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Retention in Research Administration

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RETENTION IN RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
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RETENTION IN RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

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The current study was conducted to gain insight into what factors are most important to research administrators when they are deciding whether to remain at or leave their current organization. Research administration, like many other professions, experiences a high rate of turnover. This is problematic because the time to train research administrators can be very lengthy and expensive. This exploratory study utilized a quantitative survey to find the most highly rated factors by research administrators when deciding whether to stay at or leave their position.

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DEDICATION

To my husband, J.R.: I could not have gotten through this program without your support. You took everything in stride--late nights, Saturdays, early mornings spent in class or writing. Me jabbering on about whatever topic we discussed in class or what I was writing about, crying on your shoulder when I was frustrated, canceling plans because of class, slacking on household duties to focus on my studies. You were a rockstar through it all, and I share this achievement with you. XO.

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Background of the Study

The Great Resignation. Quiet quitting. Mass exodus. Regardless of the terminology used, over 4 million Americans are vacating their positions every month (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023), whether due to voluntary or involuntary reasons. Voluntary could mean choosing to leave their current position, choosing to leave their profession in general, or retirement, while involuntary refers to being fired or laid off. All of these possibilities are considered in job turnover. According to Burgess (1998) "turnover generally refers to the movement of workers around the labor market, between firms, and among the states of employment, unemployment, and inactivity" (p. 55).

Turnover is detrimental to an organization for several reasons: increased costs associated with recruiting and training new employees (Cascio, 2006 and Collins, McKinnies, Matthews, & Collins, 2015); work disruptions, loss of organizational memory and seasoned mentors (Allen, Bryant, & Vardaman, 2010); additional burden on employees who remain (Collins, McKinnies, Matthews, & Collins, 2015); etc. For these reasons, retention is of paramount importance. As Tymon, Stumpf, and Smith (2011) wrote, retention of quality employees is "of great practical significance to organisations as it eliminates the recruiting, selection and on-boarding costs of their replacement, maintains continuity in their areas of expertise, and supports a culture in which merit can be rewarded" (p. 293).

A plethora of information exists on retention in several industries. However, there is very little research that focuses specifically on the field of research administration. In fact, there are only two journals dedicated solely to the field: *Journal of Research Administration* and *Research Management Review, which have only been in existence since 1967 and 1987, respectively.*

Even before the field was called research administration, it was recognized that to ensure the sustained course of scientific research, it would be necessary to have a group of professionals to manage said research (Lintz, 2008). Research administration, in its simplest definition "is the support required for success in research programs" (Beasley, 2006, p. 9). Lintz also stated: "institutions must recognize research administrators as valuable assets, and be willing to incorporate non- academics into the top levels of institutional strategic planning" (p. 69). The importance of the field cannot be over-emphasized, and moreover, one can only fully understand the roles and importance of research administrators after delving into its history and responsibilities.

What is Research Administration?

The field of research administration came about after World War II, with the creation of federal agencies to fund basic research; these included the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Office of Naval Research (Beasley, 2006). Stackhouse's definition of research administration (as cited in Kerridge, 2021) is anything that organizations:

> can do to maximise the impact of their research activity. It includes assistance in identifying new sources of funds, presenting research applications and advice on costing projects and negotiating contracts with external sponsors. It incorporates project management and financial control systems. It also involves help in exploiting research results—through commercialization, knowledge exchange and dissemination to wider society. (p. 12)

Additionally, research administration can be defined as "the administrative support required to manage and apply for external funding, including but not limited to" (Welch & Brantmeier, 2020, p. 71) "the oversight and compliance of the sponsor's management and fiscal requirements as stated in the grant or contract" (Beasley, 2006, p. 9).

Universities often employ the largest number of research administrators. Research is one of the main pillars in institutions of higher education, so most universities with any research program will have some form of research support staff, ranging from one to over 7,000 (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2022). Though not as prevalent, research administrators also exist in industry, non-profits, hospitals, and government. These organizations can all be involved in research and thus require employees with some semblance of research administration experience.

Responsibilities in Research Administration, and Where It Occurs

Multiple job functions/titles exist under the all-encompassing term of research administration. However, not all organizations define these areas exactly the same, nor might they include each specific role in their structure. Even though research administrators may not have responsibilities in all areas, each research administrator should have working knowledge of the entire research funding process, as many roles affect each other in the funding cycle. Lintz (2008) stated, "To achieve success in obtaining funding, research administrators must be knowledgeable in numerous areas—accounting, law, technology, academic content, clinical trials, economic trends, public and social policy, and global issues" (p. 68-69). The following subcategories encompass the general roles that research administrators hold, but each organization's research administration staff will vary based on type, size, and variance of funding sources (Katsapis, 2012; Zink, Hughes, & Vanderford, 2022):

- Pre-award administration generally consists of proposal development and submission, preparing and revising budgets, applying regulations to proposals, and negotiating contracts.
- Post-award and financial administration typically cover financial reporting, funds draw-downs, working with auditors, and reconciling accounts.

- Compliance comprises those topics such as human subjects, animal research, conflicts of interest, and biohazards.
- There are also such issues as technology transfer, export control, and material transfer agreements.

Professional Development and Mastery in Research Administration

The field of research administration is one that is highly specialized, requiring extensive training and continuous professional development. A research administrator needs to have knowledge of federal guidance for grants management, state regulations, institutional requirements, compliance regulations, and a myriad of other concepts. If a research administrator is not well-versed in these concepts, it could have fiscal and/or legal implications on the researcher, the organization, and even the administrator itself (Zink, Hughes, & Vanderford, 2022).

Continuous training is required because regulations and guidance change constantly. "Given the complexity and ever-changing legal and regulatory environment in the United States (U.S.), research administrators must keep apprised of emerging developments in the field and constantly adapt policies and practices in order to reduce risk and ensure compliance for their institutions" (Chu, 2020, p. 2).

The Research Administrators Certification Council (RACC) administers a certification examination for those who wish to show their proficiency in research administration. In order to even sit for the certification test, a candidate must have at least three years of experience in research administration or must apply for a waiver and prove breadth of experience needed to understand the Body of Knowledge (Qualifications and Credentials, 2023). This certification takes extensive time and funds (Research Administrators Certification Council, 2023). Even if one does not study to be certified, learning the scope of information required to be effective as a

research administrator is a long, arduous process.

Problem Statement

Because research administration is such a niche field, there is not a large pool of already-trained research administrators. This contributes to a high demand for those already trained, and difficulty in finding qualified applicants for research administration positions. Especially since COVID, jobs have been pivoting to provide remote opportunities; the number of fully remote workers went from slightly more than two million in 1980 to almost twelve million in 2020, or about 7.3% of the labor force (Silver, 2023). Other estimates put the percentage closer to 18% (Silver, 2023). According to Zippia.com (2023), 36.2 million workers are expected to be fully remote by 2025. This means that there are more options available for those trained, capable candidates, making it easier for employees to leave a position.

Given the time and expense of training research administrators combined with increasing voluntary turnover, it is especially important for organizations to be proactive in implementing meaningful retention strategies to keep experienced, knowledgeable employees to avoid turnover. Organizations need to have strategies in place to keep these employees. The aim of the current study was to discover those strategies to increase retention in research administration.

Purpose of the Study

Welch and Brantmeier (2020) discussed the need for identifying those factors that affect voluntary turnover (as opposed to layoffs or downsizing), as employees are no longer remaining with organizations for a prolonged period of time. Through this study, the researcher set out to determine what factors are the most important in research administrators' decisions on whether or not to remain with their organization, and in research administration in general. It is anticipated that the results of the study will advise organizations in matters of retaining these vital employees.

Research Question

What factors do research administrators consider when deciding whether to remain at or leave their employing organization?

Significance of the Study

Research administrators are in a position to protect their organizations from incidents such as fraud, waste, and non-compliance with federal guidance. To this end, an organization needs to have and keep the strongest team possible. Few studies have been conducted focused solely on research administration retention; those that have focused on institutions of higher education. The aim of the current study was to fill the gaps in the current research and add to the knowledge base. The current study collected data from several different types of organizations that employ research administrators, and collected data on what type of research administrator responded to the survey, in order to fill those gaps. The data was analyzed to find which retention factors are most important to various demographics within research administration. These results have the potential to provide guidance on how to retain research administrators with various backgrounds, in various types of organizations, in various locations.

Definitions

Research administration: the support required for success in research programs. This includes, but is not limited to, proposal preparation, award negotiation, award management, regulatory compliance, and intellectual property protection. (University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2015)

Research administrator: anyone from administrative assistant to Vice President for Research that performs administrative maintenance, compliance, review, or oversight for a sponsored program. (Association of Research Administrators, 2017)

Retention: the organizational goal of keeping productive and talented workers and reducing turnover. (Baker, 2022)

Turnover: sum of quits, layoffs and discharges, and other separations initiated by the employer or the employee. (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.)

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations in research indicate potential weaknesses in study designs (Creswell, 2003). As with most research studies, the current study design was subject to limitations. First, the survey did not yield a large number of responses in comparison to the number of possible responses. It was available to those research administrators who subscribe to the RESADM (research administration) listserv or are members of NCURA (National Council of University Research Administrators) or SRAI (Society of Research Administrators International). There are 9,064 subscribers to the RESADM listserv (M. Varney, personal communication, January 16, 2024). NCURA's website claims that there are over 7,500 members (About Us, n.d.). A representative from SRAI stated that their organization has close to 30,000 members in their system (S. Meas, personal communication, November 14, 2023). This gives a possible pool of over 46,000. In addition, the results may not be representative of the general population, but the aim was to add to research administration-specific knowledge. There were some groups within demographics that only had one response each. While it is still important to gain these data and report them, those instances could have slightly distorted the overall data for those demographics. Respondents self-identified in terms of type of region (rural, urban, or suburban); it was not based on actual locale codes, so there is a risk of error in that category. Lastly, the researcher is a research administrator and has personal experience dealing with retention issues. Measures have been taken to reduce the chances of bias.

Delimitations

The delimitations in a research study are those parameters imposed by the researcher that

are meant to narrow the scope of the study (Creswell, 2003). The research design used was expected to find the most prevalent retention factors, but perhaps various motivating factors exist behind each retention factor. A follow-up qualitative study or interview design might be able to find those. The choice in utilizing a quantitative study was purposeful: to elicit the most responses and information possible and keep the survey manageable for the respondents.

Positionality

The researcher has been in research administration in various positions for over 15 years and is currently employed as part of a pre-awards team at a high research activity public university. She has witnessed the negative impact that turnover has in research administration and therefore set out to find ways to retain these valuable employees.

Chapter Summary

Job turnover is a prevalent issue in the workforce, and one that can prove detrimental to an organization. A great deal of literature on the topic exists, but what is lacking is the focus on research administration. Research administration requires extensive training and maintenance. With it being a relatively small field, it is difficult to find trained employees for these positions. The aim of the current study was to find retention factors that organizations can utilize to keep knowledgeable research administrators in their positions. In the coming chapters, the author discusses previously published literature on retention and within research administration, the structure and process of the current study, the results of the current study, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Literature Review

Scholars have written many articles on the trends in retention in other industries; however, the literature concerning retention in research administration is sparse. There are only two peer-reviewed journals that focus on research administration: *Journal of Research Administration* and *Research Management Review*. This severely limits the reference material from which research administrators can draw. In the current chapter, the review of the literature will be laid out by topic to synthesize what little research has been done that focuses on retention, specifically in research administration; review the difficulties in the field of research administration to show the importance of retaining research administrators; and then frame the challenges in retention in other fields.

Review of Literature

In the area of research administration, though there are few studies, some key themes emerged from the literature. Some of those were professional training, support from leadership, adequate compensation, clear development path, and workload.

Who are Research Administrators?

It is important to know some background information about research administrators in order to better gauge what factors may be important to them. The 2010 Profile of a Research Administrator (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011) compared demographic data from the 2005 Research Administrator Survey (RAS) by Roberts (2005) to the Research Administrators Stress Perception Survey (RASPerS) (Shambrook, 2010) to gain a sense of who research administrators are, demographically. They found that research administrators were “overwhelmingly” (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011, p. 29) college-educated, with 88.7% having a college degree

(Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctorate); 80.1% were female; 69.2% were over 40 years old; and 72.6% had more than five years of experience in research administration.

Retention in Research Administration

Welch and Brantmeier (2020) conducted a mixed-methods online survey. It was distributed only to university research administrators (although it was not clear as to whether these were all located in the United States), and included questions regarding the participants' desire to remain with or leave their current organization, the factors affecting that desire, and demographic information. This study found that only about 17% of research administrators were looking for new employment at the time of the survey with only 8% of those looking outside the field of research administration. This shows that research administrators want to stay in their current positions and in research administration in general.

For those not looking for new employment, the top motivation factors were "support from supervisor and upper management, adequate compensation and benefits, good work/life balance, and positive relationship with coworkers" (p. 78). For those looking for new employment, the top motivating factors were "lack of support from supervisor and upper management" and "feeling undervalued" (p. 79).

The Welch and Brantmeier survey was only open for two weeks and no reminders were sent due to COVID developments, which may have contributed to an extremely low response rate (3.3%, or 178 complete responses). This sample size may not be representative of the population, and respondents may be those who are already more motivated in their field, which could have affected the results. The authors suggested additional research in turnover and retention among various employer types. This was attempted in the current study.

Ibrahim, Guerrero, and Goos (2022) described the adaptation of a professional framework for clinical research professionals (a subset of research administrators) that was

created to “define performance criteria, standardize job descriptions, and guide the development of education and training-related initiatives” (p. 88). The framework was implemented to address voluntary turnover in that subset. The authors cited lack of professional training as a major contributor to voluntary turnover. In addition, workload and responsibility levels increase while salary does not. No opportunities for advancement was also cited as a reason for lack of engagement in the job. While these findings are significant, this is only applicable to a small population of research administrators.

Zink, Hughes, and Vanderford (2022) conducted a qualitative study using interviews to “clarify the development of new professional roles in research administration” (p. 119) in the wake of new complexities that have affected the field. These complexities include shift of many positions to remote work because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the creation of more complex positions in response to the continually changing regulatory landscape, and the automation of workflow. Some additional themes that emerged from the interviews were burnout, high turnover, and high stress. Balancing the workload as a research administrator is difficult to do, and the field is one that is hard to withstand long-term. Finding ways to address the hardships in these roles is paramount to retaining research administrators.

Many institutions were forced to move all research operations to fully remote during the pandemic; some have gone back to assume normal operations, but many have “fully embraced the remote professional, leading to an industry-wide voluntary turnover. Research administrative professionals are joining the global resignation movement to land new positions that offer higher wages and clear pathways to promotion” (Zink, Hughes, & Vanderford, 2022, p. 134-135). This shift to remote work allows for more opportunities depending on what the research administrator values; whether it is the remote work itself, a better work-life balance, cost of living issues, or simply a new opportunity.

While the Zink, Hughes, and Vanderford study resulted in thoughtful new directions for research administration, there were only 16 interviews conducted. These were limited to American academic research institutions, with respondents at the director level or higher. This omits several different subsets of research administrators: international, organizations other than academic institutions, and entry- or mid-level employees.

Even though these studies only sampled certain specific subsets of research administrators, they show several factors that organizations can utilize to retain their research administrators. It would be worthwhile to obtain results from additional areas of research administration and various types of organizations. The aim of this study was to obtain both of those, in addition to obtaining results from international organizations.

Challenges Affecting Research Administration

The emphasis on research nationally has increased exponentially since the creation of federal agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). For example, funding for the NIH has increased from $1 billion to $43 billion in less than 50 years (Zink, Hughes, & Vanderford, 2022). Similarly, the regulations have changed significantly to provide increased accountability to taxpayers and to regulate the various types of research that have emerged over the years. Regulating bodies have been created to protect human subjects, testing on animals, use of chemicals, and other various research topics. The field of research administration has had to evolve to meet these increased demands (Zink, Hughes, & Vanderford, 2022).

Accordingly, Stanley and McCartney (2009) reported on the increasing and ever-changing regulatory demands in research, based on results from a Senior Research Summit which the National Council of University Research Administrators hosted to discuss the increasing complexities of research compliance and potential solutions. New regulations that had

been passed contributing to the compliance burden included:

- Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (select agents and toxins);
- Federal Information Security Management Act (2002);
- National Institutes of Health (NIH) Data Sharing Policy (2003);
- Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (Subrecipient Reporting 2006);
- Code of Business Ethics and Conduct (FAR – 2008);
- Homeland Security Chemical Facilities Anti-Terrorism Standards (2008); and
- NIH Public Access Policy (2008) (p. 15).

Increased oversight of other areas was also discussed; effort reporting, conflict of interest, human subjects research, and subrecipient monitoring are all areas that require heavy management. This demonstrates an enormous challenge that faces research administrators: increasing burdens and complexities call for retention of knowledgeable administrators.

The Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) (2023) is:

> an association of federal agencies, research policy organizations and academic research institutions with administrative, faculty and technical representation. Overall, the FDP's mission is to streamline the administration of federally sponsored research and create resources that are available to the research enterprise regardless of membership status. (para. 1)

The FDP distributed a survey to principal investigators of federally-funded projects to inform efforts to reduce administrative burdens on federal grants and contracts. Rockwell (2009) reviewed this burden survey (Decker, Wimsatt, Trice, & Konstan, 2007) and found that faculty spent 42% of their time working on grants on administrative tasks such as reporting or compliance rather than their actual research. Again, this demonstrates a massive challenge

facing research administration: an overabundance of administrative burden and tasks that require up-to- date training. Keeping those administrators who are already trained is of utmost importance.

Retention in Other Fields

A simple Google Scholar search reveals that there are about 2.75 million results for "retention of employees". In reviewing several abstracts, many common themes emerge. These have been well-captured by two literature reviews. These literature reviews focused on retention in fields other than research administration: business, health care, computer science, nursing, and child welfare. Between the two literature reviews, 152 sources were reviewed. While both publications explore the common themes found throughout the literature, Kossivi, Xu, and Kalgora (2016) simply synthesized the literature, while George (2015) utilized the literature to attempt to predict retention based on several factors.

Kossivi, Xu, and Kalgora's (2016) analyzed 70 research articles and books to find commonly cited factors to determine an individual's decision to remain with an employer. Work sectors included in this review minimally included business, health care, computer science, and nursing. Their review found the most frequently discussed factors were professional development opportunities, compensation, work-life balance, management/leadership, work environment, social support, autonomy, and training and development. They did not offer an analysis of what factor(s) were most associated with retention, and expressed the need for additional research into individual factors, classifications of employees, and types of organizations in order to gain further insight into the impact of individual factors on retention.

George (2015) conducted a review of literature pertaining to retention of professional employees—such as health care workers and child welfare workers—to find the retention factors that were cited most frequently. She found that management, conducive environment,

social support, development opportunities, autonomy, compensation, crafted workload, and work-life balance emerged as the most commonly mentioned factors. Those factors were then categorized as either organizational-level (i.e. management) or job-level (i.e. crafted workload). She then developed a model to measure how likely an individual was to remain in an organization based on each factor. Her findings suggest that job-level factors, such as autonomy and work-life balance, were not as strong of predictors of retention as organization-level factors, such as management and development opportunities. In the current study, the author has used these findings to guide the survey design, and attempted to discover whether George's findings would apply to research administrators.

Chapter Summary

There are few studies conducted in retention that focus solely on research administration. In the few that exist, key themes are professional training, support from leadership, adequate compensation, clear development path, and workload. The field of research administration has had to evolve to meet increased demands from regulating bodies in research. This overabundance of administrative burden and tasks requires up-to-date training and makes retention of knowledgeable research administrators vital.

There is a litany of research on retention in areas other than research administration. Some factors that are influential in retention that emerged from the literature are professional development opportunities, compensation, work-life balance, management/leadership, work environment, social support, autonomy, and training and development. These findings were used to guide the current study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to find out what factors motivate research administrators to stay at or leave an organization so that organizations can be proactive in keeping research administrators. The researcher collected data from research administrators within several different types of organizations and collected demographic data on what type of research administrator responded to the survey. The results can be applied to various types of organizations in their retention strategies based on several different factors.

Research Question

What factors do research administrators consider when deciding whether to remain at or leave their employing organization?

Research Design

Scholars typically utilize one of three main research design approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative research uses different forms of inquiry that focus on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of human participants in natural settings (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1990). Efron and Ravid (2013) stated that qualitative research is designed to study situations and events as they develop naturally. The focus is on the significance of the experiences for the participants. This method is designed to observe thoughts, feelings, and attitudes of the subjects in order to describe the phenomena.

By contrast, in quantitative studies statistical data can be used to measure the degree of association between phenomena (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Quantitative research can be thought of as a “numbers” approach, where observations and measurements of information are analyzed numerically. The data are either collected numerically, or non-numeric data are converted to

numeric form in a coding scheme to draw comparisons (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2019). Data are collected based on hypotheses or research questions, statistical procedures are utilized, and biases are limited (Creswell, 2003). The ultimate goal of quantitative research is to confirm or alter theories of phenomena utilizing experimental results.

A mixed methods approach is exactly what it claims to be—it is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Creswell (2016) describes the advantages of the mixed methods approach as "one plus one equals three": "So quantitative plus qualitative. But when you begin to combine the two, you get three, you get more value. So that's what mixed methods is all about" (seg. 1).

The current study utilized a quantitative approach. In many ways, quantitative data are much simpler to handle than qualitative data. Several data sets can be gathered simultaneously, there are several statistical tests that can be ran, along with varied statistical manipulations of the results (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Software exists that will automatically run analysis on the data, rather than being manually analyzed or manipulated, which welcomes human error or inconsistency. Data sets gathered can be compared in many different manners to garner numerous conclusions. Because of the large volume of data that can be collected in a short amount of time, quantitative research can be faster and more generalizable than qualitative (Queiros, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). Existing data sets can be easily obtained and analyzed based on further research questions and also compared with one another.

Johnson and Christensen (2004, p. 411) explained that a strength of quantitative research is that the "researcher may construct a situation that eliminates the confounding influence of many variables, allowing one to more credibly establish cause-and-effect relationship." The nature of some quantitative methodologies (e.g. experimental) allows the researcher to control for external factors that may otherwise present as confounding; this control is typically not

possible in qualitative research.

The most common types of quantitative methodologies are experimental research, causal-comparative (also known as ex post facto or quasi-experimental) research, descriptive research, and correlational research (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Experimental research seeks to establish cause and effect relationships among variables and involves the researcher manipulating the independent variable to observe changes in the dependent variable (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Causal-comparative research is very similar to experimental research, but the researcher either cannot control a variable or random assignment is not possible (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). In descriptive research, there is no manipulation of variables, only observations of variables as they naturally occur in order to provide information about various phenomena to further additional discovery or research or to inform decision-making processes. There is no hypothesis, or forming of theories, simply the goal to describe what exists. This can be done using simple observation by observing how many times a phenomenon occurred, or by comparing an observation to existing data. Correlational research seeks to find the relationship(s) among variables, with a goal of predicting one variable from another. At least two variables are compared and the direction and magnitude of the correlation are calculated.

Yet another methodology is exploratory research. In this approach, the researcher is attempting to generate ideas and learn about phenomena. It is used when there is little known about a topic, when the researchers want to conduct their study without preconceived notions and therefore ignore previously conducted research, or the researchers are attempting to generate new concepts for additional research. This approach begins with the data and then attempts to find patterns and develop theories (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The current study utilized quantitative exploratory research because of the volume of data expected and the lack of foundational data. It did not utilize a hypothesis prior to collecting data, but will apply the

results to provide foundations for future research.

Methodology

The author utilized a survey to collect the data. The intent was to find relationships between several different variables so that the results will be relevant to various organizations and settings. The authors aim was to identify whether patterns exist between variables in order to predict an outcome from one variable or another.

This method was selected because the author's research question sought to find answers as to what is most important in terms of retention strategies for people in research administration. The aim was to have results that can be applied to many different organizations and demographics in research administration. Any correlations found will be utilized to advise various organizations regarding retention of research administrators.

Instrument

The survey instrument was comprised of three sections of questions (See Appendix A—Survey): demographics, retention factors, and follow-up. Twelve demographic questions were presented regarding the respondents' age, location, experience with research administration, current employment, and more. These were multiple choice with only one response allowed in order to gain background knowledge on the respondents; all of the questions required a response.

There were then 18 retention factors that utilized a Likert scale to score which options were most important to respondents. These options were chosen based on previous literature and experience. The Likert scale was from one to five, with one meaning not at all important, and five meaning extremely important. The respondents were then presented with an open-ended question where they could enter one factor that would keep them in their current role if they were tempted to accept a role at a different organization.

The final section of follow-up questions asked respondents whether they were currently

seeking alternative employment, whether they were looking outside of research administration, and why. This was important to note because if they were seeking to leave research administration, there is little that an organization can do to keep them in their position, but if the reason can be determined, perhaps this can be mitigated on the front end.

The researcher acknowledges that salary does play a large role in retention of employees. However, some organizations have little control in determining salary levels and their ability to offer increases. The current study intended to find non-monetary retention factors that at even the departmental level might be more accessible to implement to retain research administrators.

Population and Sample

The population of the current study was research administrators and was "clustered" into three groups: the research admin listserv, the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) discussion board, and the Society of Research Administrators International (SRAI) discussion board. This sampling method is known as cluster random sampling. It is a method in which a population is grouped into clusters, with subsets of each cluster being randomly selected (Suresh, Thomas, & Suresh, 2011). The survey was available to research administrators housed at varying organizations such as institutions of higher education, hospitals, and non-profit organizations worldwide. The respondents have varying responsibilities in their roles, such as pre-award, compliance, or a combination of multiple roles.

As stated earlier, there are 9,064 subscribers to the RESADM listserv, NCURA has 7,500 members, and SRAI has over 30,000 members. However, there is no reasonable way to determine how many of these subscribers or members are actually active. This makes determining an ideal number of responses difficult. According to Bullen (2022), the minimum sample size is 100 to obtain meaningful results. She described how to determine a good maximum sample size:

> A good maximum sample size is usually around 10% of the population, as long as this does not exceed 1000. For example, in a population of 5000, 10% would be 500. In a population of 200,000, 10% would be 20,000. This exceeds 1000, so in this case the maximum would be 1000. Even in a population of 200,000, sampling 1000 people will normally give a fairly accurate result. Sampling more than 1000 people won't add much to the accuracy given the extra time and money it would cost. (sec. 3)

Determining how to choose an appropriate sample size between the minimum and maximum depends on the situation. These situational factors include resources, accuracy needed, data analysis methods, and significance of consequences of the results. Increased resources needed, division of the sample into smaller groups, and increased significance require a higher sample size within the minimum and maximum. Because this study did not require excessive resources, but divided the sample into smaller groups, a sample size in the middle of the range of 100-1,000 was chosen by the researcher. The ideal sample size for the current study was set at 500 responses; the survey yielded 479 complete responses.

Data Collection Procedure

The questions were reviewed by a panel of experts, consisting of Dr. Bradley Colwell, Research and Faculty Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Education; a Professor of Education, Dr. Saran Donahoo; a Clinical Assistant Professor of Education, Dr. Gary Kelly; and a Director of the Center for Fisheries, Aquaculture, and Aquatic Sciences and Professor of Zoology, Dr. James Garvey. Two independent experts in research administration were also consulted during review of the survey questions: Ashley Matzenbacher, Interim Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects Administration at Southern Illinois University; and Dr. Julie Swarihim-Griffin, Assistant Vice President of the Central Sponsored Programs Administration at Oklahoma State University. Finally, a data consultant was employed to review the survey and

compute the raw data. The data consultant was Dr. George Vineyard, the Director of Institutional Research at the University of Missouri-St. Louis; he has over twenty years of data analysis experience. Once the panel of experts had reviewed the instrument, the study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Southern Illinois University (See Appendix B—IRB Protocol).

An email was sent to the RESADM listserv, a research administration mailing list, to solicit survey responses. A survey announcement was posted on the message boards of two professional organizations for research administrators: NCURA (National Council for University Research Administrators) and SRAI (Society of Research Administrators International). The email and announcement described the purpose of the study, information about the survey, and the risks and benefits of participating in the survey. A link to the survey was included at the very end of the email and announcement. Administering the survey online allowed participants to take the survey at a time and location where it was most convenient for them and expand the diversity of respondents.

Participants had the option to provide their email address if they wished to obtain a copy of the results of the study. The researcher felt this would entice more responses and also potentially aid other organizations in their pursuit of retention of research administrators. Anonymity was maintained, as the email addresses were obtained via a separate survey from the main survey, which was linked at the end of the main survey.

Reminders were emailed and posted on message boards at one and two week increments after opening. The survey remained open for three weeks. The timing of the survey was planned so that it was open between the major winter holidays (Thanksgiving and Christmas) to allow for employees who take vacations during holidays sufficient time to respond to the survey. The timeframe was manageable and accessible.

Data Analysis

All data collected was quantified and ranked. The few open-ended options were analyzed, categorized, and grouped based on similarity of scope/need. Retention factors were ranked as standalone results to find which factors were selected most prevalently. Several comparisons were analyzed—all of the demographic factors were analyzed to determine which retention factors were most important to each group. The author employed a professional data analysis consultant to ensure analysis was thorough and unbiased.

The Likert items were converted to numerical values (one to five, with one being not important at all and five being the most important) and means and standard deviations were calculated. Each demographic option was analyzed to determine which retention strategies were the highest and lowest rated among each group.

There were three demographic questions in which respondents had the option to choose "other". This would then prompt them to fill in a more specific response in an open-ended text field. These questions were their main area of research administration, type of organization, and Carnegie classification.

For the main area of research administration, the response options were proposals, awards, compliance, accounting, or other. Several of the "other" open-ended responses corresponded to options already given, as some terminology differs amongst organizations. For example, some organizations use the term "contracts" instead of "awards", but the meaning is essentially the same. The open-ended responses were coded in this manner in order to better classify responses and prevent too many outliers from occurring.

This was also done with the type of organization and Carnegie classification. For example, the options for the type of organization were public institution of higher education, private institution of higher education, non-profit foundation, hospital, and other. Several

"other" responses used terms such as "government entity – hospital" or "hospital research institute", both of which would be classified as a hospital, which was an original option for the type of organization. Similar responses were found for the Carnegie classification, so these were reclassified as well. Not all organizations actually have a Carnegie classification; those responses that were found to not correlate with an actual Carnegie classification were updated to reflect Not classified/not sure.

The retention factors were grouped into categories after analysis to find a general sense of what type of needs research administrators may prioritize: physical needs, connection to the work, flexibility, and facilities (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Retention factor categories

Retention Strategy	**Category**
Free meals	Physical needs
Time to exercise	Physical needs
Free gym access	Physical needs
Team building activities	Connection to the work/organization
Supportive administration	Connection to the work/organization
Professional development	Connection to the work/organization
General learning opportunities	
Training opportunities	Connection to the work/organization
Targeted training to advance knowledge	
Rewards/recognition	Connection to the work/organization
Interesting/engaging duties	Connection to the work/organization
More involvement in org	Connection to the work/organization
More responsibility, involvement in campus and/or decision-making	
Clear promotion path	Connection to the work/organization
Fully remote	Flexibility
Fully in person	Flexibility
Hybrid	Flexibility
Flex hours	Flexibility
Private offices	Facilities
Upgraded facilities	Facilities
Upgraded equipment	Facilities

An open-ended question was included after the Likert-style retention factors. This asked "Not considering salary, if you were tempted to take a position at a different organization, what would be the one (1) factor that would make you stay with your current employer?". Despite the question requesting a single factor, some respondents included more than one, and some included salary in their response. All of the open-ended questions were coded first based on similarity to options give in the previous section (Likert-style retention factors). For example, some wrote in flexible schedule or flexible location; these relate back to flexible hours and various work arrangement options given. Those that could not be assimilated to specific factors already scored in the survey were coded into fourteen new categories:

- Work-life balance: respondents cited the desire for work/life balance, or "the minimization of work-related stress, and the establishing of a stable and sustainable way to work while maintaining health and general well-being" (Qualtrics, n.d.).
- Additional staff: many responses indicated the need for more staff verbatim, and some used language such as "too much workload".
- More pay: respondents cited the desire for bonuses, pay raises, cost of living increases, and simply more money in general.
- Benefits: this includes such fringe benefits as retirement packages, additional paid time off, tuition remission, and better health insurance.
- Culture: many responses cited culture, and many included comments regarding their positive attitude towards team that they work with.
- Reorganization/management change: some respondents cited a desire for either a change to the reporting structure, or for changes to the managerial staff.
- Security: a few respondents cited the desire for job security, tenure, or stability.

- Aversion to moving: respondents did not want to relocate or move their kids from their current schools.
- Needs of spouse: a few respondents stated that a spousal hire would be important, or their spouse could not leave their current position to move for their own job transfer.
- Institutional knowledge/longevity: the knowledge of the current organization or systems and time to build that was cited by several respondents.
- Loyalty: some respondents mentioned loyalty to their supervisor, team, or organization.
- Autonomy: a few responses indicated the desire to not be "micro-managed".
- Organizational reputation: some respondents mentioned the reputation of the
- organization as a factor in their decision to leave or accept a position.
- N/A: respondents stated there was nothing their current organization could do to make them stay.

The first follow-up question asked if the respondents were seeking alternative employment. The question, "Are you currently seeking alternative employment?" had yes or no response options; a response of no ended the survey. A response of yes led to the question, "Are you seeking alternative employment outside of Research Administration?". A response of no ended of the survey, and a yes response led to the open-ended statement, "Please briefly explain why." Most respondents gave multi-faceted answers to the open-ended statement. These were then coded into categories in a similar manner to the previous open-ended questions.

Bias, Validity, and Reliability

Research bias is any deviation or trend from the truth in data that can lead to false conclusions, which can occur intentionally or unintentionally (Simundic, 2013). The researcher

has experience in research administration and has dealt with retention issues in the past. Therefore, all possible precautions to minimize potential bias were taken. First, the use of quantitative data reduced the potential effects of researcher bias by removing the need for excessive interpretation. Second, the researcher consulted a wide panel of experts to review the survey and employed a data analyst to analyze the data.

Validity is defined as "the extent to which a concept is accurately measured in a quantitative study"; reliability refers to "the extent to which a research instrument consistently has the same results if it is used in the same situation on repeated occasions" (Heale & Twycross, 2015, p. 66). The instrument used was reviewed for validity by a panel of experts. Quantitative research is considered to be more objective than qualitative. The increased objectivity of the data obtained leads to replicability (McDavid, Huse, & Hawthorn, 2019). More consistency exists among the data and ensuing analysis rather than the data being left to individual interpretation. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, replication is one of the key ways scientists build confidence in the scientific merit of results (2019). The consistency symbolizes reliability of the new knowledge and proves that the results are not isolated incidents and can thereby be generalizable to other populations. The consistency within the data will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter Summary

The current study employed a quantitative survey. It was distributed to research administrators via three modalities: an email listserv and message boards for two professional organizations. The data was processed by a professional data analysis consultant and analyzed to find what themes emerged amongst the variables. The aim was to be able to inform various types of organizations on the most valuable retention factors based on demographics.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF SURVEY DATA

Given the proclivity for turnover in the workplace and time required to train new research administrators as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, organizations need to find ways to retain experienced research administrators. Many organizations have little control over salary ranges and increases, so this study sought to find the non-monetary factors that are most important to research administrators and keeping them in their positions.

An exploratory research study utilizing survey research was conducted to address the research question: What factors do research administrators consider when deciding whether to remain at or leave their employing organization? This chapter presents the data collected through that survey. As addressed in the previous chapter, the mean of each demographic group's responses to the retention factors were calculated to find out which factors were most important to each group. The overall number of responses received was 479. As presented earlier, the potential pool of respondents was over 46,000, though there was no way to determine if all of those potential respondents are actually active in the listserv or professional organization discussion boards.

In the upcoming chapter, the survey results will be discussed in several sections:

- Profile of a Research Administrator, where the demographic responses with the highest frequencies will be presented and compared to previous data;
- Summary of Collective Responses, where the retention factors with the highest and lowest mean scores among all of the respondents will be presented;
- Trends by Demographic, where the highest and lowest rated retention factors for each demographic group from the survey will be presented in 12 separate sub-sections;
- Open-Ended Retention Factors, where the results from the open-ended question that was

presented to survey respondents to fill in their one most important retention factor will be reported;

- and Seeking Alternative Employment, where the responses from those respondents who indicated they were seeking employment outside of research administration will be reviewed.

Profile of a Research Administrator

A frequency distribution was completed on the demographic questions. Based on the highest percentages of responses, the "typical" research administrator is female (86.22%), is aged 45-54 (33.82%), holds a Master's degree (52.19%), and has been in research administration for 16 years or more (34.45%).

Some of these average factors are slight departures from the 2010 Profile of a Research Administrator (Shambrook & Roberts, 2011), which was based on the 2010 Research Administrators Stress Perception Survey (RASPerS). This presented research administrators as 80% female, 31.9% aged 40-49 (28.9% aged 50-59), 41.4% with a Bachelor's degree (37.3% with a Master's), with 30.7% having 10-20 years of experience (Table 4.1, RASPerS). Data obtained from the current study show that the "typical" research administrator is slightly older, is more educated, and has more experience than the previous profile.

Table 4.1 Profile of a research administrator

RASPerS 2010			Retention in Research Administration 2023		
Gender					
2010	Frequency			Frequency	2023
Male	228	20.0%	Male	60	12.53%
Female	915	80.0%	Female	413	86.22%
N/A			Non-Binary	6	1.25%
Totals	1143			479	
Age					
2010					2023
N/A			18-24	1	0.21%
<30	87	7.6%	25-34	43	8.98%
30-39	266	23.2%	35-44	151	31.52%
40-49	365	31.9%	45-54	162	33.82%
50-59	331	28.9%	55+	122	25.47%
60+	96	8.4%	N/A		
Totals	1138			479	
Education					
2010					2023
High School or GED	7	0.6%	N/A		
Some college credit	90	7.9%	N/A		
Associate's degree	31	2.7%	Associate's degree	26	5.43%
Bachelor's degree	475	41.4%	Bachelor's degree	159	33.19%
Master's degree	428	37.3%	Master's degree	250	52.19%
Doctoral degree	115	10.0%	Doctoral degree	44	9.19%
Totals	1146			479	
Experience in Research Administration (in years)					
2010					2023
<1	27	23.0%	N/A		
1<5	288	25.1%	0-5	100	20.88%
5<10	305	26.5%	6-10	110	22.96%
10<20	353	30.7%	11-15	104	21.71%
20+	178	15.3%	16+	165	34.45%
Totals	1149			479	

Summary of Collective Responses

In this section, the retention factors with the highest mean scores and lowest mean scores among all of the respondents will be presented. Overall mean scores ranged from 1.37 to 4.3. See Table 4.2 for full results.

The retention strategies that scored the highest overall were supportive administration (4.3), flexible hours (4.26), clear promotion path (4.21), and interesting/engaging job duties (4.14), with a tie for fifth place between professional development and training opportunities (4.1). The lowest mean scores were fully in person work (1.37) and free meals (1.5).

Table 4.2 Summary of collective responses

	Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Overall	1.5	2.58	2.37	2.43	4.3	4.1	4.1	3.67	4.14	2.92	4.21	3.8	1.37	3.09	4.26	3.09	2.62	3.49

Trends by Demographic

In the following sections, each of the 12 demographic categories are compared to the retention strategies that were rated on a Likert scale from least to most important. The frequencies of each sub-demographic are included, the top five retention strategies are discussed along with the lowest rated, and tables are included to show all of the data collected. These tables show averages for each sub-demographic group, with their respective average scores for each retention strategy. The top five scores have been highlighted for easy reference; the average scores are out of a possible five points based on the Likert scale used. Some groups may have more than five top factors, if there was a tie between scores.

Gender

In the gender category (Table 4.3), there were three retention factors that each gender option (female, male, non-binary) scored in their top five: supportive administration, interesting/engaging job duties, and clear promotion path. For females, the other most highly rated strategies were training opportunities (4.11) and flexible hours (4.3). For males, the other most highly rated strategies were professional development (4.12) and training opportunities (4.07). For non-binary, the other most highly rated strategies were a fully remote option and flexible hours, which both had mean scores of 4.33.

The lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement (mean score of 1.32) and free meals (mean score of 1.36).

Table 4.3 Gender

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
	Female (413)	1.5	2.6	2.37	2.45	4.31	4.1	4.11	3.72	4.16	2.9	4.21	3.85	1.33	3.08	4.3	3.1	2.62	3.48
	Male (60)	1.57	2.52	2.47	2.35	4.25	4.12	4.07	3.33	4.07	3.08	4.18	3.43	1.62	3.18	4.02	2.93	2.62	3.6
Gender	Non-binary (6)	1	1.67	1.33	1.83	4	3.67	3.83	3.83	4	3	4.17	4.33	1	3	4.33	3.5	2.67	3

Age

In the age category, similar to gender, there were three factors that were common to each age group (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, and 55+): supportive administration, with scores ranging from 4.25 to 5; training opportunities, with scores ranging from 4.05 to 5; and flexible hours, with scores ranging from 4.14 to 5. Professional development was a top five factor for four out of the five age groups, and missed being in the top five for the fifth age group (45-54) only by .01. Because there was only one respondent who is in the 18-24 category, there were several factors that tied as the most important, with the response being 5 to all of them.

The overall lowest rated factors were having a fully in-person work arrangement (mean score of 1.48) and free meals (mean score of 1.82).

Table 4.4 Age

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
	18-24 (1)	3	4	2	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	2	5	5	4	4	4
	25-34 (43)	1.72	2.33	2.21	2.37	4.3	3.98	4.14	3.65	3.88	2.91	4.4	3.91	1.23	2.93	4.14	2.88	2.37	2.84
	35-44 (151)	1.51	2.61	2.36	2.46	4.38	4.19	4.17	3.74	4.07	2.85	4.36	3.93	1.25	3.05	4.34	2.89	2.53	3.35
	45-54 (162)	1.5	2.71	2.47	2.3	4.25	4.05	4.06	3.56	4.15	2.84	4.17	3.88	1.34	2.99	4.27	2.96	2.6	3.5
Age	55+ (122)	1.39	2.43	2.3	2.55	4.26	4.08	4.05	3.73	4.31	3.11	4.01	3.48	1.58	3.3	4.18	3.57	2.84	3.88

Highest Degree Attained

In the highest degree attained category (Table 4.5), there were again three factors that were common to all of the degree options (Associate's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree). These were supportive administration, with scores ranging from 4.23-4.42; interesting/engaging job duties, with scores ranging from 4.04 to 4.27; and flexible hours, with scores ranging from 4.22 to 4.54. Training opportunities and clear promotion path narrowly missed being common factors among all groups, by only .19 and .07, respectively.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.38 and free meals with a mean score of 1.45.

Table 4.5 Highest degree attained

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Highest Degree Attained	Assoc. (26)	1.35	2.46	2.27	2.69	4.42	4.27	4.19	3.73	4.27	2.65	4.12	3.85	1.35	2.96	4.54	2.85	2.62	3.73
	Bach. (159)	1.53	2.53	2.4	2.44	4.26	3.99	4.05	3.72	4.04	2.8	4.17	3.99	1.38	2.94	4.22	2.95	2.48	3.45
	Mast. (250)	1.51	2.58	2.34	2.4	4.33	4.13	4.15	3.67	4.18	3.01	4.26	3.72	1.34	3.14	4.24	3.14	2.71	3.52
	Doc. (44)	1.41	2.8	2.48	2.36	4.23	4.16	3.95	3.48	4.25	3.02	4.14	3.52	1.43	3.41	4.36	3.43	2.61	3.36

Years of Experience in Research Administration

In the category for years of experience in research administration (Table 4.6), there were again three top factors that were common to all experience ranges (0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16+). These were supportive administration with scores ranging from 4.16 to 4.43, professional development with scores ranging from 4 to 4.15, and flexible hours with scores ranging from 4.08 to 4.43. Again, interesting/engaging job duties and clear promotion path were narrow misses for being among the most important factors, by .04 and .08 respectively.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.36 and free meals with a mean score of 1.52.

Table 4.6 Years of experience in research administration

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Years Experience in RA	0-5 (100)	1.67	2.58	2.43	2.48	4.16	4	4.15	3.43	3.96	2.73	4.2	3.59	1.41	3.24	4.08	3.17	2.45	3.29
	6-10 (110)	1.55	2.55	2.4	2.35	4.24	4.12	4.09	3.76	4.14	2.85	4.42	3.85	1.26	3.02	4.31	3.01	2.62	3.3
	11-15 (104)	1.48	2.69	2.35	2.3	4.31	4.08	3.98	3.66	4.13	2.72	4.21	3.9	1.31	3.03	4.43	3	2.52	3.41
	16+ (165)	1.37	2.52	2.32	2.53	4.43	4.15	4.15	3.76	4.27	3.22	4.07	3.82	1.44	3.08	4.23	3.15	2.79	3.79

Main Area of Research Administration

Table 4.7 displays the data for main areas of research administration. Two retention strategies were common for all main areas of research administration (accounting, awards, compliance, proposals, and other): supportive administration with scores ranging from 4.17 to 4.4 and flexible hours with scores ranging from 3.89 to 4.37. There were three other strategies that

appeared in the top five for four of the areas: professional development (4.02-4.25), training opportunities (3.89-4.2), and clear promotion path (3.89-4.31).

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.43 and free meals with a mean score of 1.53.

Table 4.7 Main area of research administration

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/ engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Main Area of RA	Acct. (36)	1.5	2.64	2.31	2.19	4.17	3.83	3.89	3.28	3.81	2.42	3.89	3.97	1.28	2.83	3.89	2.67	2.56	3.31
	Awards (102)	1.43	2.5	2.23	2.54	4.18	4.17	4.2	3.74	4.14	2.97	4.22	3.99	1.42	3	4.2	2.94	2.38	3.44
	Compliance (20)	1.7	2.7	2.4	2.45	4.4	4.25	4.2	3.35	4.1	3	3.9	3.85	1.8	3.45	4.15	3.05	2.9	3.8
	Proposals (176)	1.52	2.7	2.48	2.43	4.35	4.15	4.17	3.76	4.09	2.88	4.31	3.8	1.31	3.09	4.3	3.14	2.66	3.41
	Other (145)	1.49	2.45	2.34	2.41	4.36	4.02	3.99	3.66	4.3	3.06	4.21	3.61	1.36	3.17	4.37	3.23	2.72	3.63

When a respondent answered “other” to the main area of research administration question, they were prompted to specify their area in a text field. These main area responses were coded into six additional main areas:

- All of the above (this includes all of the responses from the main area of research administration question)
- All but fiscal (all responses except for accounting)
- Leadership
- Proposals and awards
- Technology
- Training

After these responses were analyzed, a few noteworthy points emerged. While there were five strategies that were the most important to these respondents (supportive administration, professional development, interesting/engaging duties, clear promotion path, and flexible hours), three emerged as top five for the first time. These strategies were private offices (from the proposals/awards respondents with a score of 4.5), rewards/recognition (from the technology respondents with a score of 4.5), and upgraded equipment (from the training respondents with a

score of 4.4) (Table 4.8).

The overall lowest rated factors in the "other" group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.45 and free meals with a mean score of 1.61.

Table 4.8 Other areas of research administration

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Other Areas of RA	All above (105)	1.46	2.41	2.36	2.28	4.31	3.99	3.98	3.64	4.27	2.97	4.17	3.64	1.35	3.1	4.39	3.19	2.7	3.6
	All but fiscal (16)	1.44	2.81	2.13	2.31	4.5	4	3.94	3.44	4.13	2.94	4.13	3.75	1.13	3.44	4.5	3	2.25	3.44
	Leadership (9)	1.44	2.44	2.67	3.22	4.44	4.33	4	4.11	4.67	3.67	4.22	3.44	1.33	3.22	4.44	3.22	2.78	3.33
	Proposals/Awards (6)	2	2.5	2.17	3.33	4.5	4.17	3.83	4	4.5	3.67	4.67	3.33	1.67	3.5	4	4.5	3.5	4
	Tech (4)	1.5	2.25	1.75	3	4.75	4	4.5	4.5	4.75	4	4.5	3.75	1	3.25	4.25	3.5	3.75	4.25
	Training (5)	1.8	2.2	2.6	2.4	4.2	4	4	2.8	4.4	2.8	4.4	3.2	2.2	3.2	4	3.2	2.8	4.4

Type of Organization

Table 4.9 lists five response options for the type of organization that the respondents were employed in: hospital, non-profit foundation (NP Found), private institution of higher education (Private IHE), public institution of higher education (Public IHE), and other (Table 4.9). Three retention factors were in the top five among respondents in all types of organizations: supportive administration, with scores ranging from 4.27 to 4.33; training opportunities, with scores ranging from 3.99 to 4.27; and flexible hours, with scores ranging from 4.23 to 4.57.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.32 and free meals with a mean score of 1.45.

Table 4.9 Type of organization

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Type of Organization	Hospital (33)	1.39	2.39	2.45	2.39	4.27	4.36	4.27	3.73	4.15	2.88	4.3	3.94	1.42	2.52	4.27	2.52	2	3.45
	NP Found (21)	1.38	2.52	2.1	2.33	4.33	4.33	4.19	3.62	3.9	2.95	4.29	3.67	1.19	2.76	4.33	2.9	2.48	3.1
	Private IHE (115)	1.48	2.44	2.09	2.34	4.3	3.93	3.99	3.65	4.16	2.97	4.12	3.98	1.18	2.92	4.23	2.8	2.57	3.34
	Public IHE (289)	1.53	2.68	2.5	2.47	4.3	4.11	4.12	3.67	4.15	2.89	4.25	3.72	1.44	3.18	4.25	3.25	2.71	3.56
	Other (21)	1.48	2.24	2.19	2.48	4.33	4.1	4.05	3.71	4.19	3.24	3.95	3.86	1.38	4	4.57	3.48	2.9	3.81

Similar to the main area of research administration, the "other" responses for type of organization were coded into two subcategories: consulting, and non-profit other than hospital or institution of higher education (NP (not hos/IHE)), shown in Table 4.10.

When analyzed, the two subcategories had four top retention factors in common: supportive administration, professional development, interesting/engaging job duties, and flexible hours. Respondents in the consulting subcategory had eight top factors, as five factors tied with the same average response (4.29). The non-profit other than hospital or IHE respondents selected hybrid work arrangement as one of their top five factors. When this group's responses were reviewed, twelve of fourteen respondents were found to already have a blended work arrangement.

The overall lowest rated factors in this "other" group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.4 and free meals with a mean score of 1.5.

Table 4.10 Other type of organization

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Other Type of Org	Consulting (7)	1.57	2.57	2.43	2.43	4.43	4.29	4.29	4.14	4.29	3.57	4.29	4.43	1.43	3.43	4.57	3.29	3	4.29
	NP (not hos/IHE) (14)	1.43	2.07	2.07	2.5	4.29	4	3.93	3.5	4.14	3.07	3.79	3.57	1.36	4.29	4.57	3.57	2.86	3.57

Carnegie Classification

The response options for Carnegie classification were Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity (DU: Very High), Doctoral University: High Research Activity (DU: High), Doctoral/Professional University (DPU), not classified/not sure (NA/not sure), and other (Table 4.11). Three retention factors emerged as common among all response options: supportive administration (4.22-4.53), training opportunities (4.06-4.46), and flexible hours (4.08-4.33). Professional development was also very popular, appearing in the top five factors for four of the five options; it did not make the top five for the DU: Very High respondents, but only narrowly missed by .02. The DPU respondents scored rewards/recognition in their top five; among those respondents it tied for fifth with flexible hours.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.4 and free meals with a mean score of 1.48.

Table 4.11 Carnegie classification

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Carnegie Classification	DU: High (72)	1.38	2.69	2.49	2.47	4.22	4.06	4.08	3.65	4.03	2.82	4.25	3.75	1.39	3.47	4.31	3.63	2.81	3.43
	DU: Very High (249)	1.55	2.53	2.33	2.41	4.33	4.04	4.06	3.63	4.17	2.97	4.29	3.87	1.31	2.88	4.23	2.85	2.6	3.48
	DPU (13)	1.54	2.46	2.31	2.77	4.38	4.31	4.46	4.08	4	3.08	4.38	3	1.69	3.15	4.08	3.38	3	3.85
	NA/Not sure (130)	1.47	2.58	2.32	2.39	4.27	4.16	4.15	3.74	4.12	2.84	4.06	3.78	1.44	3.22	4.3	3.23	2.51	3.51
	Other (15)	1.47	2.8	2.87	2.53	4.53	4.47	4.07	3.4	4.67	3.27	3.8	3.8	1.2	3.6	4.33	2.93	2.8	3.47

The “other” responses to the Carnegie classification question were coded into five subcategories: Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus, Master’s, Research Doctoral: STEM-Dominant, Special Focus Institution (SFI), and varies (Table 4.12). The first four subcategories are actual Carnegie classifications. The varies response applied mostly to those who work in consulting because they likely provide their services to several different types of organizations.

Among the “other” classifications, only two retention strategies were scored in the top five for all groups: professional development (with scores ranging from 4 to 5) and interesting/engaging job duties (with scores ranging from 4.5 to 5). Further, four of the five “other” classifications listed two additional factors in common: supportive administration (4.5-5) and flexible hours (4.17-5). Lastly, there were two outlying factors that were rated favorably: team building activities for the SFI classification and private offices for the Baccalaureate College classification, though these groups had only two and one respondents, respectively.

The overall lowest rated factors in this “other” group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.1 and free meals with a mean score of 1.58.

Table 4.12 Other Carnegie classification

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Other Carnegie Classification	Bacc College (1)	2	3	3	1	3	4	1	4	5	2	2	1	1	5	5	5	3	2
	Master's (5)	1.5	3.33	3	2.17	4.5	4.33	4	3	4.67	2.83	3.83	2.83	1.5	4.33	4.17	4	3.33	3.67
	Research Doct (1)	2	2	2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	1	4	5	4	3	4
	SFI (2)	1	2.5	2.5	4	4.5	4	4	3.5	4.5	2	2.5	5	1	1.5	4.5	1.5	1	1
	Varies (5)	1.4	2.4	3	2.4	4.8	4.8	4.6	3.4	4.6	4.2	4.4	4.8	1	3.2	4.2	1.6	2.8	4.4

Location

The location of respondents was a key element to this study (Table 4.13). As laid out in Chapter 2, there have not been retention data obtained for international research administrators. Though there were only six international respondents, they represent a fairly wide swath of research administrators worldwide. Respondents in this category were from Ghana, United Arab Emirates, Austria, Colombia, United Kingdom, and Australia. This group's top five retention factors consisted of (in highest to lowest order) professional development, and rewards/recognition (both at 4.5); clear promotion path (4.33); interesting/engaging job duties, and flexible hours (both at 4.17). The overall lowest rated factors in this group were free meals with a score of 1.33 and free gym access with a score of 1.67. This is the first instance where free gym access has been at the very bottom of the ranking.

Commonalities among international and U.S.-based research administrators were interesting/engaging job duties (4.14), clear promotion path (4.21), and flexible hours (4.26). U.S. research administrators also preferred to have supportive administration (4.31) and training opportunities (4.1). The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a score of 1.36 and free meals with a score of 1.5.

Table 4.13 Location

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Location	Int'l (6)	1.33	2	1.67	2.83	3.67	4.5	4	4.5	4.17	3.33	4.33	2.5	2	3.5	4.17	3	3.83	3.83
	US (473)	1.5	2.58	2.38	2.42	4.31	4.09	4.1	3.66	4.14	2.92	4.21	3.82	1.36	3.08	4.26	3.09	2.61	3.49

Below, the location data will be further analyzed by United States and Territories, U.S. Regions, and International Countries.

United States and Territories

Respondents to this survey represented 48 of the 57 United States (U.S.) and territories

(Federal Aviation Administration, n.d.) (Table 4.14). While no single retention factor appeared in every state's top five factors, there were six that were heavily favored: supportive administration, professional development, training opportunities, interesting/engaging job duties, clear promotion path, and flexible hours, with average scores of 4.34, 4.11, 4.1, 4.04, 4.15, and 4.29, respectively.

Conversely, there were several factors that were extremely unpopular: free meals, free gym access, team building activities, and fully in-person work arrangements. These had average scores among the states of 1.58, 2.5, 2.45, and 1.42, respectively.

Table 4.14 United States and territories

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More inter-ensemble opp	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in-person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
States	Alabama (14)	1.93	2.29	2.29	2.64	4.5	4.5	4.5	3.79	4.5	2.57	4.64	4.07	1.71	4.14	4.36	4.14	3	3.43
	Alaska (2)	1	4	4	2.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4	2.5	5	5	1.5	2.5	5	1	1	4
	Arizona (16)	1	2	1.81	2.5	4	3.94	4	3.5	4.19	2.69	4.25	4	1.31	3	4	2.69	2.69	3.75
	Arkansas (1)	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	3	3	3	5	5	4	4
	California (39)	1.46	2.38	2.21	2.33	4.51	4.13	4.31	3.56	4.08	3.18	4.15	4.15	1.26	2.44	4.13	2.38	2.18	3.49
	Colorado (19)	1.84	2.79	2.58	2.58	4.42	4.58	4.42	3.47	4.42	2.79	4.42	3.89	1.21	3.74	4.47	3.26	2.53	3.21
	Connecticut (8)	1.5	2.63	2	2.38	4.38	3.75	4	3.63	3.63	3	4.5	4.63	1	1.75	4.38	2.5	2.75	3.38
	District of Columbia (9)	1.33	2.89	2.33	2.56	4.33	4.33	4.44	3.89	4.22	3.56	4.56	4.33	1.44	2.44	4.67	2.56	2.56	3.44
	Florida (20)	1.6	2.55	2.55	2.65	4.25	4.15	4	3.85	4.45	3.05	4.4	3.95	1.35	2.8	4	3	2.75	3.55
	Georgia (8)	1.38	2.38	2	2.38	4.5	4.38	4.38	4.13	4.88	2.75	4.5	4.38	1	3.13	4.38	3.75	2.38	4.13
	Idaho (4)	2	3.75	3.75	3	5	4.5	4.75	3.5	4.25	3.25	3.75	4.5	1.75	2.75	4.5	3.5	2.25	3.25
	Illinois (26)	1.46	2.38	2.19	2.23	4.19	4.15	4.27	3.62	4.12	2.88	3.88	3.12	1.35	3.46	4.15	3.35	2.69	3.69
	Indiana (8)	1.75	2.13	2.5	2.5	4.13	4.38	4.13	3.5	3.88	3.13	4.38	2.75	1.5	2.75	3.88	2.88	2.13	2.63
	Iowa (3)	1.33	3	2.67	1	4	3.33	3	2	4.33	1	4	3.33	1	3.33	4	2.67	2	3
	Kansas (3)	1.33	2	2.67	3	3.67	3.67	3.67	3.33	3.67	2.67	3.67	3.67	2	4.67	4.67	3.33	2.67	4
	Kentucky (2)	2	2.5	2.5	3	4.5	4	4	3.5	3	3	5	4	1.5	3	4	3	3	4.5
	Louisiana (4)	1	2.75	2.25	2.25	4.25	4.5	4.5	4.5	5	3	4.75	3.75	1.75	3.75	3.75	3.5	2.75	3.25
	Maine (1)	1	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	1	5	4	3	4	4
	Maryland (14)	1.64	2.86	2.64	2.71	4.5	4.57	4.79	4.14	4.21	3.29	4.5	4.29	1.36	3.79	4.43	3.29	2.86	4.29
	Massachusetts (22)	1.18	2.73	2.14	2.64	4.36	4.23	4.09	3.68	4.27	3.18	4.27	4.18	1.27	2.59	4.5	2.91	2.59	3.41
	Michigan (13)	1.54	3.08	2.85	1.85	4	3.69	3.54	3.62	4.23	3.15	4	3.85	1.23	3.15	4.08	3.54	3.08	3.62
	Minnesota (3)	1.33	3.33	3.33	2.67	3.67	4.33	4	3.33	3.33	2.67	4	4.67	1	2.67	4.67	2	1.33	1.67
	Mississippi (6)	2.17	2.83	2.67	2.33	4.5	3.5	3.67	3.5	4	3.17	3.5	2.5	1.67	3.33	3.83	3.67	3.67	3.67
	Missouri (11)	1.45	2.91	1.91	2.73	4.27	3.73	4.36	3.55	4.18	3.18	4.27	3.64	1.82	3.27	4.18	3.09	2.36	3.55
	Montana (1)	1	3	3	1	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	1	1	1	5	2	1	1
	Nebraska (4)	1.5	3.5	2.75	3.25	4	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.5	3	4.75	4.5	1	3.5	4.75	3.5	3.25	3.75
	Nevada (1)	1	1	1	1	4	4	4	2	4	2	3	1	1	3	3	2	2	2
	New Hampshire (1)	1	1	1	2	5	4	4	3	2	2	4	4	1	3	4	1	1	3
	New Jersey (8)	1.25	2.38	2	2.5	4	3.25	3.5	4	4	2.63	4.13	4.25	1.13	3	3.75	2.5	3	3.25
	New York (28)	1.46	2.54	2.18	2.46	4.21	3.96	4	3.82	4.11	3.07	4.07	3	1.36	3.32	4.11	3.57	3.07	3.25
	North Carolina (25)	1.32	2.72	2.48	2.28	4.28	4.12	4.04	3.44	3.96	2.64	4.56	4.32	1.28	2.16	4.36	2.52	2.48	3.48
	North Dakota (3)	2	4	3	1.67	3.33	3.67	3.67	2.67	3.33	2.33	3.67	3.33	2.33	3.67	4	3.67	2.67	3.67
	Ohio (11)	1.36	2.36	2.18	1.55	4.55	4.36	4.09	4.09	4.73	2.91	4.27	3.55	1.27	3	4.64	3.64	2.82	4
	Oklahoma (7)	2.43	3.43	3.57	3.14	4.57	4.14	4.29	4.14	4.14	3.29	4.57	2.86	2.29	3.86	4.57	4.57	3.57	4
	Oregon (6)	1	3	2.67	2.5	4.33	3.83	4	3.5	4.33	1.83	3.5	4.83	1	1.83	3.83	3	2.5	4
	Pennsylvania (28)	1.46	2.07	2.07	2.11	4.21	3.82	3.79	3.57	4	2.61	3.96	3.96	1.18	3.14	4.29	3	2.32	3.07
	Puerto Rico (1)	1	2	1	1	5	5	5	3	4	1	5	4	1	3	4	1	3	4
	Rhode Island (5)	1.6	3	2.6	3.4	4.8	4	4.2	4.6	4.8	3.4	4.4	3.8	1	3.4	4.8	3.4	3.6	3.8
	South Carolina (3)	1	1.33	2	3	4.67	4.67	4.67	3.67	4	3	4.33	4	1.67	2.33	3.33	1.67	1.67	4.67
	Tennessee (15)	1.2	2.73	2.47	2.53	4.13	4	4.33	3.4	4.2	2.87	4.4	3.27	1.4	3.53	4.27	3.33	2.13	3.27
	Texas (23)	1.7	2.52	2.65	2.61	4.43	4.13	4.09	3.87	3.78	3	4.43	3.26	1.61	3.13	4.26	3.87	2.87	3.61
	Utah (3)	2.33	3	3	2.67	4.33	4.67	4	3.33	3.67	2.33	3.67	3.33	1.33	2.33	3.67	1.67	2	2.67
	Vermont (1)	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	1	2	2	3	4	4	3	3
	Virginia (19)	1.21	2.37	2.32	2	4.26	4.05	3.74	3.84	4.32	3.21	4.21	4.16	1.42	3.21	4.11	2.89	2.32	3.26
	Washington (8)	2.13	2.75	2	2.75	4.63	4.13	3.88	3	3.63	1.88	3.25	3.75	1	3.25	4.63	2.38	2.5	3.5
	West Virginia (2)	1.5	1	1.5	1.5	5	5	5	3.5	5	5	5	4.5	2	4.5	5	3.5	2.5	4
	Wisconsin (6)	1.67	3.83	3.33	2.5	3.83	3	3.5	2.67	3.67	2	3.67	3.83	1	4	4.83	2.83	2.5	3.17
	Wyoming (2)	3	1	1.5	3	4.5	5	4	2.5	3	2.5	3	4	2.5	4	5	4.5	2	3.5
	Multiple/NA (6)	1.17	2.17	2.33	2	4.17	4	3.83	3.5	4.67	3.67	3.33	4.33	1	3.67	4.83	2.83	2.67	3.83

U.S. Regions

The U.S. state and territory data were recategorized into regions: west, southwest,

midwest, southeast, and northeast (O'Connor, 2023). The states representing each region are shown in Table 4.15 (states in red were not represented in the data collected).

Table 4.15 U.S. Region States/Territories

West	**Southwest**	**Midwest**	**Southeast**	**Northeast**
California	Arizona	Iowa	Alabama	Connecticut
Colorado	New Mexico	Illinois	Arkansas	Massachusetts
Idaho	Oklahoma	Indiana	Washington, D.C.	Maine
Montana	Texas	Kansas	Delaware	New Hampshire
Nevada		Michigan	Florida	New Jersey
Oregon		Minnesota	Georgia	New York
Utah		Missouri	Kentucky	Pennsylvania
Washington		North Dakota	Louisiana	Rhode Island
Wyoming		Nebraska	Maryland	Vermont
Hawaii		Ohio	Mississippi	
Alaska		South Dakota	North Carolina	
		Wisconsin	Puerto Rico	
			South Carolina	
			Tennessee	
			Virginia	
			West Virginia	

When the states and territories data were reclassified, two retention factors were in the top five for all five groups: supportive administration (with scores ranging from 3.97 to 4.52) and flexible hours (with scores ranging from 4.2 to 4.35). Three factors were common to four of the groups: professional development (with scores ranging from 3.82 to 4.43), training opportunities (with scores ranging from 3.82 to 4.4), and clear promotion path (with scores ranging from 3.93 to 4.56). Interesting/engaging job duties (with scores ranging from 3.87 to 4.04) and a fully remote work arrangement (3.76) were the only other factors that appeared in any region's top five.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.46 and free meals with a mean score of 1.6.

Table 4.16 U.S. Regions

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Regions	West (85)	1.68	2.67	2.57	2.33	4.52	4.43	4.29	3.44	4.04	2.53	3.87	3.55	1.36	2.68	4.32	2.57	2.00	3.06
	Southwest (46)	1.71	2.65	2.68	2.75	4.33	4.07	4.13	3.84	4.04	2.99	4.42	3.37	1.74	3.33	4.28	3.71	3.04	3.79
	Midwest (91)	1.52	2.96	2.67	2.27	3.97	3.82	3.82	3.28	4.00	2.63	4.05	3.66	1.41	3.41	4.35	3.14	2.50	3.34
	Southeast (143)	1.62	2.48	2.33	2.52	4.51	4.38	4.40	3.91	4.15	3.07	4.56	3.90	1.57	3.21	4.23	3.12	2.74	3.80
	Northeast (102)	1.49	2.71	2.44	2.61	4.33	3.67	3.73	3.70	3.87	2.88	3.93	3.76	1.22	3.13	4.20	2.88	2.81	3.35

International Countries

Six countries outside of the United States were represented in this survey: Australia, Austria, Colombia, Ghana, United Arab Emirates, and United Kingdom. However, each country only had one representative, which affected the distribution of the data. Specifically, either all of the factors that received a score of 5 were included, or in the case of the United Arab Emirates, all of the factors that received scores of 4 were selected, as there were no factors that were given a 5.

Given the small sample size for each country and that the countries represented every continent except Antarctica, it follows that the data are quite differently distributed. For example, this is the first demographic group in which supportive administration was not included in the top five retention factors for any subgroup. There were four countries that gave supportive administration a score of 4, but it still did not make their top five factors since they rated several other factors with perfect scores. Professional development and rewards/recognition were the most highly rated factors among the international respondents, both with mean scores of 4.5.

As stated earlier in this section, the overall lowest rated factors in this group were free meals with a mean score of 1.33 and free gym access with a mean score of 1.67.

Table 4.17 International countries

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
International Countries	Australia (1)	1	2	2	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	2	2	2	3	3	5	5
	Austria (1)	2	4	2	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	5	5	5	4	4
	Colombia (1)	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	5	4	2	5	5	2	5	4	2	4	4
	Ghana (1)	1	2	2	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	2	2	3	4	3	5	5
	UAE (1)	1	1	1	1	3	4	4	4	3	1	4	1	3	2	4	1	1	1
	UK (1)	2	2	2	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	1	4	5	4	4	4

Type of Region

The type of region options consisted of rural, suburban, and urban, as self-reported by the respondents. The retention factors most important among these groups were supportive administration (4.19-4.32), interesting/engaging job duties (4-4.18), clear promotion path (4.08-4.23), and flexible hours (4.18-4.29). Rural respondents scored training opportunities at 3.99 while interesting/engaging job duties were scored at 4, so only .01 separated training opportunities from that group's top five factors.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.44 and free meals with a mean score of 1.52.

Table 4.18 Type of region

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Type of Region	Rural (73)	1.58	2.59	2.45	2.37	4.19	4.03	3.99	3.59	4	2.92	4.08	3.6	1.59	3.15	4.29	3.38	2.63	3.42
	Suburban (106)	1.51	2.53	2.3	2.5	4.32	4.04	4.04	3.7	4.14	2.94	4.23	3.55	1.44	3.16	4.18	3.27	2.76	3.45
	Urban (300)	1.48	2.59	2.37	2.42	4.32	4.13	4.15	3.68	4.18	2.92	4.23	3.94	1.28	3.05	4.28	2.95	2.57	3.52

Years at Current Employer

The distribution among respondents with varying longevity at their current employer (Table 4.19) was very similar to the types of regions (see Table 4.18, above). The top factors were supportive administration (4.28-4.35), clear promotion path (4-4.3), and flexible hours (4.1-4.6), with professional development (4.13-4.14), training opportunities (4.01-4.13), and interesting/engaging job duties (4.15-4.27) being very popular as well.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.38 and free meals with a mean score of 1.49.

4.19 Years at current employer

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Years at Current Employer	0-5 (211)	1.52	2.51	2.26	2.38	4.28	4.14	4.12	3.6	4.06	2.84	4.15	3.86	1.32	2.85	4.22	2.92	2.46	3.35
	6-10 (101)	1.53	2.53	2.38	2.53	4.29	4.13	4.12	3.83	4.15	2.97	4.43	3.91	1.28	3.2	4.28	3.1	2.76	3.4
	11-15 (67)	1.43	2.82	2.48	2.48	4.31	4.12	4.13	3.69	4.27	2.93	4.39	3.85	1.36	3.37	4.6	3.16	2.79	3.75
	16+ (100)	1.47	2.6	2.52	2.38	4.35	3.96	4.01	3.65	4.23	3.05	4	3.53	1.55	3.3	4.1	3.37	2.71	3.71

Work Arrangement

In Table 4.20, the responses for current work arrangement (100% in person, 100% remote, or blended) are shown. While supportive administration (4.16-4.34) and clear promotion path (4.13-4.29) were rated in the top five for all three groups, the 100% in-person respondents rated private offices (4.05) as one of their top five factors. Not surprisingly, the 100% remote respondents rated a fully remote work arrangement (4.71) as their top factor, indicating their desire to not return to the workplace.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.52 and free meals with a mean score of 1.54.

Table 4.20 Work arrangement

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Work Arrangement	100% In Person (55)	1.67	2.64	2.45	2.47	4.16	4.02	4.04	3.67	4.16	2.96	4.24	2.8	2	3.29	3.98	4.05	3.24	3.53
	100% Remote (197)	1.34	2.63	2.29	2.31	4.34	4.13	4.12	3.69	4.1	2.9	4.29	4.71	1.13	2.05	4.28	2.6	2.24	3.44
	Blended (227)	1.6	2.51	2.41	2.52	4.31	4.08	4.1	3.66	4.18	2.93	4.13	3.26	1.42	3.94	4.31	3.28	2.81	3.52

Spousal Relocation

Spousal relocation means that the respondent had previously relocated due to their own or their spouse or partner's employment; this is also referred to as a "trailing spouse" (Careless & Mizzi, 2015). This is an important aspect to consider when formulating a retention strategy. As Careless and Mizzi (2015) stated, "adjustment and accommodation for trailing spouses is necessary, although often left out of the equation when considering worker retention, job satisfaction, and work success" (p. 2).

Whether the respondent had previously relocated for their spouse or not, supportive administration (4.27-4.36), interesting/engaging job duties (4.05-4.3), clear promotion path (4.13-4.35) and flexible hours (4.24-4.29) were four of the top five rated retention factors. The

other top factors were training opportunities (4.06) for those who had not relocated, and professional development (4.25) for those who had; either factor was still very highly rated for the other group.

The overall lowest rated factors in this group were a fully in-person work arrangement with a mean score of 1.35 and free meals with a mean score of 1.5.

Table 4.21 Spousal relocation

		Free meals	Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment
Spousal Relocation	No (302)	1.52	2.57	2.4	2.45	4.27	4	4.06	3.63	4.05	2.92	4.13	3.82	1.42	3.13	4.24	3.07	2.58	3.52
	Yes (177)	1.47	2.58	2.32	2.38	4.36	4.25	4.18	3.75	4.3	2.93	4.35	3.76	1.28	3.02	4.29	3.12	2.7	3.45

Open-Ended Retention Factors

An open-ended question was included after the Likert-style retention factors. This asked "Not considering salary, if you were tempted to take a position at a different organization, what would be the one (1) factor that would make you stay with your current employer?". Despite the question beginning with "Not considering salary", some respondents included salary in their response. Despite the question requesting a single factor, some respondents included more than a single factor, resulting in a total number of responses being higher than the total number of respondents (total open-ended retention factors were 709).

All of the open-ended responses were coded first based on similarity to options given in the previous section (Likert-style retention factors). For example, some wrote in "flexible schedule" or "flexible location"; these equate to the previous retention factors that were scored of flexible hours and various work arrangement options. Those that could not be assimilated to specific factors already scored in the survey were coded into 14 new categories and ranked based on frequency. Tables 4.22 shows the frequency of all retention factors: those taken directly from the survey options, and the newly coded categories. Table 4.23 shows the newly coded retention factors only.

Table 4.22 shows that the overall most frequently cited write-in retention factor was a fully remote work arrangement (n=126); the second most frequently cited factor was a supportive administration (n=82). This is a slight departure from the data previously reported, as a fully remote work arrangement rarely scored in any group's top five retention factors, while supportive administration appeared frequently. Despite the question including the statement "Not considering salary", several respondents (n=34) felt that increased pay was such a crucial issue that they still cited it. One respondent stated, "Salary is the only factor worth considering" with others echoing that sentiment.

Table 4.22 All retention factors

All Retention Factors	N
Fully remote	126
Supportive administration	82
Culture	72
Benefits	65
Clear promotion path	60
Flex hours	58
Staff	46
Pay	34
Professional development	21
Hybrid	20
More involvement in org	16
Interesting/engaging duties	13
Loyalty	12
Work/Life balance	9
Reorganization/Mgmt change	9
Moving	8
Autonomy	8
Training opportunities	8
Institutional Knowledge	7
Rewards/recognition	6
Security	5
Organizational reputation	5
Upgraded facilities	5
Upgraded equipment	5
N/A	4
Spouse	3
Time to exercise	1
Private offices	1
Free meals	0
Free gym access	0
Team building activities	0
Fully in person	0

The most frequently cited new retention factor (Table 4.23) was culture (n=72). Some examples of this were “relationships I have with my co-workers”, “team camaraderie”, “institutional culture and if I felt good working there”. Improved or additional benefits were cited nearly as frequently (n=65), including such desires as retirement packages, additional paid time off, tuition remission, and better health insurance.

Perhaps the most fervently cited retention factor was additional staff (n=46). There were several lengthy responses provided such as:

- “Firm staffing plan with set required minimum number of people in my role that corresponds appropriately with the total workload and allows for work/life balance (ex. overall assigned workload allows for using sick & vacation days)”
- “Despite the consistent achievement of record-breaking research expenditures month after month, our institution is currently grappling with a hiring freeze, ostensibly due to the ongoing challenges posed by COVID-19. While the organization boasts about these achievements, the workforce is facing an increased workload, with limited acknowledgment or appreciation from employers. Adding to the frustration, an internal program titled 'Compensation Modernization' was introduced, raising expectations for salary updates. However, after four years of stagnant wages and the continuation of the hiring freeze, the only noticeable change has been in job titles. This has proven to be deceptive, given the program's promising name. It is disheartening that the institution has not recognized the strain on the staff, who are diligently working to achieve these remarkable research expenditures. A true appreciation of our efforts would involve lifting the hiring freeze and providing much-needed support. Perhaps, by acknowledging the workforce's dedication and effort, the institution can create an environment that fosters both productivity and employee well-being.”
- “Smaller work load - most RA organizations have a tendency to pile on work; there need to be larger teams and smaller workloads across the entire field”

Loyalty (n=12) was the next frequently mentioned factor, whether to their

supervisor, team, or organization. The remaining factors (work life balance, reorganization or management change, moving, autonomy, institutional knowledge, security, organization reputation, N/A, and spouse) all had frequencies in the single digits.

Table 4.23 Newly coded retention factors

Newly Coded Retention Factors	N
Culture	72
Benefits	65
Staff	46
Pay	34
Loyalty	12
Work/Life balance	9
Reorganizaton/Mgmt change	9
Moving	8
Autonomy	8
Institutional Knowledge	7
Security	5
Organizational Reputation	5
N/A	4
Spouse	3

Seeking Alternative Employment

The final three questions in the survey pertained to whether respondents were seeking alternative employment, and why. The question, “Are you currently seeking alternative employment?” had yes or no response options; a response of no ended the survey. A response of yes led to the question, “Are you seeking alternative employment outside of Research Administration?”. A response of no ended of the survey, and a yes response led to the open-ended statement, “Please briefly explain why.”

Of the 479 respondents, 127 answered yes to the question, “Are you currently seeking alternative employment?”, or 26.5%. Of these, 37 or almost 30% of the current job-seekers and 7.7% of the overall pool, responded that they were seeking employment outside of research administration. Most respondents gave multi-faceted answers to the open-ended statement, which led to 83 countable reasons.

Table 4.24 shows the 83 coded responses with their frequencies. Overall, the most cited

reasons for leaving research administration (cited 13 times each) were “lack of support and/or resources” and “unrealistic demands and/or responsibilities”. Burnout and the desire for higher pay were the next most frequently cited factors, each mentioned in eight responses. Seven responses mentioned that they were not totally convinced they would leave research administration, but they were open to it. The same number cited lack of a work-life balance in research administration.

Others that were mentioned more than once were a lack of path to promotion, lack of stability (specifically in leadership), lack of staff, wanting a new challenge, stressful deadlines, unstable work flow, wanting to work 100% remotely, inability to express their creativity or explore their passion, and a desire for recognition. Finally, a single respondent stated that they were still new, and were not sure if research administration was a good fit for them.

Table 4.24 Reasons for leaving research administration

Reasons for Leaving Research Administration	**Frequency**
Lack of support/resources	13
Unrealistic demands/responsibilities	13
Burnout	8
More pay	8
Open to other options	7
Lack of work life balance	7
Lack of promotion path	5
Lack of stability (leadership)	4
Lack of staff	4
New challenge	3
Deadlines	2
Unstable work flow	2
Remote	2
Lack of creative expression/follow passion	2
Recognition	2
Still new	1

Summary

This chapter reported out the data collected from the 479 responses to the quantitative

survey. The data were reported out in five sections: Profile of a Research Administrator, Summary of Collective Responses, Trends by Demographic, Open-Ended Retention Factors, and Seeking Alternative Employment. The most highly rated and most frequently cited factors were discussed, along with the lowest rated factors. Reasons for leaving research administrator were also shared, so that organizations may utilize that information to avoid defection from research administration.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

Given the proclivity for turnover in the workplace and time required to train new research administrators, organizations need to find ways to retain experienced research administrators. Many organizations have little control over salary ranges and increases, so this study sought to find the non-monetary factors that are most important to research administrators and keeping them in their positions. An exploratory research study utilizing survey research was conducted to address the research question: What factors do research administrators consider when deciding whether to remain at or leave their employing organization? This chapter will analyze the research question and extent to which it was answered, discuss and reflect upon the results, and recommend further avenues for studies utilizing these results as a baseline.

Answer to the Research Question

In collecting and analyzing the overall data from the survey, the retention strategies that were rated most highly by all respondents were supportive administration, flexible hours, clear path to promotion, interesting and engaging job duties, professional development, and training opportunities. When the data were examined based on the demographic groups, multiple groups rated the following factors in their top five when deciding whether to stay in their current position: supportive administration, interesting and engaging job duties, a clear path to promotion, and flexible hours. Other factors that appeared less frequently but were still rated as significant were professional development as well as training opportunities. Lastly, there was a small set of outlying factors as mentioned in Chapter 4 that were highly ranked by small clusters of respondents that reflected their specific job title or function.

Conclusions and Reflections

For this study there are two core conclusions that the researcher gleaned from the data:

recruitment efforts desperately need to be expanded to diversify and reinforce the field, and research administrators care more about connecting to their work than having their physical needs or wants met.

Recruitment

In the section presenting the profile of a research administrator, two unexpected variables emerged that reflect the current research administration community: the aging of the population, and the high proportion of females within the profession. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the "typical" research administrator is between the ages of 45 and 54. When combining the ranges of ages offered in the survey, 59.29% of research administrators are aged 45 and up, while only 9.91% of respondents were 34 or younger. Consequently, people in the research administration field need to begin reaching out and recruiting younger staff so that there will be a steady stream of research administrators to fill the void when older administrators retire.

Another recruitment need is the gender diversification of research administration. The data found that research administration continues to be saturated with female staff. The current study data show an increase in the proportion of female research administrators to over 86%; in a previous study by Shambrook and Roberts (2011), research administrators were 80% female and 20% male. The field needs to diversify in terms of gender to allow for a wider talent pool, with different insights, skills, and approaches.

The bottom line is if these trends continue, research administration could be in a serious crisis. If almost 60% of the field is nearing retirement, with less than 10% in the early stages of their careers, there will be a severe shortage in the field. The talent pipeline must be increased massively if the field is expected to continue to exist. This study can help to direct those efforts in terms of groups and offering incentives.

Research administrators' needs

The data show that respondents want to connect with and advance in their field. They would like to remain in the field, as evidenced by their desire to progress. In the retention factor categories outlined in Chapter 3, five of the six most highly rated retention factors fall into the category of connection to the work/organization: supportive administration, a clear path to promotion, interesting and engaging job duties, professional development, and training opportunities.

Organizations should focus on developing an atmosphere of support and engagement rather than offering physical perks, as physical needs never appeared in respondents' top five factors, and were actually the lowest rated factors overall, with free meals and free gym access both appearing frequently in the lowest average scores. Strategies in the facilities category were scored highly a few times, but not nearly frequently enough to be named as top factors or be considered an effective retention strategy.

Research administrators are a hard-working, over-burdened group. Small, physical tokens are considered hollow gratuities given without real thought and consideration for actual needs and wants; research administrators want to be provided meaningful support and validation.

Recommendations for Further Work

The researcher recommends a study to gain insight into the aging of the research administration workforce, and lack of gender diversity. If it can be found why more young and/or male applicants are not choosing research administration as a career, additional measures can be implemented to recruit these groups in order to fully staff the field and add diversity.

While the researcher believes that the results of this study are incredibly meaningful, it is also recommended that a similar study to the current one be conducted, but with additional qualitative characteristics such as interviews. In being able to interact with the respondents,

researchers can gain further insight as to the extent to which certain factors actually affect their desire to stay with or leave an organization, or research administration in general. For example, if a respondent said that a fully remote work arrangement was their top priority, would their organization offering that perk actually cause them to stay in any situation? Interviews could reveal additional information that a quantitative survey could not elicit.

Similarly, if organizations utilize this study to guide retention strategies, the researcher recommends reporting out on the results. While respondents may have answered the survey in a certain manner, one can never know their actual motivation factors when faced with the option to choose their current position or a new one.

Finally, research administration as a field needs more visibility and standardization. As a fairly "new" and somewhat hidden field, many people do not even know that research administration exists as a field of opportunity; most research administrators simply "landed" in the field versus actively pursued a career in it. Adding national job classifications and standardizations across the field would help immensely in providing an appropriate pay structure and clear paths to advance within research administration. Not only would this retain research administrators for the long haul, but it would also be a great incentive for recruiting new staff to the field, providing depth and longevity to a much-needed discipline.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Survey

Demographics

1. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-binary

2. What is your age?
    a. 18-25
    b. 26-35
    c. 36-45
    d. 46-55
    e. Over 55

3. What is your highest level of education attained?
    a. Associate's Degree
    b. Bachelor's Degree
    c. Master's Degree
    d. Doctoral Degree

4. How many years have you been in Research Administration?
    a. 0-5
    b. 6-10
    c. 11-15
    d. More than 15

5. In what branch of Research Administration do you mainly serve?
    a. Proposals
    b. Awards
    c. Compliance
    d. Accounting
    e. Other: _____

6. At what type of organization do you serve?
    a. Public Institution of Higher Education
    b. Private Institution of Higher Education
    c. Non-profit Foundation
    d. Hospital
    e. Other: _____

7. What is your organization's Carnegie classification (if applicable)?
    a. Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity
    b. Doctoral University: High Research Activity
    c. Doctoral/Professional University
    d. Other Classification
    e. Not Classified/Not Sure
    f. Other

8. Where is your institution located?
    a. U.S.—specify state
    b. International—specify country

9. In what type of region is your organization located?
    a. Urban
    b. Suburban
    c. Rural

10. For how many years have you been at your current organization?
    a. 0-5
    b. 6-10
    c. 11-15
    d. More than 15

11. What is the nature of your work arrangement?
    a. 100% in-person
    b. 100% remote
    c. Hybrid

12. Have you ever relocated due to your own or your partner's employment status?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Retention Factors

Please rate each item below on a scale of one (1) to five (5), with one meaning not at all important, and five meaning extremely important.

Physical Health

Free meals
Bonus time to exercise
Free gym access

Administrative Support

More team-building activities
More supportive administration
More professional development opportunities (conferences, networking, etc.)
Training opportunities (targeted/specific courses or training programs)
Rewards/recognition for productivity
Interesting/engaging job duties
More involvement in the organization (committees, etc.)
Clear promotion path

Flexibility

Fully remote work schedule
Fully in-person work schedule
Hybrid work schedule
Flexible work hours

Infrastructure
Private offices
Upgraded facilities
Upgraded equipment

Follow-Up Questions

1. Not considering salary, if you were tempted to take a position at a different organization, what would be the one (1) factor that would make you stay with your current employer?

2. Are you currently seeking alternative employment?
    a. Yes
    b. No

3. If you answered Yes, are you seeking alternative employment outside of Research Administration?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. If you answered Yes, please briefly explain why.

APPENDIX B

IRB Protocol

SIU Southern Illinois University
CARBONDALE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
WOODY HALL - MAIL CODE 4344
900 SOUTH NORMAL AVENUE
CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS 62901

siuhsc@siu.edu
618/453-4534
FAX 618/453-4573

To: Kelly Alongi
From: M. Daniel Becque
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Date: November 20, 2023

Title*:* *Retention in Research Administration*
Protocol Number: 23200
The SIUC Institutional Review Board has approved the above-referenced study. The study is determined to be exempt according to 45 CFR 46.104. This approval does not have an expiration date. However, this approval is valid only for as long as you are a student or employee of SIUC. Additionally, any future modifications to your protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval before implementation.
The IRB requests updates on exempted studies every three years. Failure to file a project update report may lead to the premature closure of your protocol.

When your study is complete, please fill out and return a study close-out form. A study is considered complete when you are no longer enrolling new participants, collecting or analyzing data.
Best wishes for a successful study.
This institution has an Assurance on file with the USDHHS Office of Human Research Protection. The Assurance number is FWA00005334.
MDB:eb
cc: Brad Colwell

VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Kelly M. Alongi

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University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Bachelor of Liberal Arts, Psychology, December 2004

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Master of Science in Education, Curriculum & Instruction, May 2010

Special Honors and Awards:
Journal of Research Administration Author Fellow

Capstone Report Title:
Retention in Research Administration

Major Professor: Dr. William Bradley Colwell