CPI Survey Data

March 20, 2024

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Methodology Overview

- Survey distributed on January 25, 2024
    - Open for two weeks, closing on Friday February 9, 2024
    - Sent to the Master PI Listerv with instructions that recipients could share broadly with colleagues that may not be PIs on the list
- All data were collected anonymously
- All questions were based on a Likert rating with follow-up open response boxes to add further comments/clarification
    - Negative values: disagree (-3, -2, -1)
    - Positive values: agree (1, 2, 3)
    - Not applicable: 0, and removed from analysis/figures
- All data are/will be available on the CPI website
    - PDF of output, excel file, and these slides

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Methodology Overview

- All responses were re-coded numerically after removing the "not applicable" responses
  - Negative values: strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree (-3, -2, -1)
  - Positive values: agree, somewhat agree, strongly agree (1, 2, 3)

3

Response Rate

- Total Responses: 349 (14.8%)
  - ArtSci: 68 (16.5%)
  - HealthSci: 52 (med: 23; dent: 2; nrs: 11; pharm: 3; sph: 13) (18.2%; 15.4, 5.4, 57.8, 12, 23.6)
  - Engineering: 53 (11.5%)
  - COALS: 66 (29.5%)
  - Architecture: 2 (4.5%)
  - CEHD: 11 (11.4%)
  - Mays: 0 (0%)
  - TAMUQ: 5 (10%)
  - TAMUG: 6 (13.9%)
  - Bush: 7 (18.4%)
  - PVFA: 1 (10%)
  - Law: 2 (25%)
  - VetMed: 17 (12.4%)
  - Libraries: 2 (50%)
  - TTI: 19 (11%)
  - TEES: 11 (27.5%)
  - AgriLife Extension & Research: 22 (6.7%)
  - No Unit Given: 3
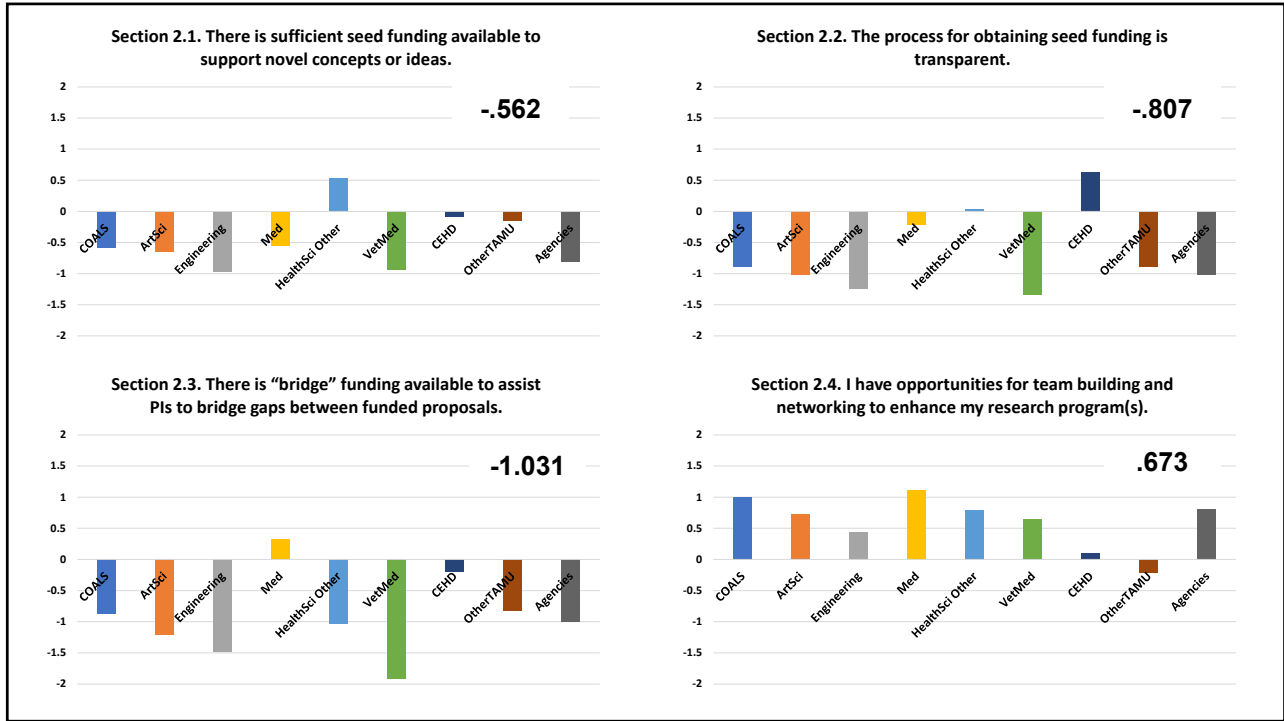
4

Responses by Rank

- Assistant Professor: 58 (16.7%)
- Associate Professor: 86 (24.7%)
- Professor: 148 (42.6%)
- Other: 47 (13.5%)
  - Research Scientist (Assistant, Associate)
  - Staff
  - Research Engineer (Assistant, Associate)
  - Note that none of these apply appropriately at TAMUQ
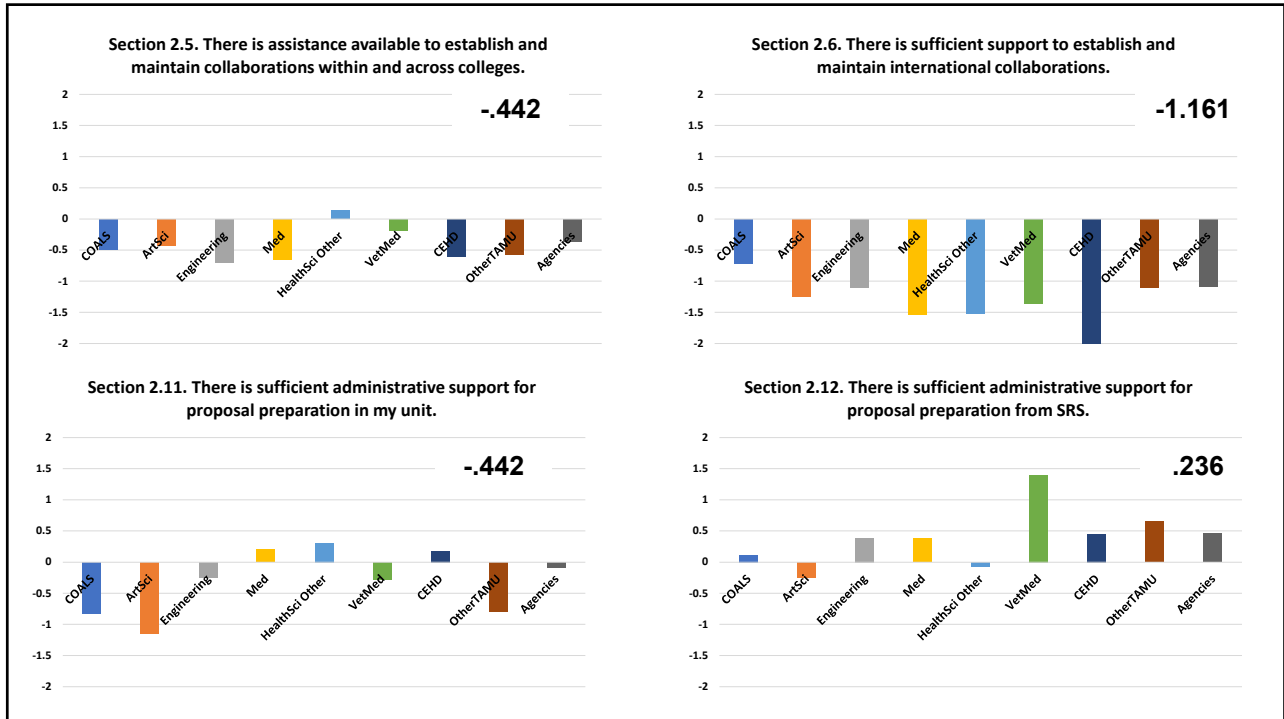- No Response: 8 (2.3%)

5

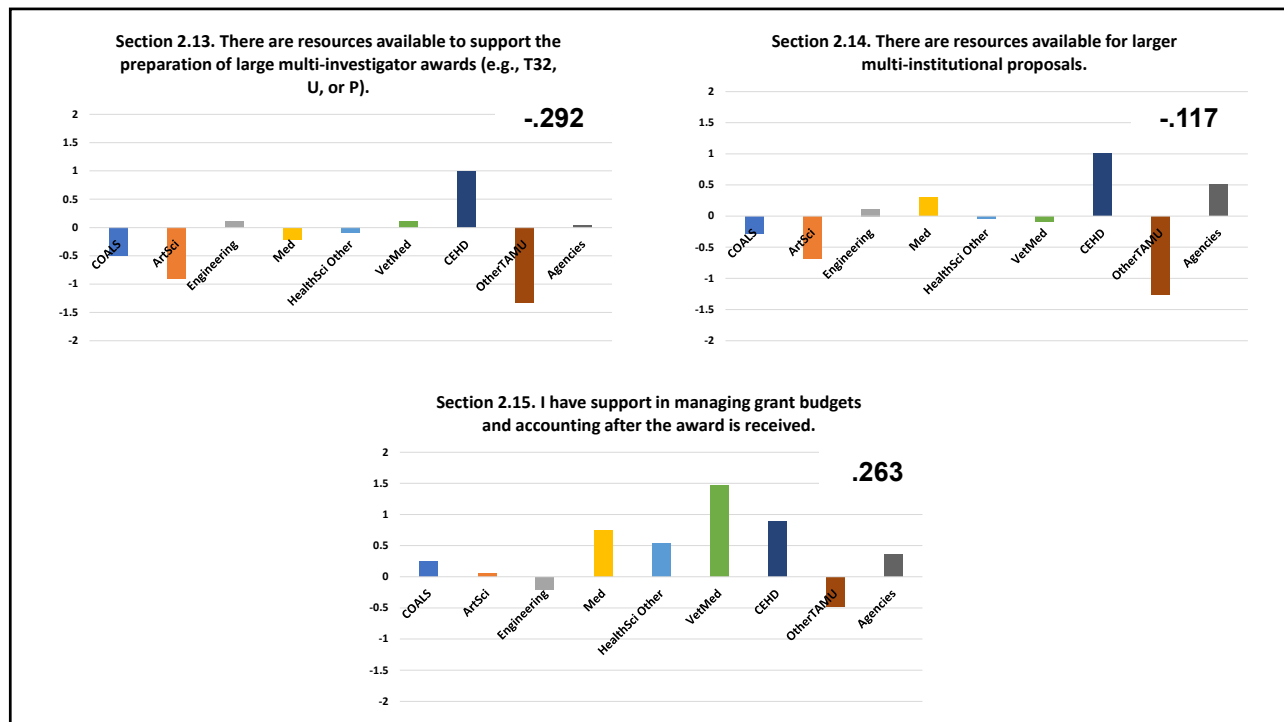# Funding

6

Section 2.1. There is sufficient seed funding available to support novel concepts or ideas.

-.562

Section 2.2. The process for obtaining seed funding is transparent.

-.807

Section 2.3. There is "bridge" funding available to assist PIs to bridge gaps between funded proposals.

-1.031

Section 2.4. I have opportunities for team building and networking to enhance my research program(s).

.673

7

Section 2.5. There is assistance available to establish and maintain collaborations within and across colleges.

-.442

Section 2.6. There is sufficient support to establish and maintain international collaborations.

-1.161

Section 2.11. There is sufficient administrative support for proposal preparation in my unit.

-.442

Section 2.12. There is sufficient administrative support for proposal preparation from SRS.

.236

8

Section 2.13. There are resources available to support the preparation of large multi-investigator awards (e.g., T32, U, or P). — -.292

Section 2.14. There are resources available for larger multi-institutional proposals. — -.117

Section 2.15. I have support in managing grant budgets and accounting after the award is received. — .263

9

Comments related to resources for large grants and collaborative grants

-more transparency on available resources
-graphics support
-more funding for staff dedicated to T32/P proposals
-mentoring: "there is only so much one can learn from seminars/workshops"
-more explicit guidance on policies for multi-institutional proposals
-Networking for new Pis: "we don't know where to start"
-admin support for supporting ideas
-professional grant writers/editors to help with proposals
-more regular communication from SRS
-less turnover in support staff
-support beyond just finding consultants
-more staffing support targeted to schools/topic areas
-professional reviewers to help structure proposals/provide feedback
-admin support for proposal preparation
-more help with budgets/budget justification
-online portals to find collaborators, resources, opportunities
- "My work is social sciences and applied research, the core facilities, multi-investigator grants, proposal supports seem to revolve around hard sciences and health professions."
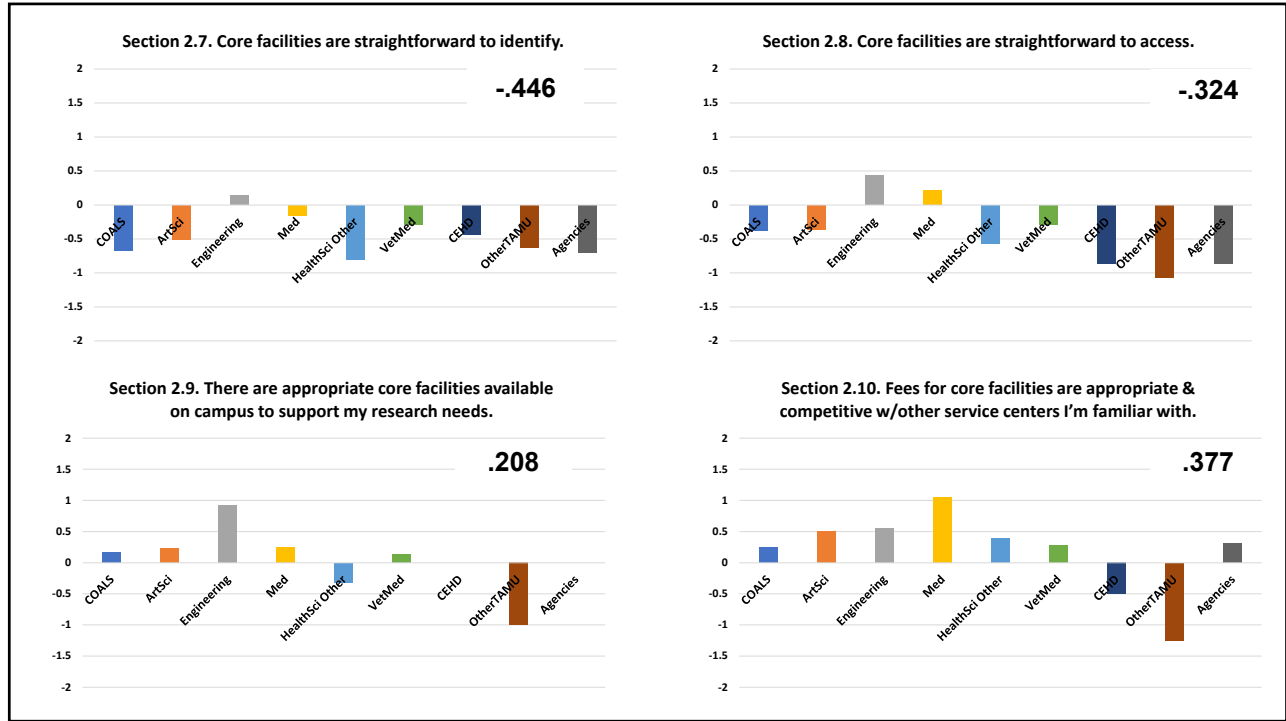-more staff needed in SRS, "SRS personnel appear to be OVERLOADED"

10

Comments related to funding more generally

-more support at department level

-"SRS staff are normally overworked

-"the SRS staff are highly professional and do a great job but are overworked and underpaid. Given their importance to securing extramural funding, I feel this needs to addressed."

      Note: variations on this point came up multiple times. Concerns about slow responses came up in several places, though in some instances the need for more staffing was highlighted

-" Far from enabling international collaborations, this university is typically in the business of hindering them instead…"

-support for managing budgets after reward received is needed

-lack of seed funding opportunities compared to 5 years ago

-need more updates on spending to better manage post-award, MAESTRO slow to update and note reliable for budget tracking

-need for internal funding opportunities

-more knowledge of NIH funding in SRS, and more regular clear sharing of updates to NIH forms before grants are prepared

-no help for budget management, all on faculty, no budget management tools ("Maestro is useless for faculty")

-accounting staff cut, bills aren't getting paid

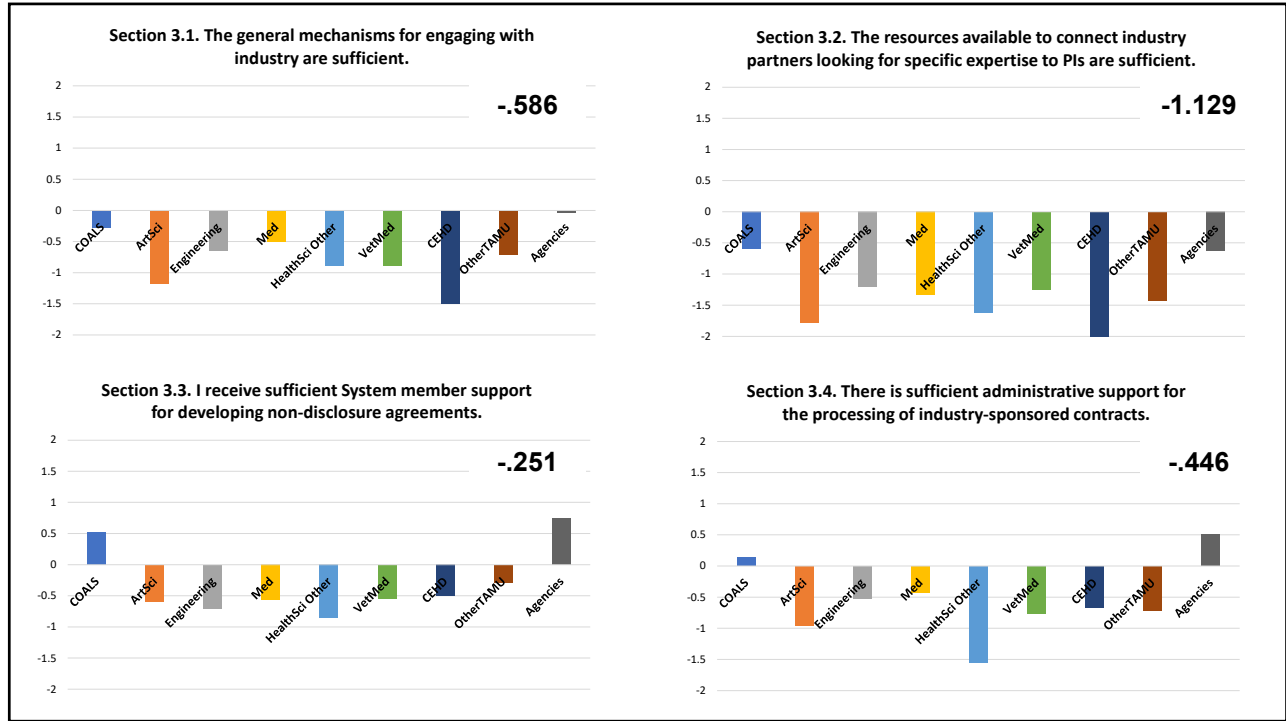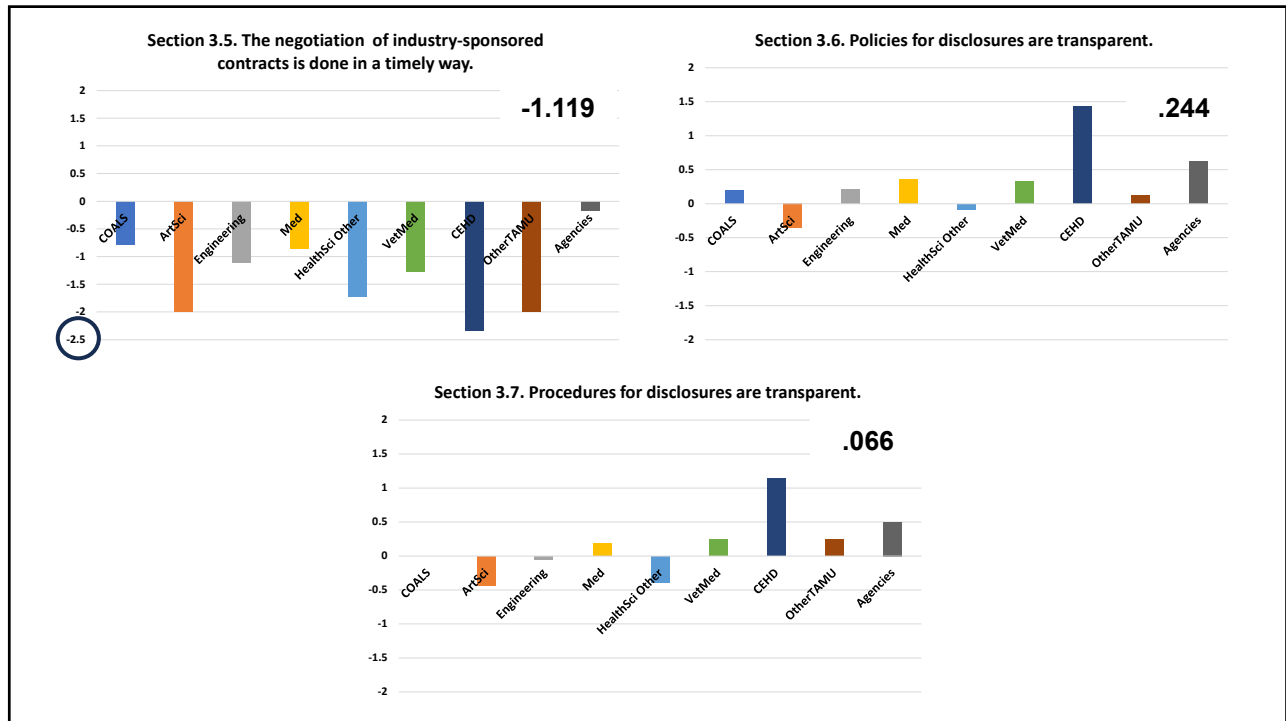-delays getting accounts set up post-award

11

Core Facilities

12

Section 2.7. Core facilities are straightforward to identify. **-.446**

Section 2.8. Core facilities are straightforward to access. **-.324**

Section 2.9. There are appropriate core facilities available on campus to support my research needs. **.208**

Section 2.10. Fees for core facilities are appropriate & competitive w/other service centers I'm familiar with. **.377**

13

Industry Engagement

14

Section 3.1. The general mechanisms for engaging with industry are sufficient. **-.586**

Section 3.2. The resources available to connect industry partners looking for specific expertise to PIs are sufficient. **-1.129**

Section 3.3. I receive sufficient System member support for developing non-disclosure agreements. **-.251**

Section 3.4. There is sufficient administrative support for the processing of industry-sponsored contracts. **-.446**

15

Section 3.5. The negotiation of industry-sponsored contracts is done in a timely way. **-1.119**

Section 3.6. Policies for disclosures are transparent. **.244**

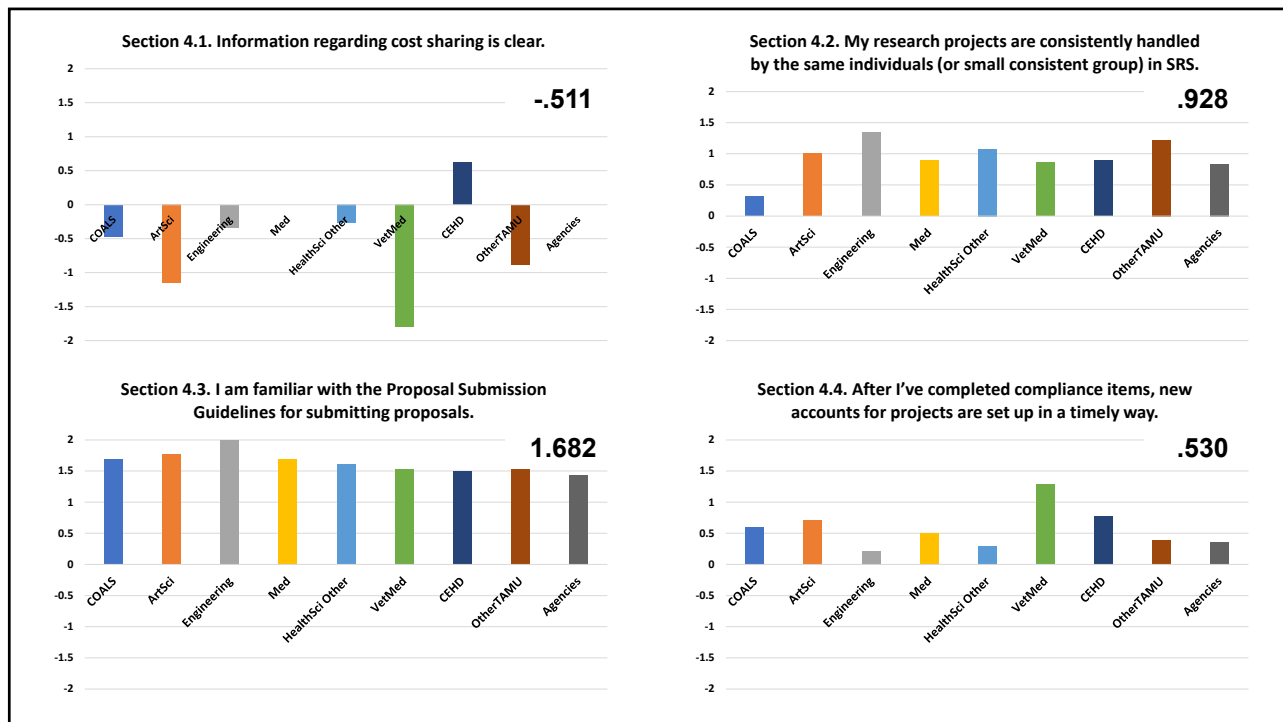Section 3.7. Procedures for disclosures are transparent. **.066**

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Comments related to industry engagement

-"TAMU is NOT business friendly"
-" The time to get any MOA/MOU/contract processed seems unnecessary long--my sense not enough staff to process in a timely fashion..."
-"Why do simple contracts take so long??????"
-" Recently lost a grant opportunity because fees are too high."
-"Insufficient expertise to identify industry partners"
-"TAMU will never be competitive because they blow up their IP process every 2-3 years and then take years getting a new process in place…"
-" In a nutshell, industry sponsor engagement has become a disaster in recent years. I am apalled at how bad it has become, right from NDA review, contract support, pre and post award management..."
-contracts take forever, a huge obstacle for PIs, embarrassing and external partners have negative view -
"horrific experiences…funding took forever to get approved"
-takes nearly a year to get contract in place, sometimes with only little time between getting $ and first deliverables due to industry partner
-" Once, the delay was so long (several months of back and forth on contract terms) that the lead organization on the team told us that, as much as they enjoy working with our researchers and value our work, they will be hesitant to include us on teams in the future. Our contracts staff are great; the issue seems to be within our contracting procedures."
-Lack of continuity in service, takes years to execute contracts
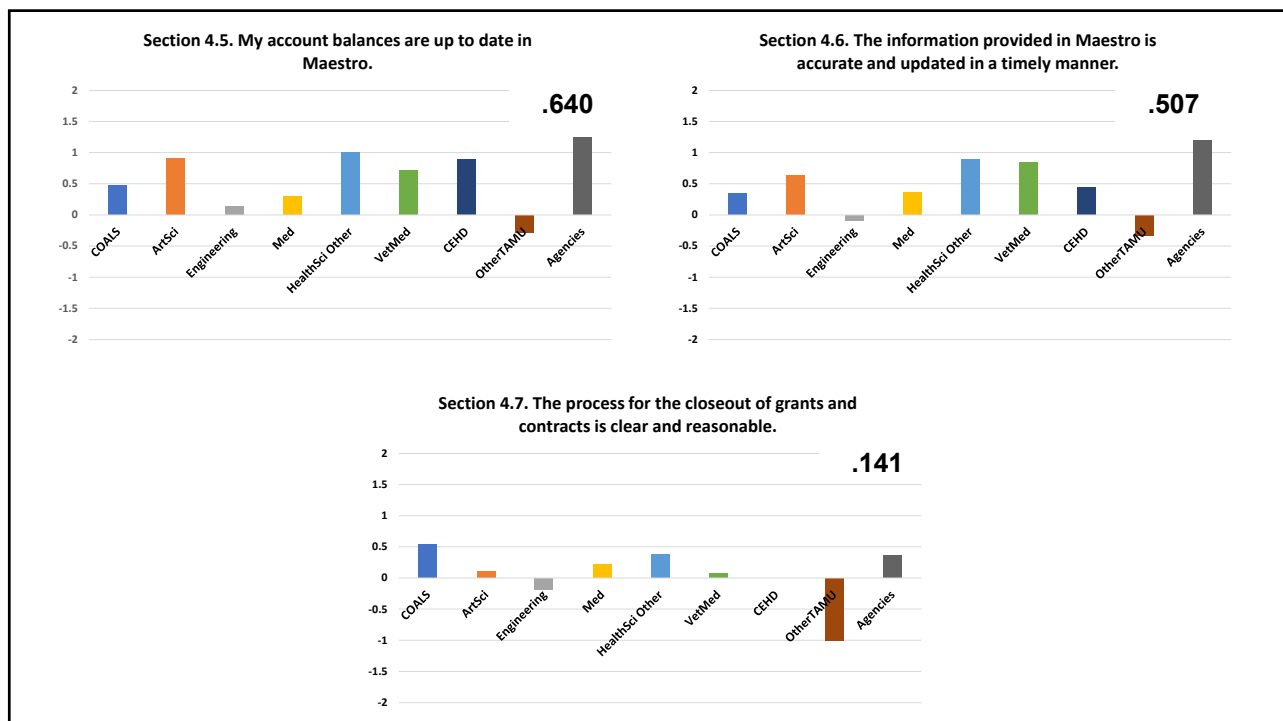-Lack of understanding in how to pursue/get involved with industry sponsors
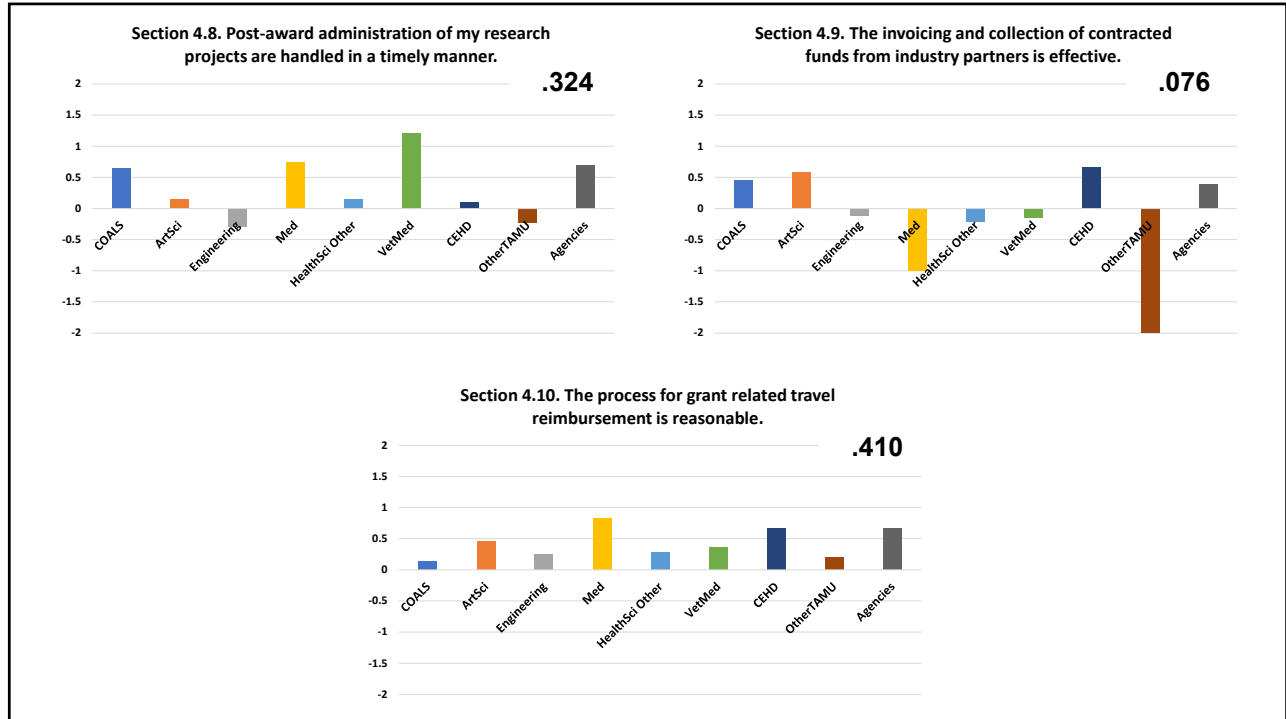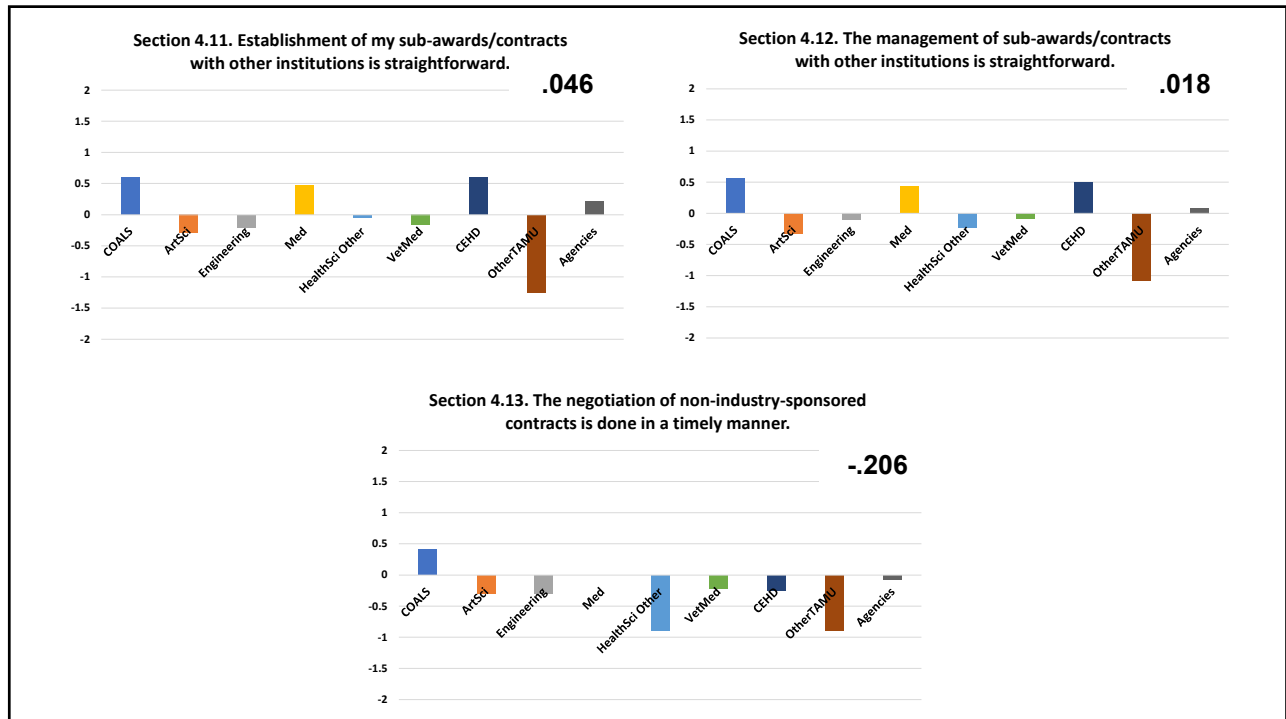
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Grants & Contracts Management

18

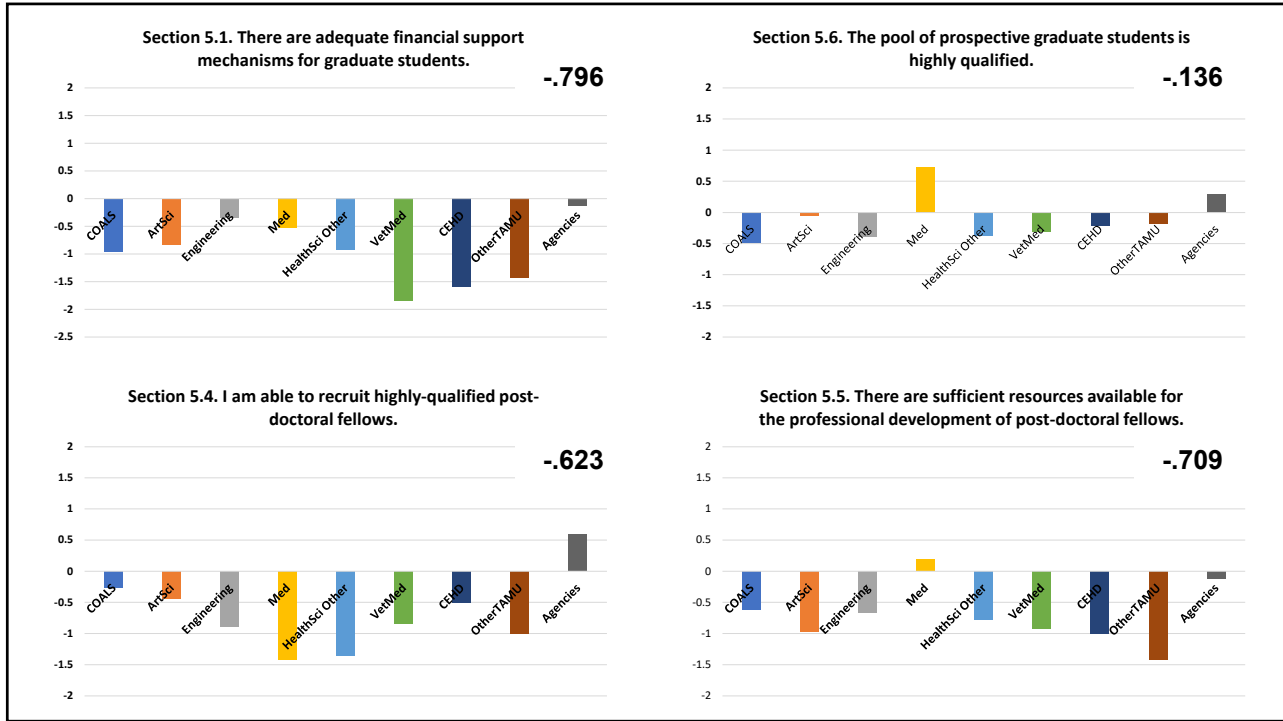**Section 4.1. Information regarding cost sharing is clear.**

-.511

Section 4.2. My research projects are consistently handled by the same individuals (or small consistent group) in SRS.

.928

Section 4.3. I am familiar with the Proposal Submission Guidelines for submitting proposals.

1.682

Section 4.4. After I've completed compliance items, new accounts for projects are set up in a timely way.

.530

19

Section 4.5. My account balances are up to date in Maestro.

.640

Section 4.6. The information provided in Maestro is accurate and updated in a timely manner.

.507

Section 4.7. The process for the closeout of grants and contracts is clear and reasonable.

.141

20

Section 4.8. Post-award administration of my research projects are handled in a timely manner. **.324**

Section 4.9. The invoicing and collection of contracted funds from industry partners is effective. **.076**

Section 4.10. The process for grant related travel reimbursement is reasonable. **.410**

21

Section 4.11. Establishment of my sub-awards/contracts with other institutions is straightforward. **.046**

Section 4.12. The management of sub-awards/contracts with other institutions is straightforward. **.018**

Section 4.13. The negotiation of non-industry-sponsored contracts is done in a timely manner. **-.206**

22

Comments related to grants & contracts management

- "SRS has suffered a substantive loss of experience in the last two years. It appears that they are often not replaced in a timely manner, resulting in current staff being overworked…These folks are integral to our success as PIs and I believe deserve higher pay and more colleagues.
- "SRS postaward office (or at least the administrator that I have been working with is non responsive. Substantially negatively affect the timely progress of the project."
- "Contracts are always a bottleneck (not always TAMUs fault)"
-needing more guidance on subawards/contracts between system members
-policies need to be more transparent
-Maestro not user friendly, hard to know if up to date/accurate, don't know how to interpret Maestro
- "often close-out process want more from me than the sponsor does"
-travel reimbursement for students not reasonable -- have to pay up front & they may not have the $
- getting $ from government agencies is easy, but hard from industry/independent agencies is impossible
-negotiation as a bottleneck and discourages subcontracts through TAMU as opposed to consulting
- "Maestro is currently 1-2 months behind..."
- "Concur is catastrophically problematic for expense recovery."
- "…SRS makes our lives much more difficult, not easier. At many of the institutions I have worked at, SRS was a service, not a hindrance…Here, it is constant oversight and telling us "no."…"
- "SRS is reliable always. Contracts -- what a mess. Who is in charge? Why does it take so long?"
- "what is wrong in contracts right now? It is so slow! I am sure they are working hard, but it is not working well right now"
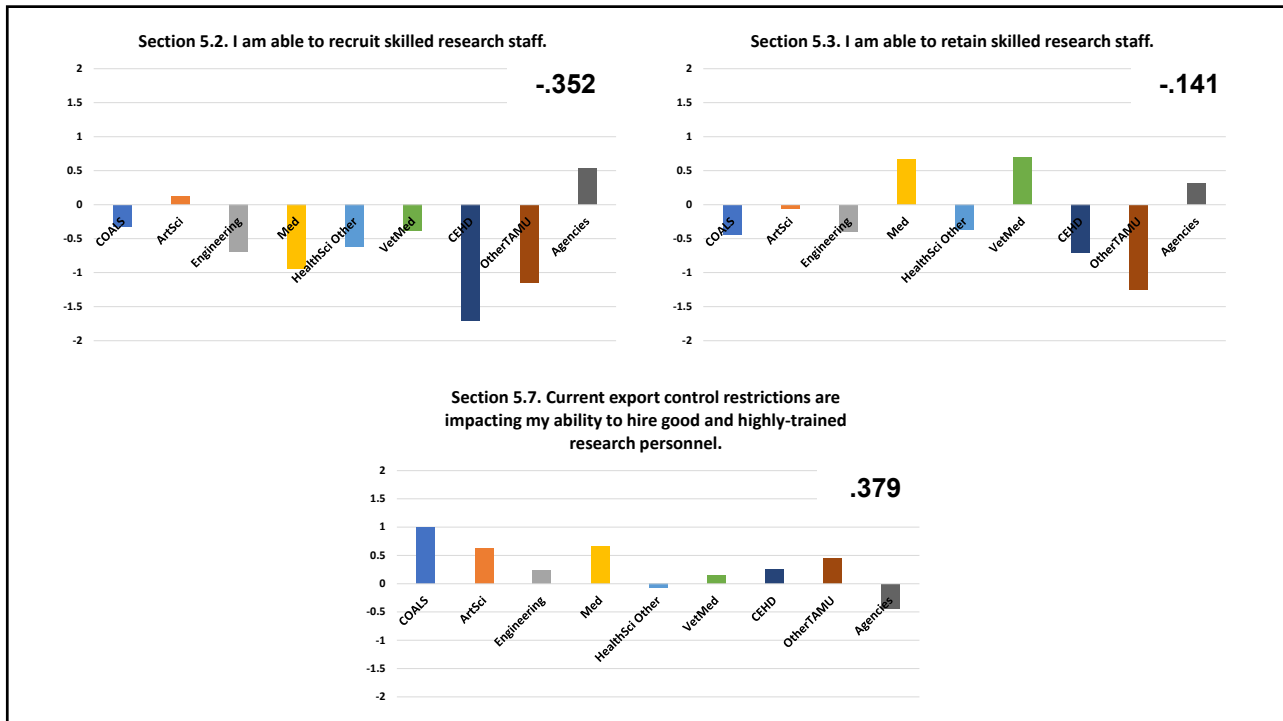
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Grad Students, Post-Docs, & Research Staff

24

Section 5.1. There are adequate financial support mechanisms for graduate students.   **-.796**

Section 5.6. The pool of prospective graduate students is highly qualified.   **-.136**

Section 5.4. I am able to recruit highly-qualified post-doctoral fellows.   **-.623**

Section 5.5. There are sufficient resources available for the professional development of post-doctoral fellows.   **-.709**

25

Section 5.2. I am able to recruit skilled research staff.   **-.352**

Section 5.3. I am able to retain skilled research staff.   **-.141**

Section 5.7. Current export control restrictions are impacting my ability to hire good and highly-trained research personnel.   **.379**

26

How do we attract better grad students, post-docs, and research staff?

- office to help place partners in the community
- pay more, bridge funding to faculty w/limited budgets
-way to post open grad student positions for folks looking to recruit
-higher salaries/ grad student stipends
-concerns about DEI ban & state policies
- office space needs for these positions
-Concern that the minimum post-doc salary of $54k is too high and grants won't cover this
- more internal fellowships
- 12-month salary for grad students
- **more funding for grad students so more can be recruited**
- internal funding for post-docs – allocated by university
- centralized training for post-docs staff
- teaching opportunities for post-docs
- need for more amenities in College Station
- increased travel funding
- better support for mentored grant mechanisms (K, fellowships)
- structured professional development
- post-doc centered spaces and events
- more training grants on campus
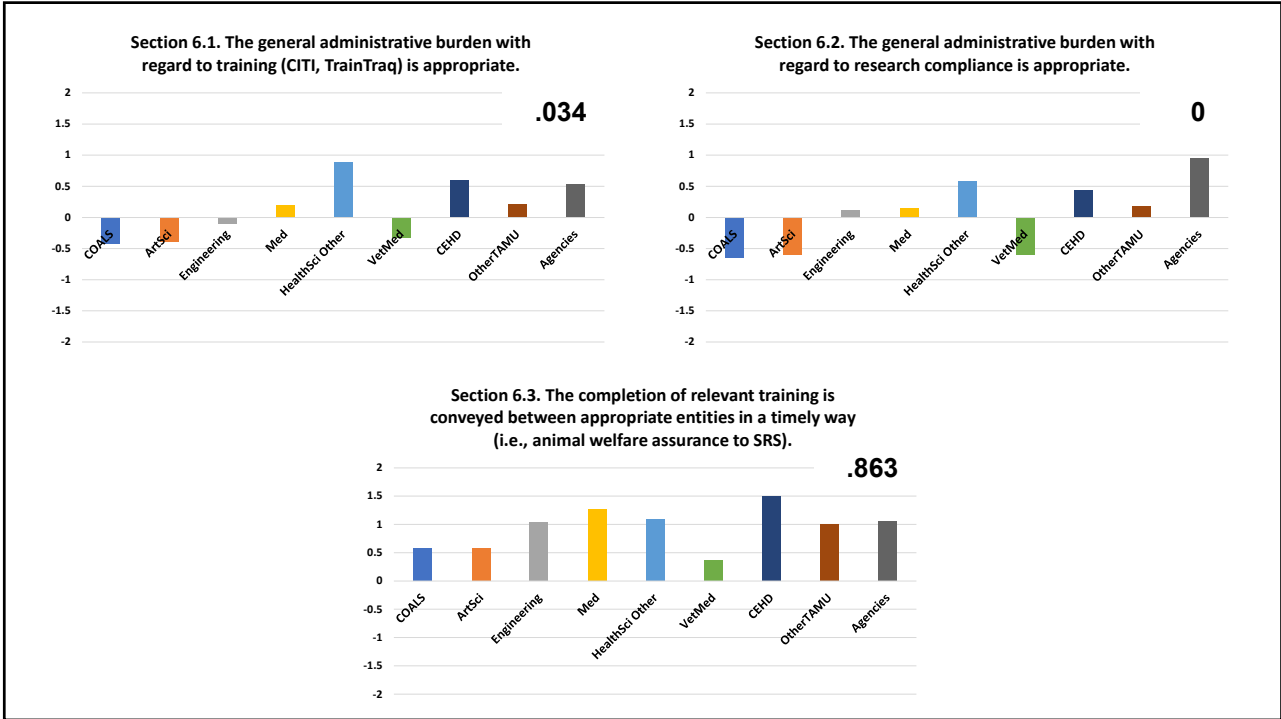-update salary bands for research staff to make them higher

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Comments related to grad students, post-docs, and research staff

-Hiring staff is very challenging, salary bands don't keep pace w/ market & it takes months to hire
- "The ability to assist in the funding of F31 and F32 proposal recipients is insanely hard here at TAMU. This needs to be addressed and rectified."
-Stipends are not competitive with peers
- "HR…tend to serve as gate keepers that want to reduce the amount of raise, or setting upper limits that are well below the max value for the position under consideration. I have not understood the reason for this."
- "Infrastructure matters"
- need flexibility to pay competitive salaries
- "The salary scale for research staff lags behind the times... A&M needs to update their entry position recommendations so that we retain people easier. Yes, I know that justification requests to hire at greater than the minimum band can be done, but the definitely should not have to be if A&M is with the times."
- concerns about restrictions on international students impacting recruitment
- "The change in our ability to apply tuition/fee waivers MS students on teaching assistantships has cut our recruitment of these important students by 80% since implementation…"
- slow hiring process – takes months to hire research staff
- "We need to fix ongoing issues with the disbursement of NRSA fellowships, particularly for graduate students."
- "Improve connectivity between urban areas and B/CS allowing trainees to see that this is not a remote location "in the middle of nowhere"

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Research Compliance

29

Section 6.1. The general administrative burden with regard to training (CITI, TrainTraq) is appropriate.

.034

Categories: COALS, ArtSci, Engineering, Med, HealthSci Other, VetMed, CEHD, OtherTAMU, Agencies

Section 6.2. The general administrative burden with regard to research compliance is appropriate.

0

Categories: COALS, ArtSci, Engineering, Med, HealthSci Other, VetMed, CEHD, OtherTAMU, Agencies

Section 6.3. The completion of relevant training is conveyed between appropriate entities in a timely way (i.e., animal welfare assurance to SRS).

.863

Categories: COALS, ArtSci, Engineering, Med, HealthSci Other, VetMed, CEHD, OtherTAMU, Agencies

30

If you feel compliance is overly burdensome, why & suggestions to simplify

- "the IRB staff are great and highly responsive; however, getting initial approval can be difficult and the time to secure can be unpredictable. Perhaps having more staff and more frequent IRB meetings would be beneficial."
- "Research compliance policies are difficult to understand and to follow because (1) the process is often inconsistent, and (2) the process for filling out paperwork is often very tedious, lengthy and sometimes, in my opinion, unnecessary."
- "Huron has been a major administrative burden and a source of confusion for the PI."
- "Let me give you a recent example. I'm doing an IRB modification. And the only change that I'm proposing to make is the location of data storage, because my lab has moved. In the IRB portal, I have to recreate the entire study protocol, simply because IRB had moved to a different platform. Why is this type of administrative burden falling on the researchers?"
- "It seems like all that I do is training and paperwork.."
- "Multiple systems with multiple formats for compliance: IRIS, Concur, Huron, EHS, etc all have their own systems to learn to navigate, and they are generally not user-friendly"
- "The online training portals may be necessary, but they should all be slated to renew at the same time each year (August). I hate having to go in regularly to check on some training."
- "For example, for each foreign collaborator, we have to disclose both in Huron and Maestro. And it has to be done every year even if the project and collaborators have not changed. This is redundant and very time-consuming especially if one is involved in many international collaboration projects. As far as I know, we have one of the most burdensome disclosure procedures in the nation."

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If you feel compliance is overly burdensome, why & suggestions to simplify

- "IRB compliance does not focus on important things. I had a doctoral student who had to do three revisions and nothing about his research changed, only filling in their form changed."
- "Doing the same training yearly over and over for 25-30 years does not make much sense."
- " I am not sure if this is what you're asking for but in terms of IRB, its incredibly burdensome to go back and forth with our representative for review. Other institutions have a model of IRB where the representative will meet with you and help you design the project to be in compliance but also reduce risk and still fulfill your research goals beforehand. This would be helpful here"
- "seems perpetual"
- "There are requirements imposed that are not mandated by any federal funding agency. TAMU imposes rules and regulations not required or justified."
- "A summary of the minimum required training that most people need, the frequency of the training, and by what authority the training is mandated should be clearly posted somewhere. Currently, various trainings pop up at seemingly random intervals. If PIs know what trainings they need (and why), it might be helpful to have an option for all of them to be completed in one block of time (like within a few days during the summer or between sessions), and then be done with training for the next few years.."
- "Texas A&M's research compliance has become extremely onerous. Our mid-level administrators, faculty, staff, students, and post-docs all waste so much time filling out worthless bean-counting forms, when we should be using our time to produce creative thought…."
- "The growth in the number of required trainings seems to be endless. Where will it stop?"
- "Not sure what the solution is but think every faculty member i know is feeling burned out by the unebbing tide of compliance burden"

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General comments related to compliance
- "Administration needs to focus on how to promote researcher success rather than being the compliance police…"
- "The privacy officer has been very helpful whenever I get stuck on things. I wish research compliance staff can have his attitude of trying to enable research as the highest priority in their job."
- "There is no communication between the different groups and platforms."
- "The current compliance regime is the worst that I have seen. We are now afraid of our own shadows when we travel or try to organize a conference…"
- "It may useful to hire more staff at IRB or increase their salaries. The turnover is quite high."
- "Research compliance is essential, but the culture of research compliance should not be adversarial to the research enterprise as a whole. Biosafety and SRS have done a better job with this. EH&S has gotten worse."
- "Reduce paperwork greatly"
- "I think we need more training opportunities on campus (e.g., face to face RCR triaining). This would also support training grants for postdocs and grad students who need to demonstrate thorough formal training in these subjects"
- "The transition to HURON still affects researchers, especially those who had approved studies within IRIS ongoing. The HURON report guidelines related to international collaboration or voluntary editorial roles are entirely unclear, and each officer provides a different suggestion as to what should be reported and how."
- "The compliance folks are top notch. They are awesome and we should pay them more. However, our legislators and admin need to figure out how to reduce the burden its too much. "

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What services/programs at TAMU do we NOT have that would make your research more productive?

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Seed/bridge funding	Grant writers/editors
More coordination/assistance to build teams and develop proposals	Seed funding for non-TT Faculty
AI services/programs	Mentoring, not just trainings, but personal training and mentoring, PI collaboration
Bigger startups, more seed/bridge funding	Editorial help with grant writing and manuscripts especially for ESL folks.
Facilities service is not being functional at all	Admin support to deal with travel, compliance, reporting, etc. would help. The commercialization office is understaffed and is hindering our ability to commercialize IP.
Accountants to help maximize funding usage	
Templates per funding partners. Review of docs for content appropriate and formatting. Assist preparing budget justification for project needs based on proposed budget.	Substantial increase in administrative support for submission of NIH grants (e.g., to help PIs draft documents)…

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community/stakeholder engagement, streamlined support of collaboration with local institutions (e.g., hospitals), removal of administrative barriers to community-partnered research	Concerted effort to better bridge the gap between CS and GV campus for an easier exchange of talent and better use of facilities
Centralized, secure research computing. For example, the system at UW is outstanding https://www.sscc.wisc.edu/	opportunities for junior to partner with previously NSF funded faculty. This is a requirement for any 'new' PI to NSF. TAMU should establish a program where NSF-funded faculty join junior faculty NSF proposals.
good finance management, pilot study funding	Marcom could do a better job of telling our research "stories" - particularly those that cross multiple faculty, labs, departments. For example, a "story" on microplastics or disaster risk reduction at the Galveston campus.
Fund for open access publishing. Previous institution had a fund through the library that you could apply for up to $2000 to assist in publishing open access.	

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Administrators who understand research and grants are also as important as undergraduate education	There needs to a a quick-strike team for RFAs. Not waiting till they are released but when they are presented as concepts at NIH council. VPR office should be looking for these and then being proactive in identifying appropriate teams.
Project budget management and forecasting software	Per diem system for travel
Bring back the OFFICE BUSINESS PERSONNEL that know what they were doing.	better accounting and HR
Enthusiasm and investment in PIs. More admin support so I don't have to waste so much time tracking down who to call...	It would be great if there were someone who was skilled in matching ideas/proposals with foundations/funding agencies. It would be great if there were someone who could comment on the actual proposal -- that is does it make sense? is it well structured? Are there bits missing? -- instead of just compliance.
funding for repair of lab instruments	
implementation of AI for various processes	

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What services or programs currently offered do you feel are most effective (what are we doing right)?

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SRS staff are professional and responsive. Unfortunately, there are not enough staff there relative to the number of PIs we have at TAMU.

supercomputer services

Compared to my previous institutions I've found the initial preparation of budgets here to be far easier and faster…having an SRS contact take my vague instructions and put something together is really nice.

I love the TAMU HPRC!

Nothing is effective. It's all handwavy and window dressing.

Very excited about the new website for community participant recruitment.

Administrative staff in my department are very helpful. Also SRS staff have followed up with outside institutions on my behalf to help with contracts or DUAs.

Grants preparation/SRS has been good and effective. Training online (TrainTraq) is generally easy.

pre awards

We now have an effective leadership team who believe in the land grant mission, rather than people who were trying to hurt us.

Help with grant application and budget preparation. The person who helps me is great and fast.

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HPRC is excellent just does not serve all needs. Am usually happy with SRS outside of negotiations. Excited for IRB changes that will make that process more straightforward.

post award financial management

The SRS office is very efficient.

Libraries have been great

Budget support; seed grants are good but we need more (and more often to allow flexibility on timing).

Institutional biosafety seems to be working well rn

The infrastructure is TAMU's strength, animal care is a strength, everything else leaves much room to be desired

Core facilities

Flexibility of work hours and location

Traintraq is straightforward and easy to use/comply with and use.

I fought with SRS for years, but have not had a problem with pre-award for at least 3-4 years now. Every interaction has been professional and timely, so for that, I am grateful.

Postdoc program is great!

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Top 3 concerns that keep PIs up at night

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These are many and varied but some common responses are shared here:

- getting/maintaining funding
- infrastructure concerns, unsafe infrastructure
        -individuals share examples including flooding, leaking pipes, temperature concerns, etc
-supporting students if salaries increase
-getting a response from SRS
-lack of bridge funds
-publishing
-lack of $ for infrastructure
-how to attract the best scientists
-concerns related to SB17, health freedom concerns in the state
-paperwork
-accessibility
-need for more admin support
- graduate student funding
- need for lab space
-undervaluing of social sciences by admin
-summer funds for students
-need for preliminary data

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