NURAP brings together staff from across the university with the aim of improving institutional cohesiveness in research administration and fostering professional excellence among its members. 

All staff from across the university who work in managing any aspect of sponsored research are welcome to join.

Table of Contents

2 CRA (Certified Research Administrator) Exam Preparation

3 My CRA Journey

7 ORCID

8 Announcements
   • Participate in NURAP
Certified Research Administrator Exam Preparation

Are you thinking about becoming a Certified Research Administrator?

NURAP offers a variety of training, tools and modules to help facilitate your studying for the CRA exam. More information coming in 2018!

- Learn more about Research Administration
- Potentially take exam in the future
- Learn about research administration beyond the institution
- Learn from topic area experts
- Attend targeted sessions to learn about selected areas

Prepare with NURAP to take the CRA Exam to get certified!
All are invited to attend NURAP’s biannual CRA study sessions. We’ll also help connect you with others who are taking the exam for study group who want to take the exam in cycles when the formal study sessions are not scheduled.

While exam takers are required to have at least 3 years of experience, everyone is welcome to attend the study sessions.

Network with fellow research administrators at NU by attending NURAP monthly brown bag lunch sessions.

If you would like more information about the 2018 CRA exam please contact:

Chicago: Brent Bell, brent.bell@northwestern.edu

Evanston: Brittany Patrick, brittany.patrick@northwestern.edu
As an Associate Research Administrator in the Department of Chemistry for the past two years, I decided some time ago that I wanted to study for and take the CRA exam, knowing that it would both benefit my career and enable me to learn about every facet of research administration. I waited until NURAP began its weekly CRA sessions in January, so I could attend them all and then take the exam in May. It was clear to me that the structure of the sessions would make preparation for the test much easier. Also essential for me was a personal commitment to read the study materials each week, no matter how busy I might be. After the sessions ended, but before my exam date, I became part of a smaller study group that was immensely helpful. We completed the official practice test together, shared study sheets and flashcards, and had insightful conversations about some of the more esoteric material. Each of us was committed to helping the rest of the group succeed.

Joining this study group was far and away the best part of the experience. We studied so extensively and performed so well on the practice test that when the test day arrived I felt pretty confident that I would do well on it. However, I was surprised by how many of the questions on the test had little to no connection to the study materials, unlike the practice test. Fortunately, I still passed the exam and earned the CRA certification. More importantly, through my preparation I learned an immense amount of material that helped me to both broaden my knowledge base and gain confidence in my skills and capabilities. In addition, it enabled me to connect with a diverse group of NU professionals with whom I would not otherwise have gotten to know. For that I am very thankful.

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MY CRA Journey

By: Yael Mayer

I think that I can safely say that there is no clear trajectory toward a career in research administration. Almost all of us are research administrators by way of another field or, like myself, landed a position right out of college without having the slightest clue about research administration. Having worked with the same Professor for a little under eight years now, I've seen almost every facet of higher education and research administration. However, only within the last year have I realized that I could turn this eight-year journey into a career. I recently completed the first major step in this direction, taking the Certified Research Administrator's (CRA) exam.

There were a handful of people in two of the departments that I work with who had taken the exam, but I had no idea what it was, who administered it and most importantly, whether or not I needed it. Now that I have the certification, I can honestly look back and say that the CRA exam was well worth it and one of the main reasons has nothing to do with the exam itself.

A little backstory here, I decided this past March that I was going to take the exam in May. It was a nice coincidence because I learned that NURAP was offering their bi-annual CRA study sessions every week. I also learned that they had started the sessions back in January, which gave me pause about taking the exam due to my shortened time frame, but I decided to join the classes and get a feel for the material. I should mention here that this exam covers an enormous amount of information that spans well beyond what one position at the University might encounter on a day-to-day basis. Based on the department you work with you might be heavily involved in NIH proposals or DOD proposals, you might never encounter a grant that needs IACUC approvals. However, all of these topics and more could and will show up on your exam. The Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC) explains that if you've worked in research administration for about 3-6 years you should have the knowledge needed to pass the exam. From my experience, you really need to study for the exam outside of work in order to be prepared. The topics range from export controls to institutional review boards to budget calculations; my particular exam had a hefty section on clinical trials. Even though I was on a shortened time
table I was able to study all of the material that the CRA study sessions provided for us and felt prepared enough to take the exam.

I attended almost all of the NURAP study sessions, from March forward and am sincerely grateful that NURAP saw the need to create these sessions for people wanting to take the exam. I believe Northwestern is among a short list of schools around the country that provide CRA study sessions. If you are thinking about taking the exam, I encourage you to attend the sessions. I also was able to attend a session put on by the RACC, the exam administrators. One of the original writers of the exam held my particular session. It was nice to have a primary source for a lot of information regarding the exam.

Though I will say that there was information that he provided about the exam that did not hold true for the particular exam that I took. This could be because this exam included material from the circulars (A-21, A-110, A133) as well as material from the Uniform Guidance, which replaced the circulars. This was the first exam the council administered that included questions pertaining to Uniform Guidance, so it more than likely deviated from their standard exam not only in questions, but also in format.

The absolute best part of this entire experience was participating in the small study group that I became a part of in preparation for this exam. The NURAP sessions concluded about a week or two before the testing window opened. Five of us who had attended the NURAP sessions and planned to take the test formed a small study group. We met extensively in the week prior to the exam to cram in as much studying as we could. We pored over every inch of available material for hours and hours and went down every rabbit hole of research administration that we could find. We took practice exams together, bounced questions off each other, shared notes, resources, flashcards…everything. I cannot emphasize enough how awesome it was to have this small study group. There were questions on the exam that I only got correct because I remembered something said during one of our sessions. This was invaluable for me.

Now that I have the certification, I am definitely excited about the next steps in my career. I am much more knowledgeable about research administration thanks to the exam. The exam gave me an in depth look at almost every aspect of research administration and I feel much more
near term future goals don’t include becoming an RA, I do plan to be heavily involved in research administration and this test was the first step in realizing that plan.

If you are thinking about taking the test, I would suggest attending the NURAP study sessions. I didn’t have to officially register for the exam until sometime in April which gives you time to attend the sessions, study the material and decide if you think you’re ready for the exam. The sessions are a great resource even if you aren’t thinking of taking the test. As I mentioned before one of the most valuable aspects of this process was collaborating with other research administrators; colleagues that I might never have interacted with otherwise. I now have a network of colleagues outside of my department that I can go to for help, bounce ideas off or grab a drink with! Taking the CRA exam wasn’t the most fun thing I’ve done this year, but what I gained went far beyond the exam.

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Northwestern University is now an institutional member of the Big 10 Academic Alliance ORCID consortium and our directory system will be ready to start capturing ORCID identifiers (ORCID iDs) this fall.

ORCID is an independent organization that maintains a registry of unique identifiers, called ORCID iDs, for researchers and scholars. The ORCID iD is a flexible persistent personal identifier which is not tied to employment at Northwestern but instead is intended to “travel with” a scholar throughout their career, enabling any organization with which they are affiliated to connect research information with that researcher. The ORCID iD helps to facilitate a complete record of activities by a scholar, regardless of name or organizational changes that may occur over the course of that scholar’s career.

Publishers and funding agencies have increasingly employed ORCID as a tool to manage submissions and applications. When a researcher provides their ORCID iD in a grant proposal or a publication submission, for example, the item can be easily associated with that researcher. That linkage can be especially helpful for individuals with common names, ensuring that their scholarly output is correctly associated with them rather than another person with the same name.

By becoming a member of ORCID, Northwestern can integrate the ORCID iDs of our researchers into our directory, and through that system, make those ORCID iDs available to a variety of the institution’s research information systems. A working group with representatives from Northwestern University Libraries, Galter Health Sciences Library & Learning Center, Office of the Provost, Office for Research, The Graduate School, and Northwestern Information Technology has partnered to implement the use of ORCID at Northwestern.

In the fall, a communication will go out to all Northwestern-affiliated faculty and researchers - including graduate students and postdocs - with the opportunity to create an ORCID iD and connect that identifier with the Northwestern directory. Individuals who already have an ORCID iD will be able to associate it with their Northwestern ID.

Be on the lookout for further information about rollout in the fall. To learn more about ORCID and its benefits for researchers, check out their website at https://orcid.org

Written By: ORCID Working Group Office for Sponsored Research Electronic Research Administration (847) 491-3003
Announcements

The NURAP Steering Committee is seeking Ad hoc members
Do you enjoy the NURAP programming, newsletter and opportunities to study for the CRA exam? Are you interested in helping shape the research administration environment at Northwestern? Then come join us! We are currently seeking new members to assist the NURAP steering sub committees in FY18.

Qualifications:
Involvement with Sponsored Research in any capacity/role/job title

For more information:
The standing subcommittees are: Continuing Education, Communications and Outreach, Membership, and Programming. For full descriptions, please see “About Us” http://www.nurap.northwestern.edu/about-us/

Please contact the subcommittee chairs listed on the “Get Involved” page http://www.nurap.northwestern.edu/get-involved/

***Attention CRAs: your participation in NURAP Steering Committee activities will earn CE credit hours towards recertification.***

Visit the NURAP website and social media sites

Website: http://www.nurap.northwestern.edu

www.linkedin.com/groups/1947804

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