The Faculty and Administrator Partnership: How Important is Trust?
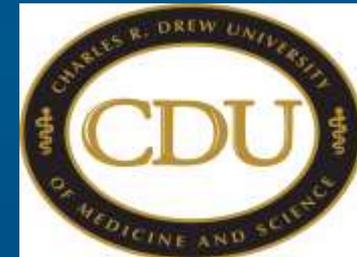
Hosted by: Faculty Administrator Collaboration Team (FACT)
Speakers: Steven Post, U Arkansas Medical Sciences
                Suzanne Alstadt, U Arkansas Medical Sciences
                Jason Carter, Montana State University
                Robert Nobles, Emory University

FDP Meeting – Sept 2020

Faculty-Administrator Collaboration Team (FACT)

Agenda for FACT Session

- **Introduction to FACT**

- **Current project – How does trust impact burden?**

- **Initial "Thoughts" on Trust topic – FDP/FACT**

- **APLU Council on Research also discussing Trust topic**

  "Faculty and Research Administrative Partnerships – Building a Culture of Trust"

- **Is there a role for FDP and FACT in this area?**

- **Open discussion**

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	**Steven Post (co-chair)**	**Suzanne Alstadt (co-chair)**
U of North Carolina Chapel Hill	Lori Carter-Edwards	David Paul
University of Texas at Austin	Dean Appling	Courtney Swaney
University of Washington	Mark Haselkorn	Lynette Arias/Rick Fenger
Montana State University	Jason Carter	Leslie Schmidt

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.

FACT Goals

- Maintain ongoing and focused dialogue between faculty and administrator FDP representatives and initiate collaborative projects to advance efforts to achieve cross-institutional research objectives.

- Explore the faculty-administrator collaboration as a vital partnership in support of both the work at FDP member organizations and throughout FDP, as well as provide FDP an opportunity to better understand and enhance this relationship.

- Utilize the wide variety of structures and types of FDP member organizations to inform best practices discussions and future projects within the FACT initiative.

Previous FACT Activities

- There is significant institutional overhead and administrative burden generated outside federal requirements
  - Quantitative metrics across institutions
    - Accuracy and consistency of metrics
    - Variable processes across institutions
- Many business process complexities stem from diverse faculty and research administrators' roles and goals
  - Qualitative surveys of faculty and research administrators
    - Personal (I/My) vs. Institutional (We/Our)
    - Engagement in policy decisions

Current Discussions around:
An Issue of "Trust"

- Faculty Workload Survey– "trust" as an institutional variable in administrative burden associated with research

- Reviewed FACT Institution FWS results of trust questions

- Queried FACT group via an "exchange" in ThoughtExchange
  - What are the 4 most important things your institution does/should do to promote trust in research?

- Results
  - Poll of FACT members (Faculty and Admin) to assess determinants of an institutional culture of trust
  - "Thoughts" scored and ranked
  - "Themes" identified

FACT: Top Thoughts
(not in priority order)

- **Accountability-owning mistakes** Mistakes happen, do not deny them. Use a no-blame approach to determine what happened and if possible, adjust processes to prevent or limit future.

- **Don't underestimate the importance of stable personal interactions** It is easier to trust people you know. High turnover and dealing with new people makes getting to know people difficult.

- **Be honest and transparent** It is important that both researchers and staff know what is happening and why. This prevents overreaction and builds trust.

- **Improve communication** It is important that both researchers and administrators know the same information about factors that affect research (e.g., new policies).

- **Really listen to the feedback** Do not collect feedback merely as an exercise. Be prepared to really listen and be open to change or other opinions.

- **Regular and consistent communication from VPR office, with visible leadership** Inspires a culture of trust, even when decisions aren't deemed "favorable" to the faculty.

- **Be transparent about how decisions, policies, etc are made** Understanding the context and process goes a long way to build trust.

- **Involve faculty and administrators in decisions regarding research** Both faculty and administrators have important insights.

Participant Zoom Poll

- Poll will be launched shortly
- The 8 thoughts will be listed
- Select the 3 thoughts that best describe what you feel are the key ingredients to trust at your institution.
- Reminder: These refer to trust between faculty and administrators
- Poll time – 3 minutes
- Will share results after – to get an idea of how participants feel as a group about this

Participant Zoom Poll

Poll question: Please select 3 of the following thoughts/statements that best describe what you feel are the 3 most important aspects to developing trust between faculty and administrators at your institution.

Multiple choice options – Please select your top 3
- Accountability-owning mistakes
- Don't underestimate the importance of stable personal interactions
- Be honest and transparent
- Improve communication
- Really listen to the feedback
- Regular and consistent communication from VPR office, with visible leadership
- Be transparent about how decisions and policies are made
- Involve faculty and administrators in decisions regarding research

FACT: Top Thoughts
(not in priority order)

- **Accountability-owning mistakes** Mistakes happen, do not deny them. Use a no-blame approach to determine what happened and if possible, adjust processes to prevent or limit future.

- **Don't underestimate the importance of stable personal interactions** It is easier to trust people you know. High turnover and dealing with new people makes getting to know people difficult.

- **Be honest and transparent** It is important that both researchers and staff know what is happening and why. This prevents overreaction and builds trust.

- **Improve communication** It is important that both researchers and administrators know the same information about factors that affect research (e.g., new policies).

- **Really listen to the feedback** Do not collect feedback merely as an exercise. Be prepared to really listen and be open to change or other opinions.

- **Regular and consistent communication from VPR office, with visible leadership** Inspires a culture of trust, even when decisions aren't deemed "favorable" to the faculty.

- **Be transparent about how decisions, policies, etc are made** Understanding the context and process goes a long way to build trust.

- **Involve faculty and administrators in decisions regarding research** Both faculty and administrators have important insights.

Poll Results

Poll question: Please select 3 of the following thoughts/statements that best describe what you feel are the 3 most important aspects to developing trust between faculty and administrators at your institution.

Multiple choice options – Please select your top 3
- Accountability-owning mistakes
- Don't underestimate the importance of stable personal interactions
- Be honest and transparent
- Improve communication
- Really listen to the feedback
- Regular and consistent communication from VPR office, with visible leadership
- Be transparent about how decisions and policies are made
- Involve faculty and administrators in decisions regarding research

APLU COR Summer Series

- Robert Nobles, Emory University

- Jason Carter, Montana State University

- Association of Public Land Grant Universities
  - Council on Research

COR Summer Meeting Series:
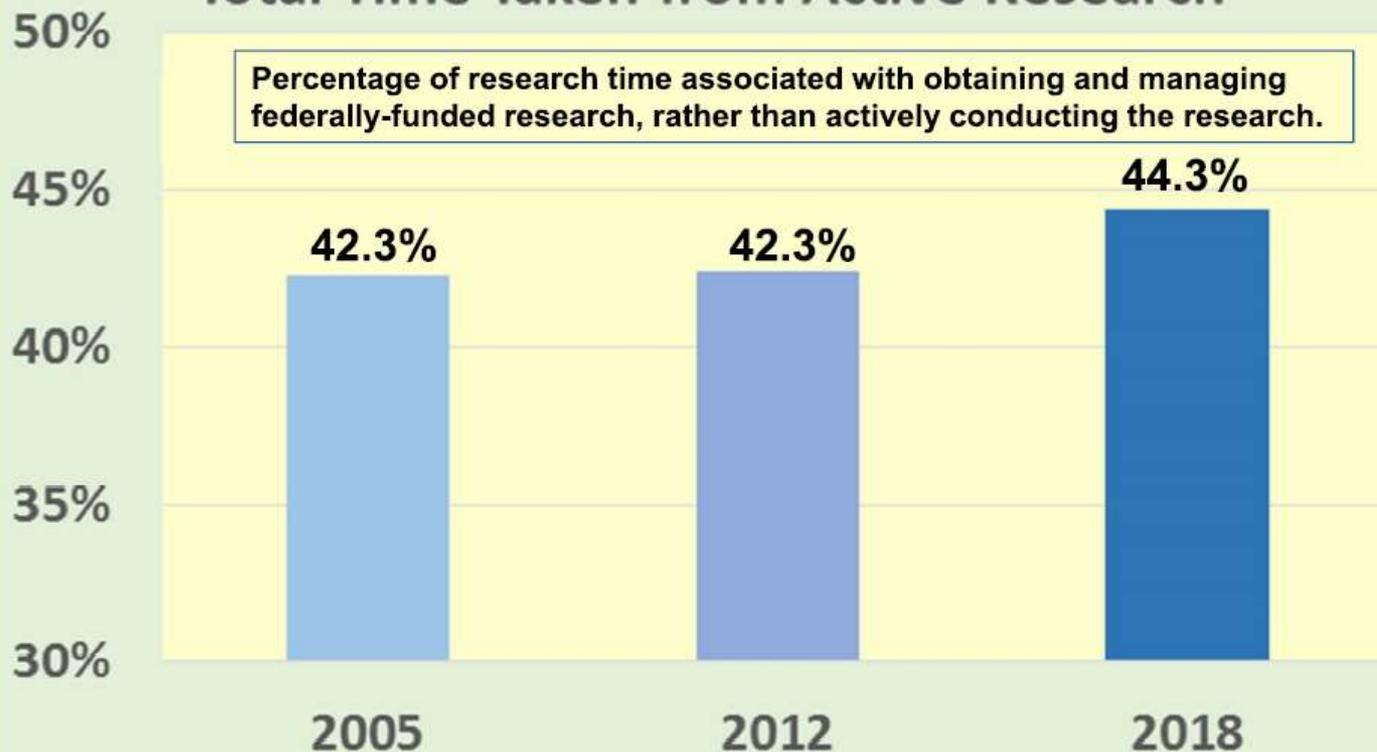## New and Future VPR Workshop

Thurs, July 23 at 1:30-3:00PM EST – Second Challenge Set

Topic: **Faculty and Research Administrative Partnerships – Building a Culture of Trust**

- Welcome and Topic Introduction
- Breakout Room Discussion w/ four common questions
- Brief report-outs by session facilitators
- Insight from Experienced VPRs/VCRs
- Closing Q&A

Total Time Taken from Active Research

Percentage of research time associated with obtaining and managing federally-funded research, rather than actively conducting the research.

Year	Percentage
2005	42.3%
2012	42.3%
2018	44.3%

Schneider, 2018; http://thefdp.org/default/assets/File/Presentations/FDP%20FWS%20Prelim%20Summary%20090618%20post.pdf

- *"My institution has a culture of trust in researchers."*
  - Preliminary report out of breakdown questions at January 2020 meeting reported this was one of the strongest correlates for lower perceived administrative workload by faculty.
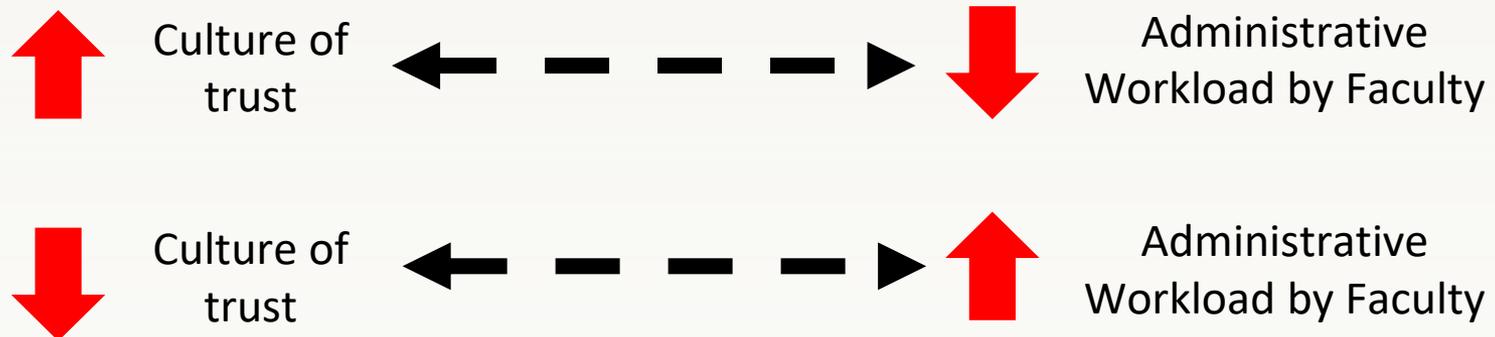
COR Summer Meeting Series:
New and Future VPR Workshop

- At your institution, how would you rate "*trust*" between faculty and research administration? Is this stronger in some areas (i.e., Sponsored Programs, Research Compliance, Tech Transfer, etc.), and if so, why?

- What factors do you think are most important in building "*trust*" from both the faculty and research administrative perspectives? Share any creative strategies you have implemented at your institution.

- How might strategies differ as you build a culture of trust with junior faculty, senior faculty, research faculty, and/or underrepresented faculty?

At your institution, how would you rate "*trust*" between faculty and research administration? Is this stronger in some areas (i.e., Sponsored Programs, Research Compliance, Tech Transfer, etc.), and if so, why?

- While "ratings" varied by institution, everyone agreed trust can be improved.

- Mixed responses on area differences, but more breakouts reported lower "trust" in Research Compliance vs. Sponsored Programs.

- Some reported "trust" in Sponsored Programs can vary quite a bit depending on unit and structure (i.e., centralized vs. decentralized).

- Personalities matter (on both sides).

What factors do you think are <u>most important in building "*trust*"</u> from both the faculty and research administrative perspectives? Share any <u>creative strategies</u> you have implemented at your institution.

- Transparency and communication – *consistent with Thought Exchange*

- Several groups converged on the importance of a "*Research Council*" of sorts that engaged key administrators (i.e., assoc deans, center directors, etc.) and representative faculty.

- Surveys were mentioned, both in positive and negative light.

- Visible and effective leadership (i.e., VPR/VCR that takes active role engaging with faculty)- *consistent with Thought Exchange*

- Some suggested that the willingness to *"try new things"* is important part of their institutional success stories.

How might <u>strategies differ</u> as you build a culture of trust with <u>junior faculty, senior faculty, research faculty, and/or underrepresented faculty</u>?

- Need to have strong plan/programs for junior faculty (i.e., early career mentoring, regular brown bags, etc.).

- Balance professional development opportunities for various stages, and engage mid-to-senior faculty in sessions for junior faculty.

- Flexibility on platforms/timing/etc. important for all, but particularly important for underrepresented faculty.*

- Soft-funded researchers often feel left out of many conversations and initiatives, and there is room for more inclusive environment

* COVID has also highlighted different needs for faculty (of both sexes) that have children of all ages, but particularly young children.

Case Studies on Building Trust

Jason

- Animal use fees
- Sponsored programs deadline

Robert

- IRB
- Establishing a Faculty Advisory Board

Image Credit: Psychology Today

Thank you!

- Robert Nobles, Emory University
- Jason Carter, Montana State University

FACT: Top Thoughts

Overall

1. **Be transparent about how decisions, policies, etc are made.** Understanding the context and process goes a long way to build trust

2. **Be honest and transparent** It is important that both researchers and staff know what is happening and why. This prevents overreaction and builds trust.

3. **Improve communication** It is important that both researchers and administrators know the same information about factors that affect research (e.g., new policies)

4. **Don't underestimate the importance of stable personal interactions** It is easier to trust people you know. High turnover and dealing with new people makes getting to know people difficult.

FACT: Top Thoughts

Faculty

1. **Be transparent about how decisions, policies, etc are made.** Understanding the context and process goes a long way to build trust

2. **Increase transparency** Too much of the process is hidden

3. **Really listen to the feedback** Do not collect feedback merely as an exercise. be prepared to really listen and be open to change or other opinions

4. **Regular and consistent communication from VPR office, with visible leadership.** Inspires a culture of trust, even when decisions aren't deemed "favorable" to the faculty.

Administrators

1. **Be honest and transparent** It is important that both researchers and staff know what is happening and why. This prevents overreaction and builds trust.

2. **Improve communication** It is important that both researchers and administrators know the same information about factors that affect research (e.g., new policies)

3. **Involve faculty and administrators in decisions regarding research.** Both faculty and administrators have important insights.

4. **Accountability-owning mistakes** Mistakes happen, do not deny them. Use a no-blame approach to determine what happened and if possible adjust processes to prevent or limit future

Common Themes
FDP/FACT & APLU

- Transparency

- Communication

- Familiarity

- Competency, fairness, accountability

- Involvement / Engagement

- Value and Support

Open Discussion...

- What can FDP do to help build a culture of trust?
- What can FACT do to increase trust between researchers and administrators?
- How does diversity in faculty and administrator roles/goals factor affect trust at an institution?

Thank you all!!

From FACT!

Steven Post spost@uams.edu
Suzanne Alstadt sealstadt@uams.edu
Robert Nobles Robert.e.nobles@emory.edu
Jason Carter jcarter@montana.edu

For more information about FACT, see our webpage:
http://thefdp.org/default/committees/faculty-committee/faculty-administrator-collaboration-team-fact/