

EMORY OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

FY23/24 STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



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Collaboration

Communication

Transparency

Letter from the Vice President for Research Administration

Colleagues,

I am excited about the future of Emory's research enterprise and our research infrastructure's long-term growth and sustainability. I am committed to our offices continuing to provide a supportive environment conducive to research excellence for our faculty. I am also devoted to and investing in our research administration staff's training, support, and well-being. Together, we will ensure that appropriate administrative support measures are in place to attract and maintain Emory's eminence to engage in ground-breaking research. We are striving to build our research administration in becoming a competitive advantage for Emory and our researchers!

To see this potential realized, I have identified three priorities for the next 12-18 months:

- **We will modernize our Grants and Contracts Management System.**

IT modernization is critical for our team to increase the efficiency, record/information sharing, and transparency of the work that is carried out each day. We have begun the process of conducting an inventory of needs,



gathering stakeholder feedback, and mapping our processes to welcome demonstrations, selections, and implementation in 2023.

- **We will streamline and enhance the post-award activities, including the annual reporting and close-out process.**

I'm proud that in FY22 we made strategic investments to create an Awards Close-Out Team to work with RAS and Department/School administrators in timely facilitating award management and financial reports. Building transparency in the process and ensuring that

RAS team members are meeting with faculty every other month (at least 6 times per year) will be a goal, priority, and expectation.

- **We will partner with Schools and Departments for the enhanced RAS Shared Governance.**

This enhancement will include ensuring shared ownership with departments, units, and schools; enhancing the participation of department chairs and department delegates; triannual business reviews that cover finance, HR, policy/process updates, faculty challenges and QI initiatives. We are also working with units to customize aspects of research administration to maximize outcomes for their specific faculty needs.

Each of these priorities achieved will bring us one step closer to dismantling barriers to collaboration and securing a strong and stable platform for future success.

I am fortunate to partner with the more than 450 staff of the ORA team, our faculty, and school/unit administrators who care deeply about research success. We have some of the most talented, committed, and resilient research administrative professionals in the nation; and together, we take pride in serving our researchers, faculty members, and partners. As we continue in our efforts to optimize and strengthen Emory’s research infrastructure by providing top-tier research administration support, your voice and partnership is pivotal. I encourage you to share your feedback and engage with us as we continue the journey to strengthening the foundation of research success here at Emory.

In partnership,

Robert,



Robert Nobles, DrPH, MPH, CIP
Vice President for Research Administration





Facilitating World-Class Research

Executive Summary

Emory is world-renowned for its research excellence and is home to some of the most talented scientists and scholars worldwide. Our research enhances the lives of millions, solving real problems through a vast network of partnerships and collaborations. The extent of our research and the community connections drive advancement in knowledge, understanding, innovation, and creativity.

The Office of Research Administration (ORA) provides collaborative administrative support, efficient systems, and technical expertise to facilitate scholarship, research, and discovery within the Emory community. Our priority is to aid our researchers in driving high-impact discoveries and facilitating world-class research through collaboration, communication, and transparency. We identified four strategies for achieving this vision by the Fiscal Year 2025:

1. ***We will continue to recruit and develop a solid and supported workforce.***

- 1.1. Recruit and retain highly competent and effective team members to support Emory's research environment
- 1.2. Implement One ORA: a robust orientation, onboarding, and ongoing career development program

2. ***We will enhance ORA Partnerships.***

- 2.1. In partnership with the Assistant and Associate VPs for research, the VPRA will cultivate and strengthen collaboration with Emory researchers, departments, units, and schools through active engagement.
- 2.2. Connect and welcome new faculty to ensure a smooth transition of research portfolios

2.3. Solicit regular feedback from stakeholders related to received and needed research support services

3. ***We will continue to pursue operational efficiency.***

- 3.1. Collect and communicate operational metrics related to research volume, timeliness, and quality
- 3.2. Implement external program reviews for each functional ORA office
- 3.3. Assess and implement continuous quality improvement projects led by the ORA Strategic Operations Team

4. ***We will continue striving to build and maintain a robust and resilient research infrastructure.***

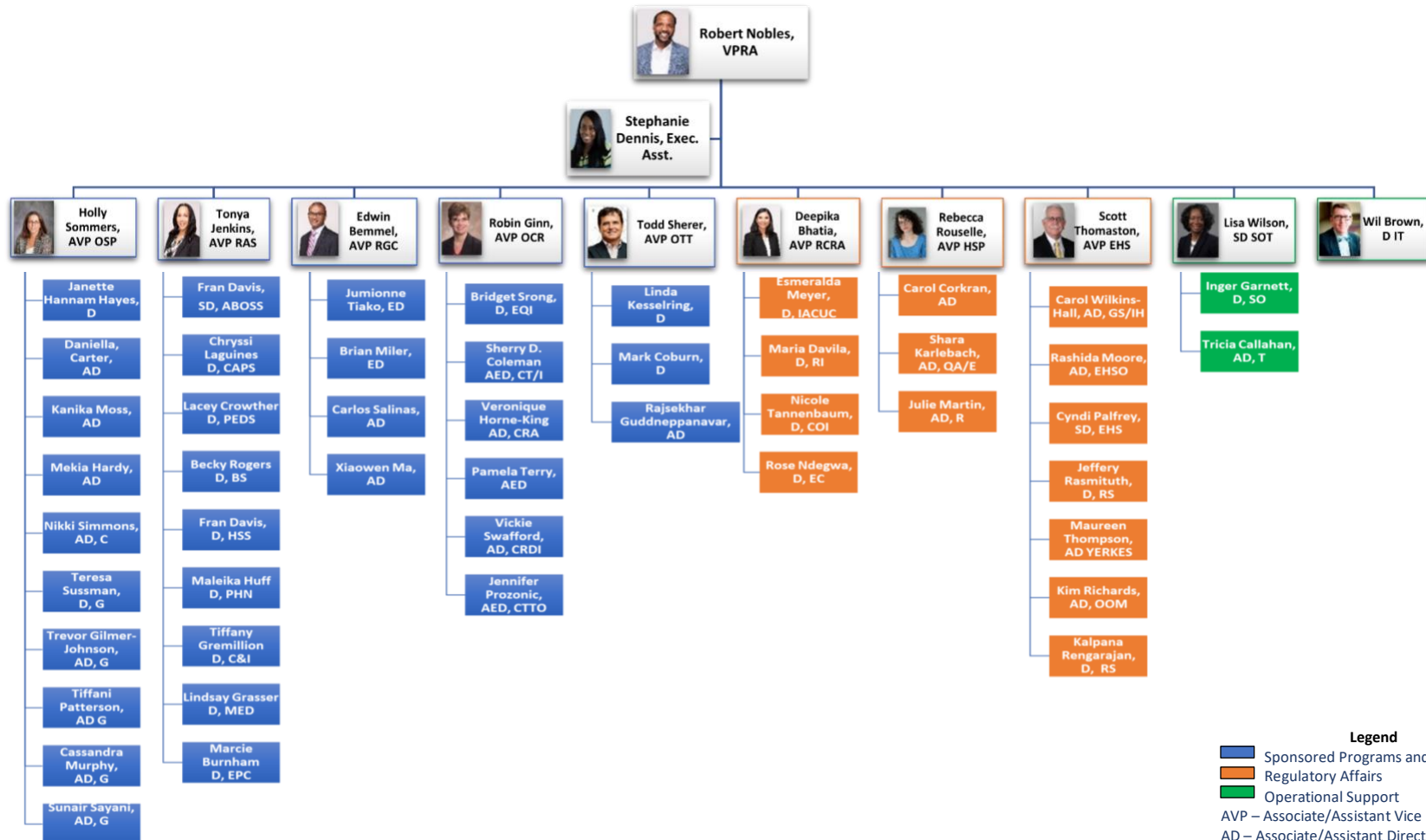
- 4.1. Create and implement research policies and procedures to optimize research growth and protection
- 4.2. Modernize information technology solutions for research in partnership with OIT
- 4.3. Collaborate with schools/units to optimize shared governance, reporting, and communication

This Strategic Action Plan sets a framework of priorities and strategic actions identified by ORA leaders to support and enhance Emory's research enterprise. Each office was consulted during the drafting of the plan, and Emory's schools, units, and departments will be vital partners in its implementation

The Office of Research Administration

The Office of Research Administration's primary purpose is to support the Emory research enterprise. By providing excellent service and technical expertise in proposal development and support, sponsored programs administration, and compliance requirements, ORA facilitates research efforts across campus. The ORA's responsibilities extend from helping researchers with funding opportunities to negotiating contracts with external parties and financial administration for ongoing projects while providing support for compliance with regulatory requirements.

Organizational Chart



- Legend**
- Sponsored Programs and Fiscal Support
 - Regulatory Affairs
 - Operational Support
 - AVP – Associate/Assistant Vice President
 - AD – Associate/Assistant Director
 - AED – Associate Executive Director
 - D – Director
 - ED – Executive Director

Offices and Functions

ORA consists of multiple offices, each of which has specialized expertise in areas of the research process to facilitate overall success. Led by Vice President Dr. Robert Nobles, our offices work closely together to provide strategic guidance and support to Emory’s research enterprise. Our offices are categorized by their functions, which include sponsored programs and fiscal support, regulatory affairs, and operational support.

Sponsored Programs and Fiscal Support

Office	Function
<u>Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSP provides efficient and expert central pre-award and non-financial post-award research administration support to the Emory research community by collaborating to seek, obtain, and administer extramural funding to support the University’s mission.
<u>Research Administration Services (RAS)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collectively, these units provide faculty assistance with pre- and post-award activities. Their support with the compliance and administrative requirements of the grant life cycle allows researchers to concentrate on the science/study while being excellent stewards of their sponsored funds and outcomes. The RAS consists of nine unique units that include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>RAS - ABOSS</u> <u>RAS - Basic Sciences</u> <u>RAS - Cancer & Imaging</u> <u>RAS - Colleges and Prof. Schools</u> <u>RAS - Hospital and Specialty Services</u> <u>RAS - Medicine</u> <u>RAS - Pediatrics</u> <u>RAS - Public Health and Nursing</u> <u>RAS - Emory Primate Center</u>
<u>Research Grants and Contracts (RGC)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RGC is responsible for central oversight and expertise related to post-award financial services of sponsored projects, including ensuring that invoicing, reconciliation, and financial compliance are maintained in partnership with each school/unit and central administration.
<u>Clinical Research (OCR)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCR’s roles include clinical research staff training, clinical trial invoicing, pre-award activities, and ensuring that study data is updated in various internal and external systems.
<u>The Office of Technology Transfer (OTT)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The office serves as the front door for companies looking to partner with researchers, clinicians, and staff to discover, develop, or source new technology ideas that will lead to products. OTT’s activities include negotiating confidentiality, data use, and material transfer agreements; compliance with federal and research sponsor requirements for intellectual property; technology scouting; commercial evaluation of new inventions; intellectual property protection; marketing new technologies; license negotiation for intellectual property rights; start-up support; and education on technology transfer and commercialization activities.

Regulatory Affairs, Compliance, and Safety

Office	Function
<u>Research Compliance and Regulatory Affairs (RCRA)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports research compliance functions around risk assessment, oversight, training, and monitoring.• RCRA is responsible for facilitating the work for research misconduct, research conflicts of interest, research security, export controls, regulatory non-compliance, FOIA requests, and regulatory site visits.• Their efforts ensure that the extensive research mission of Emory is upheld with the utmost integrity and attention to relevant mandates.• RCRA encompasses <u>Animal Care and Safety, Export Control, Conflicts of Interest and Commitment</u>, and <u>Research Integrity</u>
<u>Environmental Health and Safety Office (EHSO)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports Emory's environmental and occupational health and safety with a risk management focus on protecting people and the environment.• A regulatory framework is foundational for the EHSO approach to program development, inclusive of six units working collaboratively to implement EHS management practices that minimize risk to people, infrastructure, and the environment in all aspects of Emory operations.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <u>Research and Biological Safety</u>○ <u>Radiation Safety</u>○ <u>Industrial Hygiene</u>○ <u>Occupational Safety</u>○ <u>Environmental Programs</u>○ <u>Training and Outreach</u>
<u>Institutional Review Board (IRB)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IRB facilitates ethical and compliant human subjects' research. Along with supporting the university's ethics review committee, they are the central component of Emory's multi-tiered Human Research Protection Program.• This office maintains a toolbox of documents designed to aid researchers in preparing submissions and to aid project implementation.



Operational Support

Office	Function
<u>Office of Strategic Operations and Training (SOT)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Created in 2020, SOT's mission is to facilitate the Vice President for Research Administration's efforts to operationalize the ORA-wide strategy and create a robust and resilient research infrastructure.• The SOT office manages ORA-wide strategy, synergy, and training initiatives, facilitating communications and continuity across all partnering offices and processes.• The office is positioned to enhance ORA's bandwidth by creating synergies and coordination between units responsible for grants and contracts administration (RAS, OSP, RGC, OTT, OCR), including leading working groups focusing on the transition of awards between groups (intergroup activity), and their respective systems.• The <u>Research Training</u> team anticipates learning needs, develops educational programs, maintains a comprehensive curated mix of educational curricula, and facilitates training ORA and RAS research administrators. SOT Research Training serves as ORA's centralized professional development and research administration training hub.• The <u>Strategic Operations</u> team facilitates process improvement initiatives, identifies and recommends solutions, then quickly moves on to the next initiative. The result is a continuous improvement environment designed to solve mission-critical problems.• The Project Management team manages the infrastructure and systems that allow for a standardized view of ORA's major projects.
<u>Research Administration Information Technology (ORA-IT)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ORA-IT serves as a technology facilitator, intermediary, and project liaison on behalf of ORA departments with various third-party vendors and the University's central IT division (LITS).• Staff work in close collaboration with ORA units to understand and enhance IT infrastructure and processes and maximize service delivery.



Strategy 1: Recruit and Develop a Strong and Supported Workforce

Recruiting and supporting a diverse and successful cadre of outstanding research administration staff is the key enabler for achieving our vision. As the need for competent and committed Research Administrators grows, the Office of Research Administration must refocus its efforts to recruit outstanding staff and support and retain our current staff as their careers develop.

1.1 Recruit and retain highly competent and effective staff to support Emory's research environment.

- Coordinate with Central Human Resources to enhance recruitment activities and streamline screening and selection processes
- Develop a staffing analysis model to determine the number of FTEs needed to support the current research enterprise and projected growth
- Continue building a cohesive cadre of knowledgeable, skilled, and empowered team of research administrators and operational support staff through enhanced engagement efforts and focusing on professional and personal development
- Providing flexible schedules to include 100% remote opportunities for qualified staff

1.2 Implement One-ORA

- Establish a comprehensive onboarding and staff development program.
- Provide opportunities for training and certifications supported by the University for new and existing employees
- Develop and deliver a Certified Research Administrator (CRA) study program
- Develop and deliver a comprehensive training certificate program supporting Research Administration at Emory University – Research Administration @ Emory (RAE).



Strategy 2: Enhance ORA Partnerships

The Office of Research Administration has a history of strong partnerships with schools, units, departments, and administrators across Emory University and the Healthcare System. Given that such a significant amount of our work involves supporting Emory researchers and facilitating research with Emory partners, strengthening and nurturing these relationships is a critical component of the ORA strategy for improving collaboration and synchronicity across Emory's research enterprise.

2.1 Cultivate and strengthen collaboration with Emory schools, units, departments, and administrators.

- Customize RAS operational activities to match individual unit needs, including piloting activities that maximize faculty support
- Enhance RAS shared governance through hosting triannual business and operations meetings with schools/units/departments
- Engage with department and unit leadership to host faculty listening and problem-solving sessions
- Provide regular updates on research operational activities in the form of newsletters, emails, and short videos

**PARTNERING WITH
RESEARCHERS TO
CHANGE THE WORLD**

2.2 Connect and partner with new faculty to ensure a smooth transition of research portfolios.

- Develop a New Faculty Intake Form and streamlined process to facilitate the transition and integration of new faculty research portfolios into the Emory
- Conduct a review of the Faculty and Startup Services unit within OTT to ensure we are meeting the needs of our faculty inventors and incorporating best practices.

2.3 Solicit feedback from key stakeholders on research services.

- Conduct an annual stakeholder survey
- Engage directly with the Faculty Senate, ORA Faculty Advisory Board, Deans, and Faculty Advisory Committees to solicit and partner on solutions that matter most to faculty
- Increase opportunities for faculty to share feedback by creating an anonymous web submission form to be posted on ORA's website



Strategy 3: Pursue Operational Efficiency

Our continuous quality improvement initiatives drive the Office of Research Administration. Understanding the “how” of our efforts enables us to provide enhanced support to our faculty, which is critical for Emory’s long-term research success. This process includes creating clear and consistent standard operating procedures, training our teams, implementing and assessing progress, gathering feedback from our teams, implementing the enhancements, and then evaluating the process for optimization.

3.1 Enhance and communicate operational metrics.

- Create platforms to share metrics on the functional units within the research administration
- Develop a research communications plan that includes delivery of key information and faculty-facing metrics to stakeholders consistently
- Coordinate with School/Unit/Department communications personnel to ensure broad dissemination of information to benefit both faculty and administrators

3.2 Implement external program reviews for each functional ORA office.

- Implement a 5-year external review cycle to understand challenges and maximize the efficiency of operational activities systematically

3.3 Implement continuous quality improvement.

- Improve, streamline, and standardize the processes, services, and outputs for roles and responsibilities and partnering sites with all nine Research Administration Services (RAS) units.
- Implement and monitor Award Set-up (phase 2), Close-out, and Sub-recipient recommendations (phase 1).
- Document, develop, and streamline processes for pre-award, sub-awards, and post-award for Pediatric Research Administration in partnership with CHOA.
- Integrate and enhance inter-departmental communications and process flows, including system integrations



Strategy 4: Build and Maintain a Robust and Resilient Research Infrastructure

The Office of Research Administration has focused much of our efforts on understanding and enhancing the tools that research administrators use to accomplish research administration tasks. Having robust policies, system assessments, integrations, and modernization; while paying attention to platforms used by partners to create synergy across Emory will continue to be our focus for years to come.

4.1 Create and implement policies to optimize research growth and protection.

- Streamline IRB review and coordination of investigator financial interest in human subjects' research
- Standardize information gathering, processes, and reporting across EHS units and committees
- Develop a robust risk assessment program to identify and mitigate EHS risks
- Build transparency around policies that directly impact faculty, including Conflict of Interests and Commitment, International Travel, Regulatory Disclosures, Compliance Training/Awareness, etc.

4.2 Modernize information technology solutions for research.

- Document, publish and communicate the 5-year IT Roadmap for Research Administration
- Implement system enhancements for eDisclose, eIRB, eIACUC, and OnCore to improve functionality and address functionality and the ever-changing compliance landscape.
- Launch ContractConnect portal and promote its use campuswide for submission of material transfer agreement (MTA) requests to reduce data entry
- Implement ServiceNow Forms Technology to streamline Divisional IT service requests, reduce response times, and provide enhanced Team performance analysis.
- Conduct an assessment and implement a modernized and comprehensive grants & contracts management system

Office of Research Administration

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