

# Effort Reporting System User Group (ERSUG) Meeting Notes

## Date/Location

November 1, 2006 from 8:30AM to 3:30PM  
UCSD Eucalyptus Point Conference Center

## Attendees

Susan Abeles, Mojgan Amini, Ralph Anderson, Karen Andrews, Evelyn Balabis, Mike Bloom, Connie Brown, Stephanie Burke, Beatrice Cardona, Mark Carr, Ashley Clipson, Adam Cohen, Mark Cooper, Wei Deng, Glenda Freberg, Judith Freed, Philip Godfrey, Leslie Goldstein, Ned Hamilton, Kathy Hass, Debra Henn, Pat Hogan, Steven Hunter, Elise Jameson, Larry Johnson, Patie Johnson, Lyle Kafader, Cynthia Kane, Vadim Krifuks, Vijji Kumar, Don Larson, Dat Le, April Liberto, Stephen Lopez, Buck Marcussen, Maria Martin, Andrei Mattes, Kerry Nare, Zoanne Nelson, Alma Palazzolo, Christa Perkins, James Ringo, Don Rutherford, Wen Tang, Nora Watanabe, Erica Webber, Steve Wilson, Sungsoo Yang, Nick Arent, Pixie Ogren, Gary Blum

## Meeting Notes

### Objective

The objective for the meeting was to establish a user forum to share best practices from a technical, departmental, and central office perspective. The current focus is implementation strategies and identification of best practices. Future meetings may focus more on planning, maintenance, and enhancing integration.

### ERS User Group Email Distribution List

To facilitate communication on a go-forward basis, a UC ERS User Group distribution list has been established. To join the list serve, send an email to [listserv@ucop.edu](mailto:listserv@ucop.edu) with a blank subject line and the following text in the body of the email indicating your own first and last name, "Subscribe ERS-USERS-L firstname lastname". Send emails to the distribution list by inserting the following into your address line: [ERS-USERS-L@LISTSERV.UCOP.EDU](mailto:ERS-USERS-L@LISTSERV.UCOP.EDU).

### Lessons Learned from UCLA

UCLA began their pilot in February 2006 and Implemented in September 2006. They created test scripts, sent email notifications to CAO's and other asked the VC Research to send an email directly to Faculty and PI's. They held meetings with large research areas and the Dean's Executive Council. They generated a lot of support prior to implementation. PI's were confused that ERS might affect their pay.

To train, they held information sessions and pointed the audience to the online training modules. They focused on risks, compliance issues, whistleblowers/audit findings and communicated that because of these reasons, the campus has no choice but to embrace the system. Fund managers were trained to prepare reports for PI's and to understand payroll data, cost sharing, and the relationship to the original proposed effort. The departments did use the online training modules, but found one-on-one trainings with PI's more effective. They want to work very closely with PI's for the first certification to improve compliance, and also to let the PI's know that the system provides more accurate calculations than the PARs and the electronic format allows PI's to certify from anywhere.

Effort reports for Spring 2006 were produced on 9/12 with a deadline of 10/27 which was extended to 11/17 to accommodate additional training required for first-time users. They ran into an issue with work-study payments and with blank effort reporting. As of 11/1, approximately 20% of the effort reports have been certified, and it is anticipated that a significant number will be certified as departmental managers meet one-on-one with

faculty. The first to certify effort reports were those who participated in the Pilot. Many more trickled in after receiving a reminder email with a due date.

Cost Share data is manually tracked and input into ERS by the departments. The departments do not anticipate that ERS will reduce the number of payroll expense transfers.

An ERS HelpDesk was established to respond to questions and issues as they arise. There is a single email address for departments to remember. The HelpDesk tracks issues and creates a log for triage, and will eventually publish a list of frequently asked questions.

It is expected that a central departmental coordinator previews every effort report to intercept potential issues, and then talk with the PI's and ensure understanding of the difference between payroll % and actual effort %. Faculty are alerted when effort reports are available, but are instructed not to go into ERS until their departmental coordinator communicates that the reports are ready for certification.

ULCA has opted to certify reports quarterly because they were unsure that DCA approval could be secured to extend the cycle to annual.

In general, the fund managers think ERS is easier than the PAR process, but it is difficult to track down PI's for one-on-one trainings. It is initially additional effort, but expected to be less as PI's are trained. At UCLA, the PI's are used to certifying the PARs, so ERS is not a huge leap.

#### Lessons Learned from UC Davis

Cost sharing data was not included in PARs, so there are a number of faculty members who are paid entirely on cost shared funds that are receiving effort reports for the first time.

The faculty members in the Pilot group liked the new system. The most difficult part to train is the theory behind the relationship between effort % and payroll %.

The first quarterly Effort Reports are scheduled for production on November 15, 2006, but this may be delayed as UCD considers establishing a semiannual or annual certification cycle. They are leaning towards a semiannual certification cycle, which would mean that the first reports would be produced in February 2007 for July – Dec 2006. Currently, UCD is testing to compare results for effort reports produced on a quarterly, semiannual, and annual basis.

Thirty-five faculty members volunteered to participate in the Pilot, and approximately fifty percent attended the information sessions and thirty percent provided feedback on training materials via the web system. A result of the feedback was to combine the training modules.

In training, UCD emphasizes the training modules, the importance of reducing cost transfers, and reviewing ledgers on a frequent basis.

A functional campus user group was established. The results of the Requirements meetings are shared with this user group, and the user group is solicited for feedback on the implementation from a departmental perspective.

UCD opted for decentralized security administration because they do not have a roles/permissions database like UCLA.

#### Critical Success Factors – Technical Perspective

- Verify that interface files were correctly loaded into the system, that the data is accurate, and that security authentication and authorization is working. Departments must assist with **data integrity testing**, as experts. They have requested a list of test scenarios to aid in this process.
- Help **ensure that the users are comfortable with their role** in the system. Configure the system so that the functionality, look, and feel are user-friendly.

#### Critical Success Factors – Central Services Perspective

- Establish **departmental champions**. These representatives assist with internal training and provide a first-line of support.
- Tight **internal controls** must be established by minimizing cost transfers, evaluating policy for achievability, and helping departments understand the role of effort reporting and establishing a standard process for effort reporting as a key control.
- PI's need to understand the potential ramifications to the University if effort is not certified. To **enforce PI certifications**, establish accountability and follow up on outstanding effort reports.
- The pilot group should **test the training modules** before releasing them to campus to ensure that the content is specific to the campus and communicated in a format that will be meaningful to the PIs.
- Clearly **define roles and responsibilities** for users of the system. Establishing a clear chain of support will lend itself to quicker responses and less confusion.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate!** Communicate with the campus regularly via statistical reports, email updates, paper newsletters, web forum, project websites, in-person information sessions. You can never start too early.

#### Critical Success Factors – Departmental Perspective

- Make sure that the system is producing **good data**. Assist with data integrity testing.
- Ensure that departmental coordinators have sufficient **access and authority** to prepare effort reports timely.
- Establish **campus support** early. The attitudes of the fund managers need to reflect the importance of effort reporting and departmental chairs need to provide a clear and consistent message to faculty.
- **Review financials regularly** to improve effort report accuracy and reduce cost transfers.
- **Communicate** so that fund managers understand that initially their workload will increase, but over time it should be less than current workload associated with the PARs. Departments want clear and effective communication from central offices, and technically, they want a system that is user-friendly for the PIs.
- Build in time between the Pilot and Implementation to **assimilate lessons learned** from the Pilot.
- Create **training** that will work for a variety of departments, since they are not all the same size. Create training tools that work for the PI's – simple, short, and meaningful. Ensure that PI knows exactly what it means to certify effort.

#### The Process: Who Does What?

At UCLA, the HR coordinator looks at the payroll data first (this step may be phased out as trust in the system is built over time). Next the Fund Manager looks at the cost sharing data and the original proposed effort commitments. Once this is complete, the PI is notified that the report is ready for review and certification. Initially, the email notification also includes a link to the effort reporting system, training materials, and a request to meet one-on-one for training. The PI's are responsible for certifying reports for everyone on their projects.

At UC Davis, it is anticipated that over the next five years, departments will transition the role of the reviewer to an analyst-type position. This person will understand payroll, cost sharing, and grants analysis. After the analyst reviews the effort report, the PI will be notified that the report is ready for review and certification.

UCSF thinks it should be strongly considered who is the appropriate person to review the effort reports. With the PARs, this person was reviewing payroll data. This is no longer the case.

UCSD would like to consider designating the department chairs as ERS Champions. This role would establish a hub for distributing statistical reports and top-down support.

Security of salary data was discussed. It is public knowledge and the PIs obligated to maintain equity within their units.

It would not be a good idea to substitute a lab manager approval for a PI because non-academics cannot certify for academics. This situation can be handled on a case-by-case basis.

#### Certification Cycle

UCB: Academics certify every semester. Non-academics certify quarterly. UCB is considering an annual cycle. It is difficult to manage different certification cycles for academics and non-academics.

UCSF: Academics certify semi-annually. Non-academics certify quarterly.

UCD: Considering semi-annual or annual certifications for academics and non-academics. This would require a hybrid system of plan-confirmation and after-the-fact effort reporting. This would require stricter enforcement of ongoing verification of financials.

UCSD: Considering quarterly or annual certifications for both academics and non-academics.

UCLA: Academics and non-academics certify quarterly.

#### Cost Share Data Integration

UCD: Populates committed cost share percentage into ERS exactly as it was captured in the effort commitment system.

Cost share reported on progress reports is considered "gravy" and does not constitute formal committed effort. Departments are encouraged not to include informal, uncommitted cost sharing in progress reports.

UCLA: Does not have a cost share system, so ERS serves as a tool for departments to certify that the committed cost shared effort is met. All PI's are given an effort report, even if no direct pay is received. These reports do not require certification, but are produced in an effort to prompt certification of cost shared effort if applicable.

#### Other Notes

- An **Implementation Documentation Web Portal** will be established via UCOP and maintained by Ashley Clipson, UCSD, so that campuses can post implementation communication and training materials.
- **Base Training Materials** need to be updated. Adam Cohen will bring up this issue with the ERS Management Group. It was noted that maintenance will be easier

without audio. The campuses prefer training modules that are simpler to update so they can stay current.

#### Plans for Another ERSUG Meeting

- UCSD has offered to host the next ERS User Group meeting next fall. UCD has requested that it not be scheduled between 11/1/07-11/9/07.
- The User Group would like more representation from departments that are highly-impacted by ERS.
- Consider special presentations from UCOP on OMB-Circular A21 requirements, upcoming issues, and national audit reports related to effort reporting.
- Deliver a report with data and best practices from other institutions.
- Hold the training on a Monday or Friday.
- Arrange the room in a round table fashion rather than classroom style.
- Share campus audit reports related to effort reporting.
- Present faculty feedback on the system from each campus.