



**FEDERAL DEMONSTRATION PARTNERSHIP**  
Redefining the Government & University Research Partnership

# The Faculty-Administrator Relationship: What can I do to improve it?

Hosted by: Faculty Administrator Collaboration Team (FACT)  
Speakers: Steven Post, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences  
Suzanne Alstadt, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences



**FEDERAL DEMONSTRATION PARTNERSHIP**  
Redefining the Government & University Research Partnership

## Faculty-Administrator Collaboration Team (FACT)

Mission: FACT brings together paired FDP institutional representatives for joint interactions focused on understanding and enhancing faculty-administrator collaborations that support successful research operations and reduce administrative workload associated with federally-funded research.



# Introduction to FACT: Current Participating Institutions

FDP Member Organization	Faculty Rep	Admin Rep
Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science	Eva McGhee	Perrilla Johnson-Woodard
College of Charleston	Kelly Shaver	Susan Anderson
Northeastern University	David Budil	Joan Cyr
Michigan Tech University	Larry Sutter	Dave Reed
U Arkansas Medical Sciences	<b>Steven Post (co-chair)</b>	<b>Suzanne Alstadt (co-chair)</b>
U of North Carolina Chapel Hill	Lori Carter-Edwards	David Paul
University of Texas at Austin	Rob Crosnoe	Courtney Swaney
University of Washington	Mark Haselkorn	Lynette Arias/Rick Fenger



# Agenda for FACT Session

- Introduction to FACT – 5 min
- Current TE project – 10 min
- Theme discussion (Breakout Rooms) – 15 min
  - Increase understanding and education
  - Increase interactions and “reaching out”
  - Improve processes and timeliness
- Discussion/Next steps – 25 min

# Exchange Summary

Steven Post, Federal Demonstration Partnership  
March 19, 2021

What one action could you personally take to improve the overall research faculty/administrator relationship at your institution?



## PARTICIPATION

### Breakdown of Participation



**102**

Participants



**120**

Thoughts



**1,935**

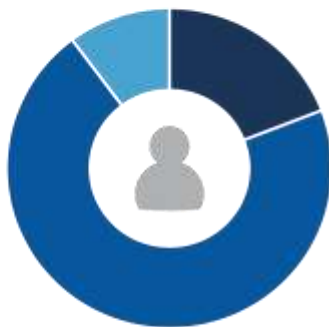
Ratings







## PARTICIPATION

### Breakdown of Participation

What is your role at FDP?



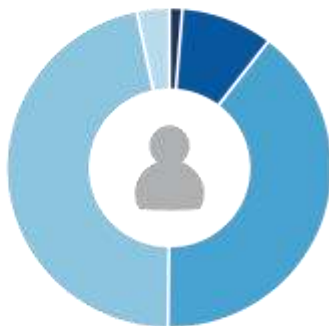
%		Answer
19%	(18)	 Faculty
71%	(67)	 Administrator
10%	(10)	 Technical




## PARTICIPATION

### Breakdown of Participation

How would you rate the quality of the current interaction between faculty and research administrators at your institution?



%		Answer
1%	(1)	■ Unacceptable
9%	(8)	■ Poor
40%	(37)	■ Satisfactory
47%	(44)	■ Good
3%	(3)	■ Excellent





## THOUGHTS

### Key Thoughts

**Help new faculty meet the right people in Sponsored Programs.** New faculty are often most frustrated and carry that perception throughout their career.

4.3 ★★★★★ (21 🧑)

Ranked #1 of 100

**Improve effective communication** When all know the same info, more effective total process

4.2 ★★★★★ (24 🧑)

Ranked #3 of 100

**Provide accurate and timely information to both faculty and administrators.** Consistency is key in relationships.

4.2 ★★★★★ (24 🧑)

Ranked #4 of 100

**Reach out from central to campus-based research administrators to extend relationships and compare mutual pain points. Fix high priority issues** Understand interrelationships and share collegially.

4.2 ★★★★★ (20 🧑)

Ranked #5 of 100

**Reach out and meet with faculty more often.** Communication and rapport are key to having faculty trust to reach out before there are concerns/issues.

4.2 ★★★★★ (14 🧑)

Ranked #7 of 100

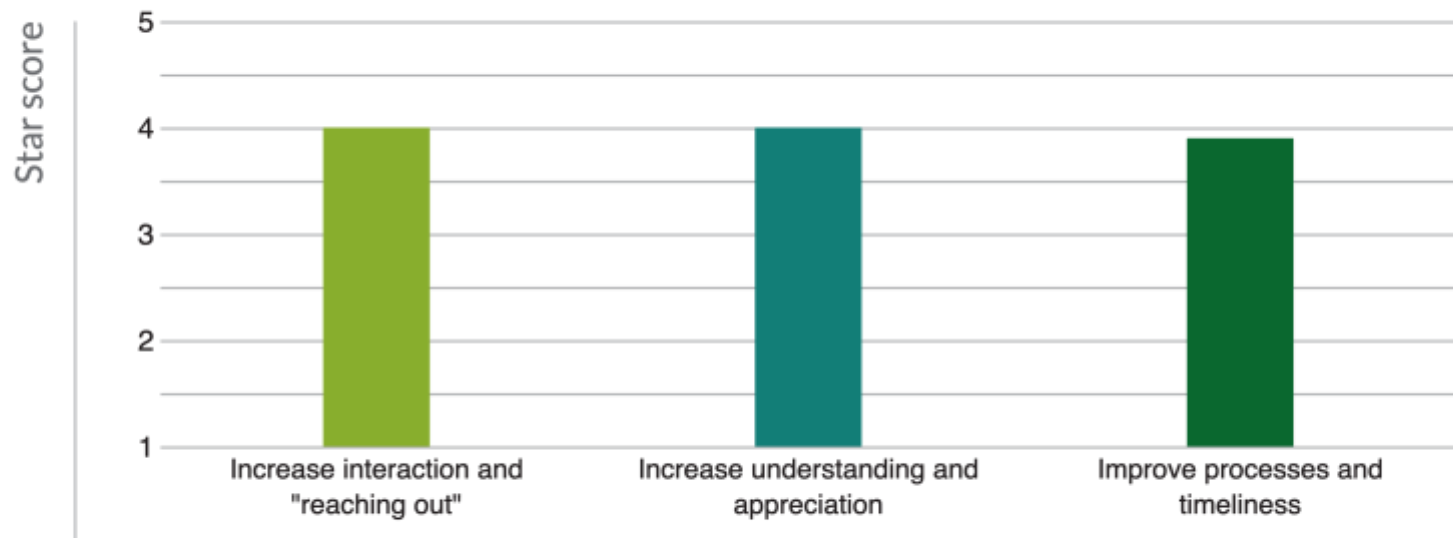
**be more transparent** faculty want to know what is going on and why there is an an issue. letting them know - makes it easier for them to understand the process and time

4.1 ★★★★★ (23 🧑)

Ranked #9 of 100



## TOP THEMES

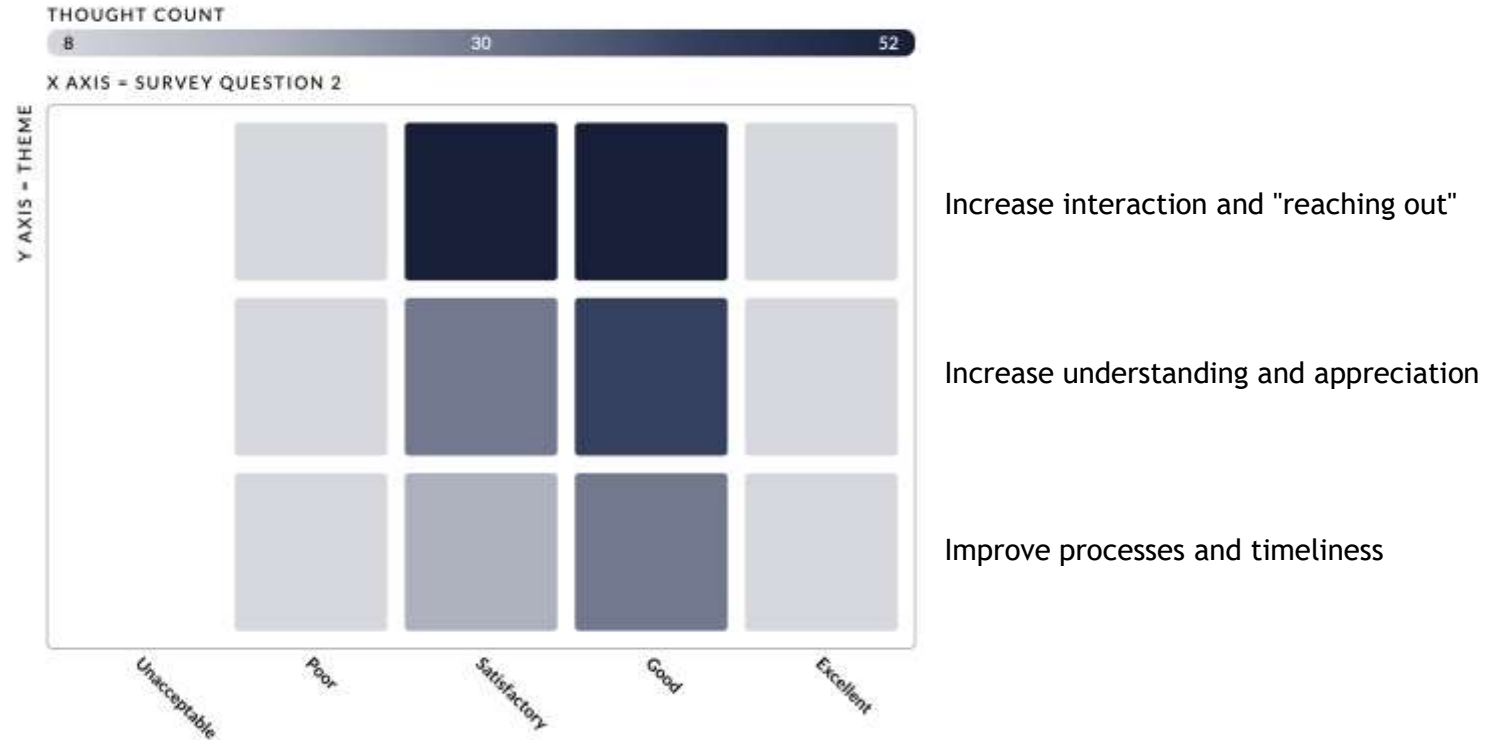




## TOP THEMES

### Heat Map: Thought Count

#### RESULTS

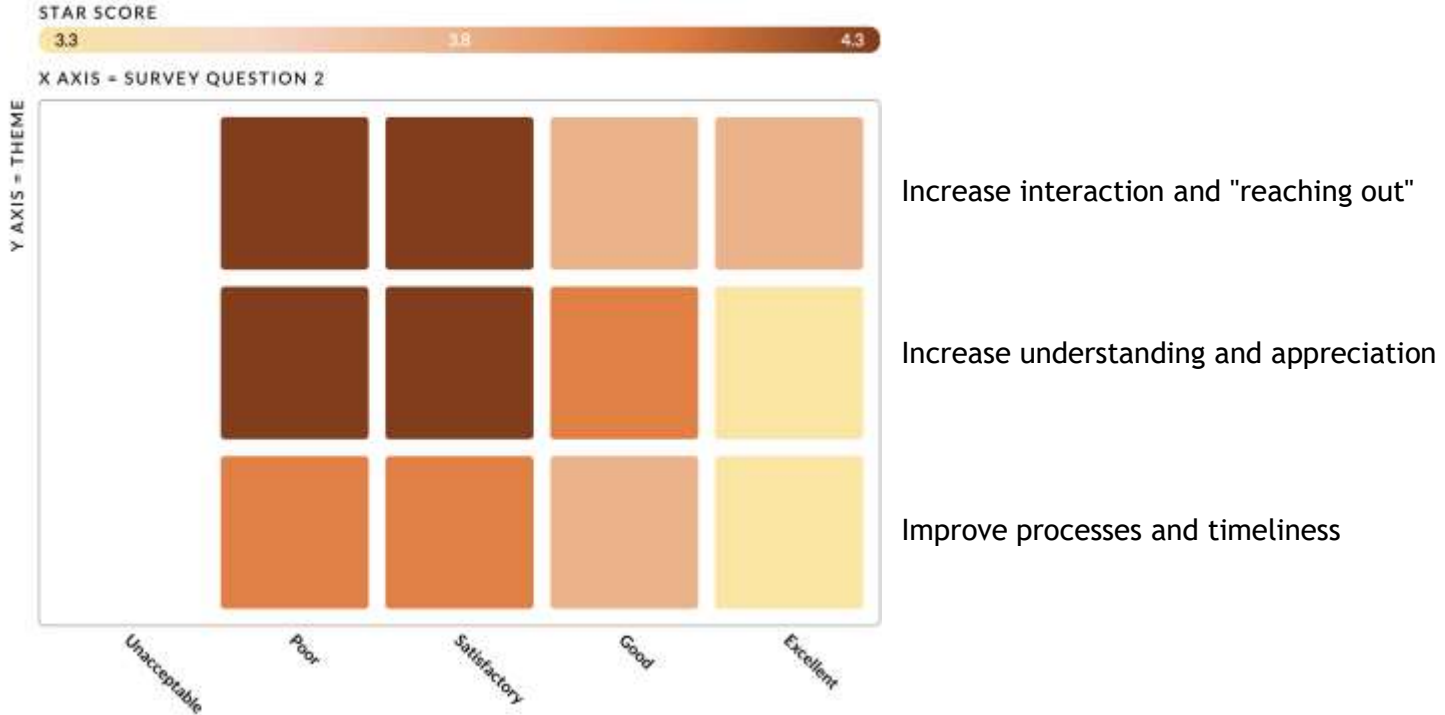




## TOP THEMES

### Heat Map: Star Score

#### RESULTS





## THOUGHTS

Increase interaction and "reaching out"



- Improve effective communication** When all know the same info, more effective total process 4.2 ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ (24 👤)
- Reach out from central to campus-based research administrators to extend relationships and compare mutual pain points. Fix high priority issues** Understand interrelationships and share collegially. 4.2 ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ (20 👤)
- Reach out and meet with faculty more often.** Communication and rapport are key to having faculty trust to reach out before there are concerns/issues. 4.2 ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ (14 👤)
- Proactively reach out to PIs and introduce myself** It would humanize both sides and help build a professional rapport 4.1 ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ (13 👤)
- Get better acquainted with Research Administration Staff** Understanding what they do, and why they think it is important helps me interact with them; fostering their understanding of me is also helpful 4.0 ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆ (23 👤)



## THOUGHTS

Increase understanding and appreciation



- Help new faculty meet the right people in Sponsored Programs.** New faculty are often most frustrated and carry that perception throughout their career. 4.3 ★★★★★ (21 👤)
- Connect with faculty about their work in a meaningful way. Showing genuine interest in their projects and work can promote a beneficial relationship.** A lab tour or a reading of technical report info may provide key insights and context for a variety of day-to-day questions for an administrator. 4.1 ★★★★★ (21 👤)
- Attend Faculty Forums** Understand Faculty needs 4.1 ★★★★★ (18 👤)
- Make sure related expectations are clearly communicated.** Many issues seem to relate to not knowing or understanding what is expected of the interaction. 4.0 ★★★★★ (24 👤)
- Department level training on roles and responsibilities surrounding sponsored projects** To set expectations and enable clearer communication 4.0 ★★★★★ (21 👤)



## THOUGHTS

Improve processes and timeliness



**Provide accurate and timely information to both faculty and administrators.** Consistency is key in relationships.

4.2 ★★★★★ (24 👤)

**Provide timely feedback when something does/does not work as expected.** Providing positive and negative feedback helps both sides understand and manage expectations better.

4.1 ★★★★★ (24 👤)

**When starting a large proposal, notify the grants processing office so they can build it into their workflow** Although writing a large proposal is not necessarily more work than a smaller project administering the proposal can be, especially with subs involved

4.0 ★★★★★ (23 👤)

**Look at current methods/content of info provided and use by improving the tools/methods of communication** When users of info find good info fast, more effective process

3.9 ★★★★★ (25 👤)

**Provide a means for feedback.** Faculty need to have flexibility in terms of timing, so it is important to find a way for them to communicate when it is convenient for them.

3.9 ★★★★★ (17 👤)

# Breakout Groups 1-2: Increase understanding and appreciation

Scenario: I am a new faculty member at an Emerging Research Institution that has only a central office of sponsored programs (no department-level research administrators). I would like to get my research project funded but have never applied for a grant.

What do I need, and how do I get it?



## Breakout Groups 3-4: Increase interactions and “reaching out”

Scenario: I am a research administrator at an institution with centralized research administrative support for faculty. I have just been assigned to a department that does not have a history of obtaining extramural support and I am unfamiliar with the faculty in this department.

What should I do, and how should I do it?

## Breakout Groups 5-6: Improve processes and timeliness

Scenario: I am the departmental research administrator for a highly funded research department. Because of the large number of grants being submitted, the VPR has instituted a strict internal deadline policy for grant submissions. Several successful senior investigators have been ignoring this policy leaving little time for me to do a thorough review of applications. I would like to prevent this from happening.

What should I do, and how should I do it?

# Theme discussion – 15 min

Groups 1-2: Increase understanding and appreciation

Groups 3-4: Increase interactions and “reaching out”

Groups 5-6: Improve processes and timeliness

# Open Discussion

What one action could you personally take to improve the overall research faculty/administrator relationship at your institution?

- Groups 1-2: Increase understanding and appreciation
- Groups 3-4: Increase interactions and “reaching out”
- Groups 5-6: Improve processes and timeliness

# Groups 1 and 2: Top actions

Increase understanding and appreciation

- A. Advocate through department to support greater research administration resources to provide these opportunities
- B. Outreach through central administration to faculty (faculty action would be to attend and take advantage of these programs and form relationships)
- C. Take advantage of one-on-one customized interaction opportunities such as lunches or tech transfer meetings
- D. Assign department mentor who shares funding interests.
- E. Provide web-hosted training materials.

A-35%; B-19%; C-24%; D-15%; E-7%

## Groups 3 and 4: Top actions

Increase interactions and “reaching out”

- A. Keep it human and have a sense of humor
- B. Learn proactively about the faculty and their area of research
- C. Learn why faculty are not funded (e.g., not submitting or not awarded) and what are the faculty agendas (research vs other academic activities). Review comparable departments across other universities.
- D. Have regular meetings with Dept Chair
- E. Present at a dept faculty meeting- ask for their needs
- F. Admin adopt an educational role (which grant opportunities are aligned with the faculty member; review publications and investigate opportunities; who funds research).

A-11%; B-22%; C-15%; D-1%; E-35%; F-16%

# Groups 5 and 6: Top actions

## Improve processes and timeliness

- A. Timeline of appointments/setting up a schedule/creating a checklist that includes dates
- B. Making the review process more transparent rather than just reaching out that the proposal has been “received”; assure the PI that the other items that do not need attention are in fact “good to go”.
- C. Departmental administrators attend faculty meetings and give overviews of what is needed and the amount of time (as well as internal deadlines) that’s required for reviews
- D. Ensure PI is aware of deadline and understands administrative activities.
- E. Understaffing and increasing complexity - 1 day adv notice. Team divide PI/admin responsibilities. Don’t submit proposals that do not meet deadline.
- F. Fine point on late turn in. Bumping others work. Awareness of impact on other proposals. PIs pressure on each other “named and shamed?”

A-15%; B-24%; C-34%; D-13%; E-6%; F-8%



## Next steps

How do we make these actions happen?





# Implications

1. Faculty and Research Administrators support similar action items implying achievable consensus moving forward.
2. Faculty and administrators together can be a powerful force for institutional change.
3. The institutional processes that need to change are not limited to faculty and research administrators.
4. Triangulated relationships between faculty, administrators, and institutional leadership are necessary for creating policy change.



# Thank you all!!

## From FACT!

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For more information about FACT, see our webpage:

<http://thefdp.org/default/committees/faculty-committee/faculty-administrator-collaboration-team-fact/>