



Division of
Research

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

***Response to the National Council of University Research Administrators Report
August 10, 2025***

Executive Summary

Bowling Green State University (BGSU) commissioned a review by the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) to identify ways to better serve faculty and the overall BGSU research enterprise. The NCURA team was asked to evaluate organizational structures and processes/policies impacting the grant life cycle. The report included over 50 recommendations covering Research Administration services, institutional communication and strategic infrastructure.

The review of research services concentrated heavily on pre-award procedures, policies, organizational structures and service models. The division reviewed over 35 specific recommendations that informed a holistic process review. Numerous procedural and electronic administrative platform changes were undertaken to decrease faculty submission barriers, provide consistent professional support, improve communication and transparency, and generate data for ongoing data-based decision making and continual improvement within the Division of Research.

Communication recommendations involved all aspects of research at the institution and reached across all levels. At an operational level, faculty stakeholders were highlighted to ensure consistent, service-oriented communication from staff, website interfaces and online platforms. Additional recommendations targeted the need to clarify the university research message to diverse stakeholders. For example, plans are being implemented to improve communication assets, ensure consistency across all communications, celebrate faculty accomplishments, and optimize external communications to reflect a research-active institution.

Strategic investments will be key to support the university research enterprise. The NCURA report described the need to support centralized research infrastructure, research development and faculty professional development. Appropriate institutional support structures within the Division of Research and across other units that impact the grant cycle will be critical for success. In addition, centralized faculty professional development will empower faculty to initiate projects and reduce one-on-one faculty professional development commitments for Research Project Coordinators; while strategic investment in research development can help PIs grow their research programs.

The NCURA Report was used in conjunction with faculty and leadership input (see Appendices A-C) to plan for transformative changes within the Division of Research (Appendix D). Significant development and testing (Spring-Summer 2025) were undertaken to allow full implementation of new processes, procedures and platforms for Fall 2025. The new structures and processes are designed to reduce faculty proposal submission barriers, improve communication, and leverage efficiencies. Moving forward, the Division will employ a continual improvement model to ensure robust support for future research growth.

Appendix A

Faculty Research Focus Group Report

Division of Research

October 12, 2024

Executive Summary

Six research focus groups were conducted with 40 faculty members October 4-11, 2024. The goal of the focus groups was to receive faculty input as part of the Division of Research response to the Summer 2024 NCURA (National Council of University Research Administrators) peer review. The summative emerging themes and underlying data informed internal process and policy discussions. This brief report summarizes major topics and is not meant as an exhaustive list of all issues discussed.

The emerging themes inform research at both the institutional and Division of Research levels (Table 1). Institutionally, faculty felt that there was a need for consistent messaging on the importance of research and for infrastructure support to realize the research mission. Numerous faculty members noted the flight of research grants out of the institution due to a lack of infrastructure support. Within the Division of Research, faculty shared their experiences and highlighted areas that could be improved to support extramural funding. Specifically, faculty discussed pre-award and post-award barriers, policies/procedures, problem solving approaches (versus gatekeeping), productive communication, and the need for expanded expertise (e.g. research development) and capacity in the Division of Research.

Table 1. Emerging themes across focus groups.

1. Provide clear institutional support to improve the research culture.

- Consistent leadership messaging on the importance of research is critical as it impacts overall research productivity through policies/procedures and impacts the perception of the university.
- Institutional research infrastructure support is equally important. The institution underutilizes faculty resources when proposals are developed and routed through other institutions due to size, complexity, timing and/or perceived administrative capacity/expertise.

2. Improve the capacity and expertise in the Division of Research to better serve faculty and to work across the institution in support of research.

- Decrease upfront barriers for proposal submission by streamlining the process.
 - Implement consistent, accessible policies and procedures that follow established research administration norms.
 - Consistently assist faculty with problem-solving through productive, timely and respectful communication.
 - Expand expertise to support research development and faculty professional development and training.
 - Increase capacity by reducing downtime, improving administrative flow and working across institutional units.
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Appendix B

Faculty Research Survey Report Division of Research October 12, 2024

Executive Summary

A survey tool was used to gauge faculty satisfaction with Division of Research services and better inform the response to the 2024 NCURA (National Council of University Research Administrators) Report. A 20-question survey sought input on pre-award, post-award and research development activities. From August 14 to September 13, 2024, 166 faculty members responded to the survey. About half of the respondents submitted a proposal within the past three years and over a quarter of respondents had secured external funding.

The survey highlighted several major areas for consideration (Figure 1). For pre-award activities the most impactful changes will likely come from reducing submission barriers by improving processes (e.g. budget preparation, timing), staffing and communication. A similar pattern was seen for research compliance. For post-award activities, many of the areas for improvement cross institutional units (e.g. student/staff hiring, account setup, purchasing, invoicing/payments), suggesting the need for a coordinated response. In addition, faculty requested improved post-award account access. For research development, there was high demand for basic faculty professional development (e.g. funding opportunities, grant writing) as well as some research development support (e.g. seed funding, editing services).

Table 1. High-level overview of faculty research survey areas highlighted for improvement.

1. Research Development

Faculty professional development (e.g. find funding, budget preparation, grant writing)
Research development support (e.g. seed funding, editing services)

2. Pre-Award (Research & Sponsored Programs [RSP])

Adequate staffing/training
Process improvements
Communications

3. Research Compliance (Research Integrity/IRB/IACUC/IBC)

Adequate staffing/training
Process improvements
Communications

4. Post-Award (RSP/Research Operations/Grants Accounting/HR/Procurement)

Cross-unit process improvements
Improve account reporting/access

Appendix C

Holistic Process Review Report

Division of Research

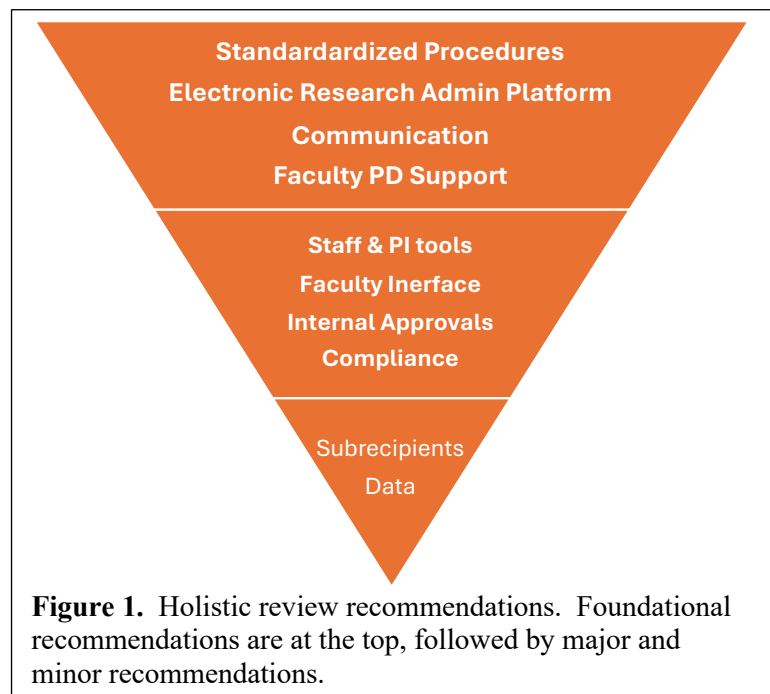
December 23, 2024

Executive Summary

A holistic process review was initiated for pre-award services to consider current procedures and provide context for potential changes. To inform discussions, preliminary documents and stakeholder input were collected during July to October 2024. Stakeholders provided input through various mechanisms including a faculty survey (Appendix B), faculty focus groups (Appendix A), the Research Council with Research Asst/Assoc Deans, a College leadership Retreat, and one-on-one meetings. Division of Research leadership engaged in weekly retreats October and November 2024 to complete the review.

As a result of the holistic process review, areas were identified for improvement throughout the grant cycle (Figure 1). It should be noted that the holistic process review was expanded to encompass a new electronic research administration platform and generation of a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure manual.

Overall, the holistic review highlighted processes and procedures that could be streamlined to better support stakeholders and improve administrative efficiencies. This process also identified gaps in current operations. The resulting recommendations for forward action were ranked based upon overall operational impact (i.e. foundational, major, minor) and described in more detail below.



Foundational Recommendations

- Standardize pre-award processes and procedures to reduce barriers and improve efficiencies.
- Implement a new electronic research administration platform to serve as a digital approval platform, the official record for proposals, and a data retrieval resource.

- Improve external communication in conjunction with procedural review to reduce barriers (e.g. website, newsletters, targeted email lists, templated responses).
- Provide expanded centralized faculty professional development (e.g. proposal preparation, budgets, find funding).

Major Recommendations

- Provide research project coordinators with tools (e.g. checklists, email templates, manual).
- Provide faculty with budgetary tools to facilitate draft budget preparation.
- More robustly link solicitation (via expanded research project coordinator solicitation review) and regulatory compliance with submission approvals & award acceptance/notifications.
- Review/revise the internal approval process
- Streamline the initial faculty interface.

Minor Recommendations

- Clarify subrecipient budgetary procedures.
- Ensure that all project-related information is stored centrally for consistent data access. Other pre-award systems should be phased out as the new electronic platform comes online.

Appendix D

Fall 2025 Implementation

Division of Research

June 1, 2025

The Division of Research has many stakeholders, but the NCURA report and resulting changes for Fall 2025 prioritized pre-award faculty barriers and interfaces as an initial step to strengthen BGSU research infrastructure. Throughout this process, both technology and standardized procedures were leveraged to improve efficiencies.

Major changes during the 2024-2025 Academic Year included basic division infrastructure buildout (e.g. staffing, budgets, space), implementation of cost-saving measures, development of new processes/procedures/platforms to improve efficiencies and accuracy, development of regular communication tools, and implementation of faculty research development opportunities. Some of the major components are outlined below in Table 1, and the basic proposal submission pathway (with critical steps) is shown in Figure 1. While the changes within the Division of Research are anticipated to improve faculty access for extramural research and scholarship funding opportunities, the Division will continue to collect feedback as part of a continual improvement model.

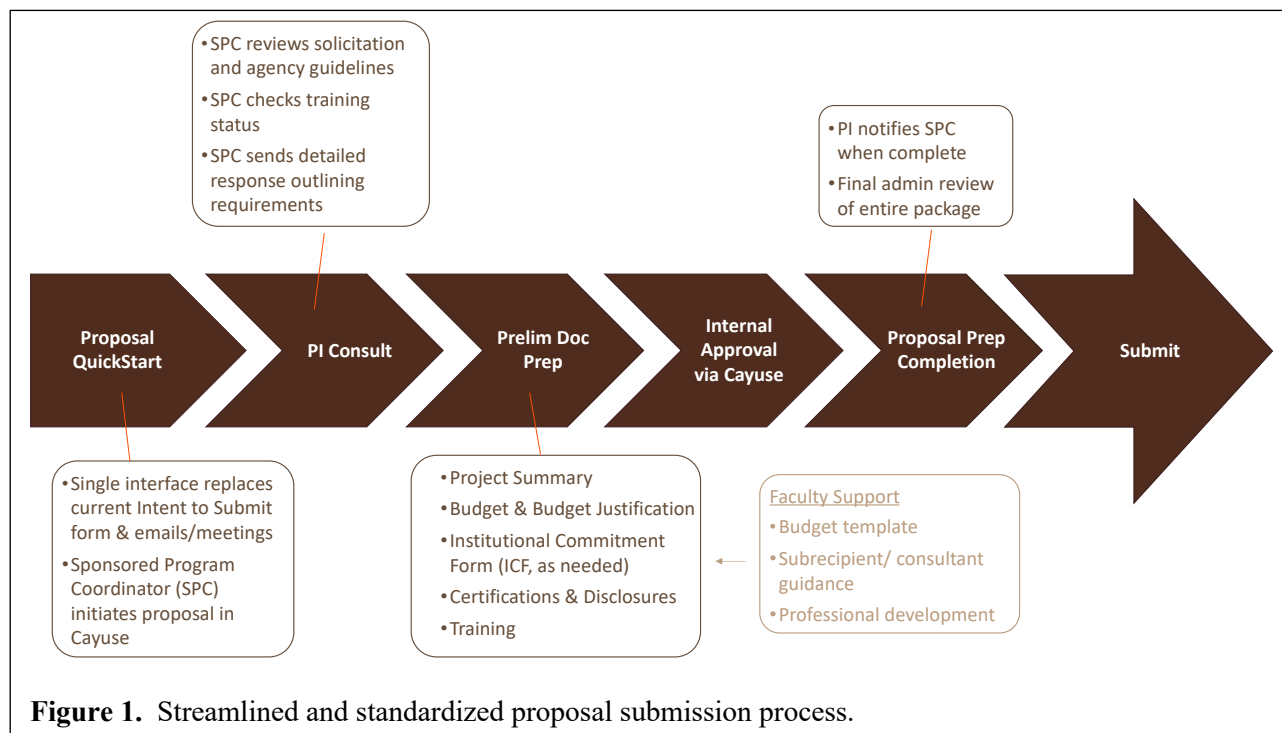
Table 1. Major Division of Research Initiatives Undertaken AY25.

Division of Research Infrastructure

- Strategic Planning
- Organizational Structure
- Staffing/Training
- Fiscal Management
- Physical Location/Space

Framework Development

- Electronic Research Administration platform (Cayuse)
 - proposal submission, award setup, compliance
 - Standardize Operations
 - Standard Operating Procedures, website-based instructions, support forms and tools
 - Communication Tools
 - faculty-centered website, newsletter, townhalls, directed emails
 - Faculty Research & Professional Development
 - professional development workshops, research development mechanisms, Research Advocates
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While post-award barriers were not an explicit part of this review and implementation phase, initial conversations were undertaken as pre-/post-award scope was clarified. Several post-award processes historically completed by the Division of Research could be implemented more efficiently by other units (Table 2). In addition, linkages across systems were required to improve efficiencies (Table 2). After the pre-award implementation phase, the Division of Research hopes to close the loop on grant lifecycle barriers by continuing to work closely with Finance & Administration to focus on appropriate structures, cross-unit functionality and efficient processes. As the NCURA report and faculty shared repeatedly, pre- and post-award units must work collaboratively to support the larger research mission and reduce faculty barriers.

Table 2. Post-Award Changes Undertaken AY25*

ITEM	CHANGE
Post-doc hiring	HR implemented NeoEd changes to allow departments to complete hires
Early post-award position posting	HR implemented NeoEd changes to allow departments to initiate early position posting with certification from RSP
Research Startup package hiring	RO streamlined the startup package setup process and is working with HR to improve startup hiring.
Detailed, manual post-award budget input	Abbreviated, manual data input shifting to API data transfer
Data input & management via business systems	Cayuse-based reporting functions
Annual faculty PD F&A distribution	RO implemented changes to utilize automatic, standard distribution to departments

* Abbreviations: Post-doc=Postdoctoral Researcher in XXXX, PD= professional development, F&A=Facilities & Administration (or indirect costs), HR=Human Resources, RSP=Research & Sponsored Programs, RO=Research Operations