

# Engaging Research

TEXAS  STATE  
RESEARCH AND SPONSORED  
PROGRAMS

Office of the Associate Vice President for Research

Issue 1 • Volume 1 Fall 2017

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## AVPR Message

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Dr. Walter E. Horton

I am really excited to share our inaugural issue of *Engaging Research*. The growth of our research and scholarly activities at Texas State has been impressive, and we want to use every opportunity to highlight those activities and talk about the faculty, staff and students who are responsible for the great work. This newsletter will be one of the ways we do that. Also, we want the newsletter to help communicate important information about the process of seeking funding, submitting grant applications and managing awards.

So what's inside? You will learn about four researchers representing four very different disciplines but who all have been successful in developing research programs that have great impact. They will share some advice and lessons learned about how to develop a meaningful research agenda. And that's just the beginning! There is a great discussion of Translational Research and Team Science by Dr. Melinda Villagran, a discussion of "indirect costs" from Jessica Schneider, one of our Research Coordinators for Liberal Arts, and some interesting news and updates from folks in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

The release of this first newsletter also marks my one-year anniversary at Texas State. I am thrilled to now be part of this great university and fully engaged with everyone who is working so hard to advance its mission. This is truly a special place because of all of you, the research and scholarly community. The work you do is compelling and it will change lives for the better.

## Editorial team

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# Faculty Research Spotlight

## Ty Schepis, Psychology: “Almost everyone misses more than they hit, so stick with it.”

**Your research:** I have been fortunate to receive two grants recently from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (of the National Institutes of Health).<sup>\*</sup> One is an R03 and one is an R01. The R01 got a lot of attention elsewhere, so I'll highlight the R03 project. In it, I propose to examine two theories addressing why college students engage in the misuse of stimulant medication (like Adderall, Vyvanse and Ritalin). We are using a technique called Ecological Momentary Assessment, which uses multiple daily surveys to get much closer to the stimulant misuse event itself. We are assessing recent stimulant misuse, mood/emotions, global stress, and academic demands and stress to see what contributes to stimulant misuse.

**Research impact:** The goal with



this project, and the R01 project, is to better understand who is at-risk for prescription drug misuse, who is at-risk for more frequent or problematic misuse, what factors may influence misuse and other misuse-related aspects (like sources of medication for misuse and motives for misuse). I hope that my research program contributes towards preventing misuse and reducing the significant con-

sequences of misuse in those who have already initiated prescription drug misuse.

**Advice:** Be persistent. I was awarded an R03 from NIDA in 2012, and between that award and the R03, I put in five applications that were not funded. Some got scored and some did not. It got frustrating at times, and I even took a break for about a year, but I stuck with it and eventually hit. Almost everyone misses

more than they hit, so stick with it.

**About you:** I am married, with two boys (9 and 3), so I know way more about Geometry Dash, Harry Potter and Daniel Tiger than I ever anticipated. If I am not working, I am probably with them, learning even more.

<sup>\*</sup>Note: Since doing this interview, Dr. Schepis has received a second R01 grant. Congratulations Dr. Schepis!

## New Faculty Focus: Viola Benavente, St. David's School of Nursing

**Background:** I am a native Texan, born in San Antonio. I have over 30 years experience as a Registered Nurse (RN). After earning my PhD in nursing, I was awarded a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Washington in Seattle. After the postdoc, I accepted a faculty position at Boston College in the William F. Connell School of Nursing and became a Nurse Faculty Scientist at Massachusetts General Hospital.

When my daughter informed me of my new and yet unborn granddaughter, it was time to return home! As an emerging research institution and Hispanic-serving institute, Texas State was the right place for me. Luckily, I got hired for a tenure-track faculty position in the St. David's School of Nursing, and am now just completing my first year here.

**Your Research:** My main research interest centers on cardiovascular health

and disease. As an ICU nurse, I was disheartened to see so many patients not survive when they got there. My intrinsic drive to conduct research relies on this motto, “To keep patients out of the ICU, I need to reach them in the community first.” Therefore, I conduct community-based research and call myself a cardiovascular health disparities nurse researcher. My target population is Hispanics, underscoring the health and health care disparities of Latinas.

Currently, I have two studies in progress. One is the 2017 Research Enhancement Program Grant award. This study explores cardiovascular health among Mexican-American women residing in South Texas. The second study is an external grant from the Latino Aging Research Resource Center (LARRC) at the University of California-Davis. The LARRC Center is funded through

the NIH National Institute of Aging. The overall goal of this research project is to inform the development of a culturally-tailored health information and communication technology program that involves testing and refining a cardiovascular e-health module for Mexican-American women.





# Faculty Research Spotlight

**Aimee Kendall Roundtree, English:** “Ultimately the project can help fire departments track and prepare for fire risk and events with more accuracy and quality.”

**Your research:** My research and consulting expertise is in science, medical and technical communication. Recently, I was awarded a grant from State Farm to help the San Marcos and College Station Fire Departments improve the quality of incident reporting. The project will culminate in workshops to help standardize selection of incident codes classified in the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and to help improve incident report decision making and narrative writing.

**Research impact:** Firefighters use NFIRS to record incidents to which they respond. A recent report on NFIRS found that firefighters use the codes inconsistently due to personal preference, idiosyncrasies of training and information overload as firefighters are faced with 177 codes to choose from and interpret.

My research will help im-

prove fire services communication by providing guidance for exposing and counterbalancing subjectivities, cultural influences and value propositions that impact reporting.

Improving fire service reporting will, in turn, improve fire services data; it can help a community have a more accurate and quality assessment of their fire services needs and risks. This cleaner big data, in turn, can help fire services and insurers better forecast, prepare and pos-

sibly prevent and lower fire incidences, risk, loss and uncertainty. Ultimately, the project can help fire departments track and prepare for fire risk and events with more accuracy and quality.

**Advice:** I recommend networking and making connections across disciplines and with community collaborators early and often. Even when attempts to earn larger grants from NSF, NIH, NEH and other Federal and national organizations take longer than hoped, the work invested can translate into additional and related, but unexpected opportunities.

**About you:** I volunteer as a judge for Knowbility's Open Air, the accessible internet rally, a web accessibility challenge that pairs teams of web developers and designers with non-profits to create or improve their website in a way that makes it fully accessible for people with disabilities.



**Bahram Asiabanpour, Engineering:** “. . . here is my advice to my younger self.”

**Your research:** I am currently involved in four active grants, each with different capacities. In all of them, my role is related to my primary expertise in Additive Manufacturing and Product Development in Renewable Resources and Sustainability. In one project entitled “EverGreen: Cross-Disciplinary Research at the Food-Water-Energy Intersection,” I serve as PI. Here we are designing, implementing and testing whether an off-grid, hydroponics system is technically and financially viable.

**Research impact:** As members of humanity, we are all responsible to leave the general human condition in better shape than we found it. My research thus focuses on those issues that are the most vital to provide for people in the world: food, water, energy and education. These are at the top of the “Top Ten Problems of Humanity for the Next 50 Years” list suggested by Richard Smalley. The prob-

lems are all massive, complex and mostly growing. I try to contribute my fair share to the best of my capacity and ability.

**Advice:** Each field and each individual of course is different. However, here is my advice to my younger self:

- Find your research topic, establish

the criteria you need to assess whether a certain topic follows your career goal or does not. You either know or can learn it, you like it, the world needs it and there is a national interest (aka funding) for it.

- Officially and unofficially, talk to colleagues in other disciplines. Most successful proposals are both multidisciplinary and multidimensional.

- Work with people that have a strong sense of goal,

motivation and integrity.

- Get help writing the proposal. It is a set of skills rarely taught in any academic setting.

- Try and Try and then Try more, but not just blindly.



# Translating Research To Reality

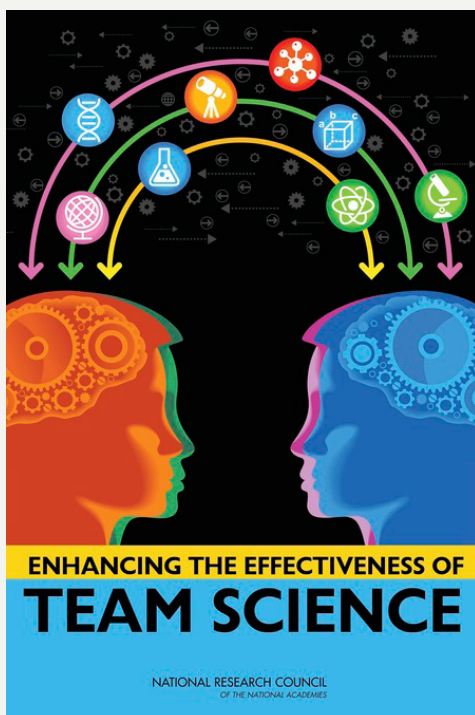
by **Melinda Villagran**

## Translational Research Teams

Over the summer, I attended the Science of Team Science (SciTS) conference with a diverse group of scholars and program officers from federal funding agencies including NIH, NSF and NASA. I can safely say I've never attended an academic conference where so many people talked about basketball and astronauts, but these analogies began to make more sense as speaker after speaker outlined challenges and attributes of all successful teams, including academic research teams.

Some of the best examples of team science involve productive collaboration among researchers from diverse interdisciplinary and international backgrounds, working together to tackle some of the most challenging issues of our time. Increasingly, funding agencies such as the [National Science Foundation](#), the [Department of Defense](#), [NIH](#) and [NASA](#) seek to fund high performing research teams with a track record of successful collaboration. Funders are also promoting new tools and evidence to assist universities seeking to build [collaborative research cultures](#).

Why is there so much interest in [multidisciplinary team science](#)? Here are few highlights from this year's SciTS



conference:

- [Research teams brought together to solve important real world challenges provide new opportunities](#) for multidisciplinary scientific breakthroughs.
- [Multidisciplinary research offers the potential to more easily identify the best research questions](#).
- The next generation of investigators on funded multidisciplinary re-

search projects can gain valuable [mentoring and research experience](#).

Successful research collaborations lead to personal and professional benefits as well. [Although some funders still hesitate to fund multidisciplinary research](#) projects, [collaborative studies are cited more often](#), which can help build individual or institutional research reputations. Early-career investigators who struggle to launch funded research programs of their own can gain experience as consultants on funded projects outside their own discipline. Teamwork is a required standard practice in almost every other sector, so developing strong team communication skills is essential for research and commercialization projects with industry partners.

NIH created the [Team Science Toolkit](#) to provide information and tools for collaborative research, and an [increasing number of resources](#) are available for [universities working to assess and reward individuals engaged in team-based research](#).

For additional [information about team science](#) and translational research teams at Texas State, please visit the Team Science Toolkit, or contact me directly at [mv12@txstate.edu](mailto:mv12@txstate.edu).

## Creating Teams Using Pivot Profiles

Looking for collaborators for your project, but not sure where to start? The [Pivot funding database](#) has a searchable profile system that can be limited to Texas State or include external researchers as well. Most faculty profiles are already in Pivot and just have to be claimed by the faculty member. Once you claim your profile, you can add updates and a lot

of searchable information, like keywords and areas of expertise. The more detailed the profile, the better the chance someone looking for your expertise will be able to find you and connect.

And guess what? Texas State research staff in ORSP and the colleges also search Texas State Pivot profiles for two purposes: to find funding opportunities

that match your expertise and to build teams. So there are a lot of good reasons to spend a few minutes or longer making your Pivot profile as strong as it can be.

If you need help claiming or updating your profile, contact your [Research Coordinator](#) or come to the ORSP fall workshop on Bolstering Your Pivot Profile. Hope to see you there!

## Send Us Your Research Stories!

**Would you like to appear in our newsletter or suggest one of your colleagues who's doing cool research? We may even be able to promote your story on the Texas State homepage. Let us know what you know! Fill out our [brief story form](#) for consideration.**

# Research Coordinator Q&A

## Who are the RCs and How Can They Help You?

In Fall 2013, the university hired its first six Research Coordinators (RCs) to provide direct support to faculty in research grant proposal preparation and award administration. There are now thirteen RCs assigned to specific colleges, schools or institutes, including one in the Graduate College to support student researchers. As described in their [profiles](#), the RCs represent a diverse range of experience, knowledge and skills, which are applied in different ways based on the needs of their units. Though not organizationally part of ORSP, the RCs work collaboratively with ORSP and other University offices to support the submission of high quality, competitive external proposals and effective administration of awarded funds.

College of Applied Arts	<a href="#">Catherine Hardin</a> , <a href="#">Linda Sterling</a>
McCoy College of Business Administration	<a href="#">Yvonne Natoli</a>
College of Education	<a href="#">Stephanie Korcheck</a> , <a href="#">Alex Lengefeld</a> , <a href="#">Stacy Bennett</a>
College of Fine Arts and Communication	<a href="#">Matthew Winn</a> , <a href="#">Lisa Westerbeck</a>
College of Health Professions	<a href="#">Michele Dziadik-Willingham</a>
College of Liberal Arts	<a href="#">Jessica Schneider</a> , <a href="#">Meredith Williams</a>
College of Science and Engineering	<a href="#">Yuvon Robin</a>
The Graduate College	<a href="#">Dr. Andrea Hilkovitz</a>

## What's the Deal with Indirect Costs? by Jessica Schneider

Of all the frequently asked questions I've encountered in my years at Texas State, there is one that has been consistently and continuously posed – what are indirect costs and why should I include them in my budget?

Indirect costs are those items that cannot be tied to a single project. They include electricity in your office, departmental equipment, administrative support for purchases and payments, library resources, software packages, maintenance of labs, etc. At Texas State, our indirect rates of 49.5% for on-campus research and 26% for off-campus are a direct reflection of the resources, facilities and administrative support available to our researchers.

But why should you include these costs? Most sponsors expect some kind of overhead charge, and federal sponsors like the National Science Foundation consider it so standard that excluding

these costs is questionable and potentially unallowable. Sponsors know a successful research project requires appropriate facilities and administrative support; indirect costs reflect those resources. However, there are also sponsors that limit the inclusion of indirect costs or do not allow them at all. A sponsor's guidelines take precedence, so the general rule is that if a sponsor allows or expects the inclusion of indirect costs, we must include them. If they do not, we will not.

This is where I'd like to highlight what makes Texas State unique in the realm of research support. Once you've started generating research expenditures, your grant account will generate what we call indirect cost recovery. Unlike many universities, Texas State returns 10% of the indirect cost recovery *to the researcher*. These funds can be used to further your research agenda, supporting things like feasibility studies, graduate student



support or travel for the dissemination of results. A small portion of the funds are returned to the researcher's department and college, but most go back to the university to support research development and growth at Texas State. In fact, two major research support initiatives – Research Enhancement Program (REP) grants and competitive faculty start-up packages – are supported in part by indirect cost recovery.

So next time you're working on a grant budget with your Research Coordinator or ORSP Proposal Coordinator, just remember that including these costs will not shock the sponsor or hurt your chance of being awarded. Most anticipate and even expect it.



# ORSP News & Updates

## Need Texas State University Data?

Research Records and System Services (RRSS), within the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, provides institutional data by request to members of the university research community for proposal submissions and other research activities.

If you are a faculty member preparing a proposal for grant submission, or a graduate students doing research for your dissertation or thesis, please complete our [data request form](#) or contact us at [researchsystems@txstate.edu](mailto:researchsystems@txstate.edu).

### Types of Data We Provide

- faculty, staff, student demographics
- student enrollment
- student performance
- student outcomes
- other Texas State University data



## Improved Research Cash Advance System

We have launched a new Research Cash Advance System. The previous cash advance manual routing was time-consuming and error-prone. The new online system streamlines and simplifies the request, reconciliation and routing processes.

The PI and his/her contact will receive a confirmation message once they submit cash advance requests or reconciliation. The request will then be electronically forwarded for approvals. Approval workflow automatically routes the request, sends approval alerts and tracks progress. PIs and their contacts will receive status update messages during the approval process. PIs can also log in to the cash advance portal to check the status of requests or reconciliation. The system also sends out messages if a reconciliation is past due.

Request a Research Advance (AP-5) on our [website](#) and complete the advance reconciliation (AP-6) form. Tutorials on how to use the system, flow charts of the approval process and answers to frequently asked questions can be found on this site.

## Help! How to Comply with Funder Mandates on Data Management and Open Access

Texas State University offers researchers multiple resources to ensure compliance with federal funder mandates for open access data and publications. Go to the ORSP [Research Data Management and Security webpage](#) to find out where to get assistance with all of the following:

- Understanding funder requirements for a data management plan
- Learning the basics of data management planning
- Depositing and publishing data and open access publications, using Alkek Library's Digital Collections and the new Dataverse Repository
- Ensuring research data security

And don't miss the upcoming workshop, [Data Management and Open Access Requirements for Funded Research](#), presented jointly by Dr. Mike Blanda, Assistant Vice President for Research and Sponsored Programs, and Alkek librarian, Dianna Morganti.

## Compliance Update: Working with Animals

As of August 28, 2017, due to new federal requirements all personnel on new and existing IACUC protocols as well as individuals who work in laboratory animal facilities or have frequent contact with animals are required to participate in the new Occupational Health and Safety Program. For specific program details please visit the Research Integrity & Compliance [Health and Safety Resources webpage](#) or contact Becky Northcut at 512-245-2314.

**[Meet the ORSP Staff](#)**

**[Upcoming Workshops and Events](#)**