from Sponsored Research Services (SRS)

Fall 2015 Upcoming Agency Deadlines:

In preparation for a busy fall 2015, SRS would like to update you on upcoming agency deadlines:

NIH

- October 16 – New R21/R03 Submissions
- November 5 – Renewal and Revised R01 Submissions
- November 16 – Renewal and Revised R21/R03 Submissions

NSF

- Physics Programs – Beginning October 28
- Mathematics – November 1-15

NIH Notice regarding ASSIST

NIH Announces New Policies Regarding 1) Inclusion of Sex as a Biological Variable and 2) Improvement of Reproducibility in applications and progress reports:

Beginning with applications due January 25, 2016, PIs will have to demonstrate strong scientific premise, rigorous experimental design, and consideration of sex and other biological variables in the Research Strategy section of their applications. Reviewers will factor this information into their overall impact scores. [Click here](#) for more information.

Contact:

Dr. Jim Joyce, Customer Service Liaison – jrjoyce@tamu.edu, 979-458-5852

Sign up for notifications about Limited Submission Proposal opportunities

The list of current Limited Submission Proposal (LSP) opportunities, maintained by the Division of Research, is available at <https://u.tamu.edu/LSP>.

To receive notifications about new LSP opportunities as soon as they are announced, email Ms. Shelly Martin at shelly.martin@tamu.edu.

Bulletin for Principal Investigators – Issued weekly by the Division of Research, Texas A&M University

The Division of Research at Texas A&M University issues a brief weekly bulletin for Principal Investigators that highlights research accomplishments and projects, funding opportunities, honors and promotions, workshops, and other items that may be of interest to the PI community.

[Click here](#) to subscribe or unsubscribe to the bulletin. [Click here](#) to submit items for consideration for an upcoming bulletin.

Upcoming Seminars and Workshops for Texas A&M Researchers

The Division of Research (DOR) offers seminars and workshops throughout the year relating to professional development in research proposal planning and writing. All of these events are coordinated by [Research Development Services \(RDS\)](#), a DOR unit providing a wide range of support to Texas A&M researchers. The new RDS calendar can be found at <http://vpr.tamu.edu/researchdevelopment/calendars>.

Upcoming Deadlines for Seed Grant Programs

DIVERSITY MATTERS Seed Grant Program

Call for Proposals (Note: DEADLINE EXTENDED TO October 28, 2015, 4 p.m.)

The Office for Diversity will make available up to \$20,000 in funds for this program. These are state funds and expended costs must be accounted for by the receiving unit by the end of August 2016. Any given proposal may request a maximum of \$5,000, although requests for lower amounts may be appropriate depending on the nature of the project. The award does not include faculty release time.

Award Edibility: All Texas A&M University faculty (tenured, tenure track, or academic professional track) or staff are eligible to submit proposals as individuals or in partnership with existing units on campus or elsewhere (e.g., other accredited universities), as relevant to the project. Letters of support from appropriate individuals in other relevant units are required when partnerships are indicated in the proposal.

It is strongly recommended that projects be discussed with the relevant Diversity Operations Committee representative(s) prior to submission. A list of the committee members can be accessed here:

<http://diversity.tamu.edu/Diversity-Operations-Committee>. Application deadline is 4 pm on October 28, 2015.

Award decisions will be made by early to mid-November, 2015.

Email Inquiries: Individuals/units desiring an additional opportunity to discuss possible project ideas and/or find potential collaborators from other units are encouraged to contact the Office for Diversity (979-458-2905) for assistance. All inquiries related to the Seed Grant may be directed to Dr. Jyotsna Vaid, Director for Organizational Development, Research and Equity, Office for Diversity, jvaid@tamu.edu

Website: Prospective applicants are strongly encouraged to peruse the Office for Diversity's website for information about existing initiatives and resources: <http://diversity.tamu.edu>

INTERDISCIPLINARY Seed Grants for Cybersecurity

Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station and the Dwight Look College of Engineering in Partnership with Texas A&M University Division of Research

Who Should Apply?

All researchers who wish to expand their research programs to address interdisciplinary cybersecurity topics can apply. As a seed grant program, funds should not be requested to incrementally extend currently ongoing research programs. Discipline-wide, interdisciplinary teams – This RFP is an opportunity to generate preliminary research results. Moreover, it should foster new collaborations necessary to substantially increase the level of cybersecurity research activity throughout Texas A&M. Teams must consist of no less than two Texas A&M PI-eligible researchers from differing disciplines.

Who is Eligible to Submit a Proposal?

PIs and Co-PIs: All PI-eligible researchers holding appointments within the Texas A&M System units headquartered in Brazos County are eligible to serve as PIs or Co-PIs on proposals. There should be only one PI per proposal. Each proposal must have at least one Co-PI who is also PI-eligible.

Questions should be directed to Dr. Margaret Hobson, Director of Research Development, TEES, email: m-hobson@tamu.edu phone (979) 458-9285 or Dr. Jorja Kimball, Executive Director, Research Development Services, Division of Research, email: j-kimball@tamu.edu phone (979) 845-1811.

Sponsored Research Services

Glen A. Laine

Vice President for Research
Regents Professor of Physiology and Pharmacology
Director, Michael E. DeBakey Institute
Wiseman-Lewie-Worth Chair in Cardiology
Texas A&M University



Sponsored Research Services

Effective September 1, 2015, the responsibility for the System's Office of Sponsored Research Services (SRS) was transferred to the University and now resides administratively in the Division of Research.

Committees

- Personnel and Accounting Committee
- Transition and Services Operations Committee (TSOC)-evolved from Roles and Responsibilities
- Executive Director Search Committee

SRS Transition and Services Operations Committee

Helene Andrews-Polymenis

College of Veterinary Medicine &
Biomedical Sciences (CPI)

Wolfgang Bangerth

College of Science

Julie Bishop

Texas A&M Health Science Center

Lois Bur

Prairie View A&M University

Carol Cantrell

Division of Research

John Crawford

Texas Engineering Experiment Station

Joseph Dunn

Texas Transportation Institute

Leonarda Horvat

MAESTRO

Jim Joyce

Sponsored Research Services

Katherine Kissmann

Sponsored Research Services

Michele Lacey

Sponsored Research Services

Les Morey

College of Liberal Arts (Faculty Senate)

Steve Schulze

Texas A&M AgriLife Research

Search Committee for the SRS Executive Director

Loren Skow

College of Veterinary Medicine &
Biomedical Sciences (CPI)

Wolfgang Bangerth

College of Science

Julie Bishop

Texas A&M Health Science Center

Lois Burg

Prairie View A&M University

Carol Cantrell

Division of Research

John Crawford

Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station

Joseph Dunn

Texas Transportation Institute

Jim Joyce

Sponsored Research Services

Les Morey

College of Liberal Arts (Faculty Senate)

Steve Schulze

Texas A&M AgriLife Research

SRS Transition

- Ideas from CPI Survey
- SRS is a Shared Service (TEES, AgriLife, Texas A&M, and other System institutions)
- Different Implementation Schedule for SRS Users
- Communication—CPI, Faculty Senate, Council of Deans, Chief Research Officers, CEOs
- Timing

Stability in Assignment of Proposal/Projects Administrators

Assign individual SRS proposal administrators and project administrators to a specific department(s) serving a specific group of researchers in order to build and stabilize good working relationships between the two.

Benefits:

- Provides the Principal Investigator (PI) with a single point of contact
- Allows the SRS employee to gain better understanding of researchers, particular departmental processes, research areas, and sponsors

Project Administrator Position—Working Group

Establish TSOC Working Group to Determine SRS Project Administrator Roles and Responsibilities.

Benefits:

- Benefits all services of SRS, especially those to the PI
- Will enhance PI productivity, project compliance, maximization of funds for the benefit of the project, sponsored billings, communications, and reduce administrative burden
- Brings the focus of SRS back to the core functions and services that are essential to the success of the research program

Uploading of Proposal Documents Into Routing Systems

Establish the uploading of proposal documents into routing systems for submission to the sponsor as a standard/basic proposal service provided by Sponsored Research Services (SRS)

Benefits:

- Reduces the confusion between PIs and SRS staff when determining who is responsible for uploading proposal documents
- Creates efficiencies and reduces the administrative burden on the PI and departmental staff
- Markets SRS as a comprehensive proposal administrative service for researchers

Award-in-House Notification

Establish "Award-In-House" Notification at SRS.

Benefits:

- Provides the PI with ample time to plan, begin hiring graduate students and research personnel, and support other preliminary activity that will enhance the performance of the project
- Provides the information to the PI and the department to ensure that the account, if eligible, is setup promptly

Automatic Interim Funding (Eligible Projects)

"Automatic" Interim Funding for Eligible Federal and State Funded Projects.

Benefits:

- Creates a project number that will be distributed to accommodate departmental payroll and other expenditures
- Reduces payroll corrections, time and effort re-certifications, and risks from over 90 day cost transfers which jeopardize the reimbursement of funds from sponsors

Transfer Industry and Commodity Contracts to System Members

Transfer Industry and Commodity proposal administration (if applicable) and contract negotiation responsibilities from SRS to System members.

Benefits:

- Improves negotiations between the PI, sponsor, and the institution
- Eliminates SRS's entrance into the negotiations in mid-stream
- Increases quality of collaborations
- Decreases turn-around time for negotiations of issues such as shared space, intellectual property, resource allocation, etc.

Transfer Purchasing to System Members/Retain Project Allowability at SRS

Transfer purchasing "back office" services from SRS to selected System members with project administration and compliance remaining with SRS.

Benefits:

- Allows SRS to reprioritize and focus on the research administrative core functions to provide better services to the PIs
- Creates efficiencies and prevents unnecessary hiring for SRS in the fiscal areas

Transfer Travel Services to System Members/Retain Project Allowability

Transfer travel services from SRS to System member. Project administration and project compliance (allowability under sponsor guidelines) will remain with SRS.

Benefits:

- Creates efficiencies and allows SRS to reprioritize and focus on the research administration core functions to provide better services to the PIs
- Prevents unnecessary hiring for SRS in areas of low priority

Restructure From Matrix Management

Implement core-function based management model for SRS.

Benefits:

- Eliminates the current dual reporting structure and establishes a single supervisor for SRS employees who can oversee their job responsibilities and area of expertise
- Enhances employee morale and helps supervisors in hiring, mentoring, training, developing, evaluating, and retaining employees

Analyze SRS Beginning Salary Rates

With assistance from human resource professionals, analyze SRS beginning salary rates to ensure that beginning rates are competitive and commensurate with the level of responsibility assigned to each job title/position. If funds are available within the current SRS budget, SRS will make adjustments to individuals making less than the beginning rate for selected positions.

Benefits:

- Helps with recruiting and retention in key research administrative areas
- Improves employee morale

Establish Mid-level Supervisory Positions

Establish eight (8) new mid-level supervisory positions to reduce the span of control at SRS in order to enhance training and enhancement of services in the core functions of SRS (proposals, contracts, and project administration).

Benefits:

- Reduces direct reports from an average of 30-35 to an average of 15-18
- Better training, increased job knowledge (having an accessible supervisor with expertise in the area of responsibilities), enhanced services and troubleshooting assistance for principal investigators
- Provides career paths for SRS employees and improves employee morale

Transition Leadership

B. Don Russell

Distinguished Professor
Dwight Look College of Engineering

Jim Joyce

Associate Executive Director
Sponsored Research Services

Questions?

CPI Speaker Questions for October 14 Meeting Speaker – Dr. Glen Laine

- Continuity of SRS Personnel. I am just entering into the third year of a four year project, and I have had four project administrators – three since June 2015. This lack of continuity is creating turmoil in the execution of this project that requires negotiating the budget at the beginning of each year. What is being done to retain competent, experienced SRS personnel?

- Contract Negotiations with Private Funding Sources. When a new contract is negotiated with a private enterprise (e.g., industry), SRS contract negotiators begin the discussions in a position so extreme that it is unacceptable to our partners. A perfect example is intellectual property in which SRS demands that 100% of intellectual property developed on the project belongs to Texas A&M. Negotiations drag on for months or even years as SRS clings to this untenable position (a position NOT supported by the PIs), and funding often is lost. This occurs even when Texas A&M has fully negotiated contracts in place with these companies. Why is this our policy? (I can provide two examples is Dr. Laine needs evidence of this: one project took eight months to negotiate, and another is in its fifth month. We have had previous contracts with both funding sources. Every colleague of mine has a similar experience.)

- SRS Post Awards: recently AgriLife Extension and Research changed the way subcontracts for awards were handled. Previously, the PI received funds and subaccounts were set up. The PI could see subaccounts in order to know that the project was spending and check on year end funds. This was changed this past year. Now the money is zeroed out from the Research side (the person this happened to assumed it was the same on Extension side). The PI can no longer see those accounts to verify spending. Is this a simple software or data entry change for Maestro? I was on the committee years ago, but no longer participate.

- SRS subcontract authorization: PIs receive a verification request from SRS (example from my email listed below). The PI brought to my attention that without being able to see the account, they cannot know if the charges are billing with categories or if the account is overdrawn. The question is whether this makes their program responsible for over spending, since they have authorized it? This is a dilemma without access to see the account on Maestro.

Example: Please find attached invoice(s) requiring your approval for payment to:

Vendor Name: XXX
Date: 03/31/15
Invoice# XXX
Billing period: 03/01-31/15
Amount: X.XX

If you approve of the charges, please reply to this email with the following response:

"I certify these costs were incurred to conduct research and are properly chargeable to the project listed above. All deliverables or reports required to date have been received

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and are acceptable. The work is currently on schedule and I am not aware of any delays or potential delays."

Once your approval is received, we will process payment to the vendor. If there is a reason this invoice should not be paid, please let us know as soon as possible the reason for the delay. Thank you, Marilyn Keller

- In my quest to identify private Foundations for applied research (not easy), I remember going to the Research Foundation years ago where they would help you identify possible funding sources relevant to your interest area, e.g., TX Foundations focused on the environment/conservation. NOW, SRS has no program development function thus, no resources are available for locating these funding sources and communicating with the program officers at the foundations.

One can obtain some information from Maestro (submitted projects, no indication of award, though), funded projects (AgriLife Research's annual report 2010-2014), and a few links within the TAMU VPR has various databases and notices of funding alerts. The TAMU library has a program called PIVOT which has some grant information as well on Foundations but not all in one place. GuideStar is another nonprofit source that can be used which provides pertinent foundation information. I am assuming TAMU is connected to it; I set up my own account. In working with private Foundations as with other funding sources, personal relationships are key.

The long and short of it is this, it would be very advantageous if there were folks on campus who could assist faculty to identify private foundations TAMU has worked with and guide us in this process. If the folks are out there, please let me know.

- We have had several issues with SRS over the past two years. One involves rigidity in negotiations with corporate sponsors of research, even some that have supported our programs for more than 40 years. This has resulted in a loss of research funding. Another issue is lack of continuity for project administrators. I have had four different project administrators assigned to my projects over the past 12 months.
- When we submit an email to begin the process for applying for a grant, it would be nice to be contacted by our contact person within 48 hours. And then it would be nice if they would periodically check in on the PI as they pull the proposal together. I recently submitted an EPA grant, I heard from my person at the very beginning and then I did not hear from her again for a couple of weeks. I would send things down to SRS (budget) and wouldn't hear anything for a while. I actually tried to submit early and ended up submitting on the due date, all because I could not get timely responses on the budget portion of the project.

Post-awards – it is extremely frustrating when I email my post award contact and I don't get responses. On a current EPA grant, I know that I will need an extension and I have received zero support from SRS on getting this set up. I will email my contact and I get no response. I needed an answer before I had a call with EPA, I sent an email to Ms. Mosely on Sept. 16th and I still have not received a response from her. I also need to

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cancel a sub award my contact retired and pick up two new sub awardees to help with the work. Again I have had no help from SRS.

Some suggestions:

- ❖ Development of a payroll – position work sheet. Often when we write a proposal in Extension we put in for a part time person or some other temporary worker. We write in for an hourly wage, add benefits, etc. However, once we receive the grant and turn in the position description we find out that either we did not budget correctly or that position requires some other title, something to delay moving the project forward. This can literally take 2 to 3 months, all the while why you fall further behind on your project.
 - ❖ Offering training to PIs on how to submit other awards not just NIH and NSF – CDC and HUD have had some proposals that would be a good fit for Extension, but applying for those programs would require some support from SRS.
 - ❖ Setting up a meet and greet for PIs who work around the state with SRS personnel – time to get to know this group and they get to know us. Help build team work and networking to make names have faces.
 - ❖ Finally, good luck with your new role, for all of us who work on grants look forward to a more streamlined and efficient office. I for one miss when it was simple, when I could call contracts and grants and I got an answer that day.
- I would like to know if the SRS staff being shared between departments will continue or is this a temporary situation.
 - The transition from EPIK to MAESTRO has been very problematic. Account balances in EPIK and MAESTRO are both unreliable, leading PI's to fly blindly in spending
 - I'm sure that faculty members from Biology department have voiced their similar concerns before. I want to raise this issue again based on my personal experience about grant submission and grant management.

I have been working in the Biology department for less than 8 years, and I am forced to work with several different grant proposal administrators. The people that I have worked with are: Sue, Janice, Pam, Tim, Irving, Ana-Lisa, and Cheryl. Even the one that I previously worked in May is not in charge of Biology proposals for the October submission. Most of these personnel changes occurred after the merge of research foundation to SRS without consulting of the departments that are going to be affected.

This constant changing of proposal administrators just increases unnecessary burden for the faculty members.

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- I think that moving the SRS into the TAMU Research Division is a very good development and opportunity to improve performance and efficiency of this critical for our research enterprise element. It is therefore important to ensure this potential opportunity is realized to the fullest. I have specific questions and suggestions that I would like to be considered and hopefully addressed in the CPI meeting.

- ❖ It appears that a good deal of thought has been put in setting up committees to look into the financial and operational aspects of the SRS reorganization as well as the activities aimed at finding a new director. I think however that the PI participation in improving and maintaining SRS operations should be enhanced. This can be done both within the existing committees as well as in setting up an Advisory Committee of sorts that could become a standing entity. There are several benefits to this: first, PIs really understand the aspects appearing on the “receiving side” of the SRS-PIs interface, which are less known to administrators. Second, it can help with evaluating potential improvements and addressing concerns brought up by PIs, and serve as an effective link between the PIs and accountants, who often speaking different languages.

- ❖ In recent months, SRS lost a lot of its most qualified personnel, which is likely at least partially related to the ongoing reorganization. However, the problem of high turnaround of personnel has been a problem at SRS for a while. At times, it feels that the SRS is a training camp for other organizations, with newly hired people spending 4-7 months in training, then working for a few months and then, once they become really well qualified, they leave. This appears to be one of the most important problems of the SRS. It affects PIs as they often have to spend a lot more time than necessary because their counterpart on the SRS side is not yet qualified enough, it is also a big contributor to the perception that the SRS is working poorly and it actually negatively affects the outcomes (proposals do not get submitted or are submitted with mistakes, which could even cause them to be rejected). It also makes little sense financially: if the fraction of trainees at SRS goes from 50% to 10%, one could double the salary of existing personnel with the same budget as it is now. It is important to understand why people are leaving. It likely has financial aspects to it, but also the operational model is such that it creates a lot of pressure on the SRS personnel, both in terms of highly non-uniform load with extreme peak loads and in terms of psychological pressure from unhappy PIs. While the culture of the SRS being a “customer service” seems like generally a good idea, it leaves folks there defenseless against angry PIs who are sometimes angry for good reasons, but often it is a result of misunderstandings or PIs mistakes. Low morale in SRS propagates in poor performance and directly affects our research efficiency. This seems to be one of those cases where we need to help them to help us.

- ❖ Following up on the previous point, I think the operational model itself needs revision. It may already be happening, but it is hard to judge from aside. The practice where SRS administrators are submitting 10 proposals each 5 minutes before the deadline is not sustainable, it creates unreasonable load on them and is likely the main reason for mistakes. There must be a hard procedure setup where PIs must submit all materials ahead of time and the SRS must find ways to deal with peak loads by redistributing the work. Some sort of an electronic “one window” approach could also be considered to help institute such policy, so PIs follow the rules and do not call SRS at the last minute insisting that their proposal is the most important thing the

CPI Speaker Questions for October 14 Meeting

Speaker – Dr. Glen Laine

SRS ever did and it has to be submitted today. Such system would also provide some layer of healthy insulation between PIs and SRS and reduce conflicts and complaints. Also, different departments likely have somewhat different "peak times" (specific types of proposals to NSF, DOE, DOD) and so attaching one administrator to 5 departments may not be the best model. It is good when PIs have a known "contact" who is familiar with the specifics of a given department, but perhaps their job should be to work with other administrators and coordinate and oversee the work rather than do everything by themselves. If this can be addressed, we will likely reduce the high rate of personnel losses we have at SRS.

- ❖ Another question that I have not found an answer to is whether we are looking at the models adopted at institutions that have successfully resolved the type of problems we are facing. Why reinvent the wheel if someone already figured out how to do it well. We can look both into their operational models, work load, rate of personnel turnaround, salaries etc. Perhaps even having external members with relevant experience on the very committees that are looking into the SRS reorganization would be a good step to tap into the experience others have in this. Maybe this is already being done, but looking at the membership of these committees it seems that it is dominated by the very people who may have created the SRS we have right now. I am not familiar with the history and so my concerns may well be not founded and even not just to these folks, but it would be good for PIs to know that this is not the case.
- ❖ I want to mention some of my own experiences with the SRS to illustrate some of these points. This summer, in a matter of 3 months, I lost my proposal administrator, project administrator and the contract negotiator. All of them left to different entities within the TAMU system because they were not happy at the SRS. High uneven workloads, low morale, sometimes what seems as poor personnel management practices, mediocre salaries seem to be the reasons for that. This happened in a middle of the final negotiation steps for 3 projects I have, which led to an incredible chaos and long delays. I had to call and email funding agencies to find out what they heard from the SRS if anything, send desperate emails asking SRS to find the status of their processing and spending a lot of my time. Over the last years I went through many project and proposal administrators, a few years ago I spent a lot of time working with the SRS over a period of three months to correct a mountain of mistakes that have been made by a trainee who has been in charge of my projects for slightly over 6 months. Some years ago I was contacted by the DOE telling me they are taking back ~\$100k they awarded us with as part of the ARRA program because after several years we still haven't spent it yet. In reality we spent it in the first month of receiving it, but apparently TAMU has forgotten to bill the DOE for these \$100k. It sounds anecdotal, but I am sure other PIs have similar stories, and the net sum of losses is probably not funny at all.

Again, I have strong hopes that with the new leadership we will be able to get the SRS to the point where it is a capable and efficient wheel in the overall TAMU research enterprise vehicle. It is obviously a gigantic task and I think we, the PIs, ought to be able to help this process and make it a success. If not out of kindness, then out of self-preservation instinct as our ability to do well critically depends on the effectiveness of the SRS.