Report of the

President’s Task Force on Administrative Infrastructure
For the Research Enterprise

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July 10, 2007
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Executive Summary

President Hardesty formed the President’s Task Force on Administrative Infrastructure for the Research Enterprise to “evaluate the current administrative infrastructure that supports the research enterprise and make recommendations that will enable researchers to accomplish their goals efficiently using legal and ethical practices and procedures.” Additionally, the Task Force was asked to examine ways the WVU Research Corporation can be better utilized as a vehicle to carry out its charter of supporting and advancing the research and economic development missions of WVU.

Rationale

This action was prompted by several factors. One of the most important of the factors was that the West Virginia University research enterprise has grown substantially over the past eight years. This rapid growth placed burdens on the research administrative support infrastructure which must meet faculty support needs. In addition, barriers to growing the research enterprise such as ineffective and inefficient policies and processes, unacceptable performance, and organizational structures must be identified and revised. Another important factor is WVU’s goal of expanding the research enterprise through the year 2010, thereby increasing the need for improved efficiencies and capacity of administrative support infrastructure.

The administrative support infrastructure has not been substantially changed over the past several decades with the intent of providing better support of the research enterprise. The support infrastructure is distributed among several major administrative units. However, some progress was made with establishment of the WVU Research Corporation approximately 17 years ago to provide more flexibility to the research enterprise and promote economic development. Other steps to improve the support of the research enterprise have been made more recently such as forming the WVURC Human Resources System, acquiring and implementing the BRAAN software for human subjects, conducting grant writing workshops, establishing the WVU Office of Technology Transfer, implementing the incentive F&A return policy for colleges, implementing new cost-share guidelines, and developing conflict of interest and intellectual property policies. OSP is also in the process of selecting electronic grants processing software.

WVU is subject to many state regulations and policies that are not compatible with a large institution such as WVU, or a dynamic and growing research enterprise, although some additional progress was made by the passage of SB603 in 2006. The full capabilities of the WVURC should be explored and implemented so that it can be of greater service to the WVU research enterprise.

Approach and Methodology

The task force, co-chaired by vice presidents Weete and Weese, was composed of representative administrators and research active faculty along with resource persons from the offices of Sponsored Programs, Finance, Auditing, and the General Counsel. The Associate Deans for Research from the colleges offered separate comments. Information for this report was obtained from the collective experiences of this knowledgeable task force, and from an electronic survey instrument that was available on-line to all faculty and administrators of the university. There were many anecdotal stories relating to each of the support functions offered by individuals of the task force and survey respondents expressing some level of dissatisfaction with some aspect of the support infrastructure.
Evaluations of the infrastructure and recommendations in this report are based mainly on trends that surfaced from individual experiences and survey responses. The administrative and business support functions included in this study were: human resources (both university and WVURC); research development, proposal, and award processing; physical plant; research accounting; procurement; research compliance; assets management; payroll; and technology transfer.

Survey Results

There were 233 respondents to the survey, most of which had been at WVU for over three years. The respondents were from most of the university colleges with two-thirds of them currently funded to conduct research. Over 50% of them were from the School of Medicine and the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences. To put this in perspective, there are about 950 tenure track/tenured faculty in the university and only about 20-25% of them have funding from outside sources at any point in time.

The response rate to the survey was relatively low at approximately 26% but in the anticipated range for such surveys. The survey showed a rather wide variation in response to the questions, and there were clear differences between the General University and the Health Sciences Center. Some members of the task force questioned whether the responses to the survey are representative of a cross section of the campus.

The functional areas identified by the respondents as creating the greatest challenge or impediment to research growth were: pre-award services (62.4%); expenditure tracking/budget management (44.9%); WVU human resources system (36.4%); post-award (34.8%); and sponsored research accounting (26.4%). Areas of less concern but in need of improvement are the physical plant (20.8%); research compliance (18.5%); business and procurement services (14.6%); as well as technology transfer (11.8%). The survey also indicated dissatisfaction with the level of service provided to assist faculty in identifying funding opportunities and developing proposals (68%). Furthermore, almost one-half of the respondents (46.1%) were not aware of their college’s research plan and how their individual research agenda fits into the plan. The degree to which faculty rated the business functions probably reflects, at least in part, the degree to which they work directly with that function.

The above ‘ranking’ of business functions by the faculty is somewhat in contrast with that of the task force that rated the functional areas in the following descending order of concern and relative importance: Human resources (State); OSP-Research Accounting/Academic Interface; Facilities (Physical Plant); Research Development; Procurement; Research Compliance; Assets Management; Payroll; and Tech Transfer.

A general evaluation of the current administrative support infrastructure reveals: organizational inefficiencies (silo vs integration); grants process too centralized relative to the colleges; insufficient communication between academic and administrative units; need for more staff in support units; too much ‘administrative’ work required of investigators; inadequate training and cross-training in administrative units; and the need for a more ‘user friendly’ approach to the research accounting system.

Overall Recommendations

A conclusion by this task force is that the administrative support infrastructure for research is in need of more than a ‘piecemeal’ fix. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the following:
A ‘systems’ approach should be used in designing an organizational structure and efficient processes rather than have each functional unit respond to the recommendations in this report ‘in a vacuum’. To accomplish this, WVU should engage an outside consultant (when appropriate) to assist with the evaluation of the existing infrastructure support structures and suggest alternatives which will advance the WVU research enterprise.

A Strategic Planning and Management Team should be formed for the purpose of managing the administrative and operational functions that support the research enterprise. This team will also be tasked with working with the consultants and existing personnel to streamline the administrative support infrastructure for research. The team should be co-chaired by the Assistant Vice President/WVURC Secretary and the Associate Vice President/WVURC Treasurer. Team membership should be management level representatives from the major research administrative support infrastructure units, i.e., OSP, SRA, Facilities, WVU and WVURC Human Resources, Research Compliance, Technology Transfer, and a research faculty member. The Team will report to the Vice Presidents for Research and Economic Development and for Finance and Administration.

WVU and WVURC will need to invest in the tools and technology infrastructure needed to support research and financial administration. Clarity about roles and responsibilities, effective training mechanisms, and improved communication and information access are crucial components that will need to be addressed in a plan to improve research support services.

Finally, many of the issues raised in this report are currently being addressed. In view of the relatively short timeframe under which we are working to reach the goals of the strategic plan, both research administration and finance should continue moving forward in taking the necessary steps to build support capacity and establish policy.
Report of the
President’s Task Force on Administrative Infrastructure
For the Research Enterprise

Introduction

The West Virginia University research enterprise has grown substantially over the past eight years and, through university-wide strategic planning, has set new and ambitious goals for further growth through the year 2010, *West Virginia University’s 2010 Plan: Building the Foundation for Academic Excellence*. Future growth is primarily expected to take the form of interdisciplinary programs, including research centers, in focused areas with the expectation of reaching $200M in total sponsored program funding by the year 2010. This will require additional faculty, office and laboratory space, and an administrative infrastructure to support the growth in the form of an enabling organizational structure and more efficient and best business processes and practices, administrative support culture, increased support personnel, accountability, and policies.

The initiative to examine the administrative support infrastructure for research came from the Vice President for Research and Economic Development in a memo that described the relevant issues associated with rapid growth of the research enterprise (see attached), and from the Provost. This was strongly re-enforced by faculty and administrators during the planning for the university-wide strategic plan.

The President’s Task Force for Administrative Infrastructure was formed for the purpose of “evaluating the current administrative infrastructure that supports the research enterprise and make recommendations that will enable researchers to accomplish their goals efficiently using legal and ethical practices and procedures.” Additionally, the Task Force was asked to examine ways the WVU Research Corporation can be better utilized as a vehicle to carry out its charter of supporting and advancing the research and economic development missions of WVU. The full text of the charge for the Task Force is appended to this document.

Several factors have led to the need for an examination of the support infrastructure for research and economic development:

- The existing traditional support infrastructure has not been updated to meet the demands of a rapidly growing research enterprise in an increasingly competitive environment and rapidly changing global economy;
- The planning process for the university’s strategic plan overwhelmingly identified the support infrastructure as a limiting factor in reaching projected goals;
- Rapid growth of the WVU research enterprise over the past several years has burdened the capacity of the support infrastructure; and
- The 2010 Plan contains ambitious goals regarding the research enterprise such as reaching $200M in total sponsored program funding by the year 2010 that will require more efficient and interactive support processes and systems.
The basic infrastructure for an academic research enterprise involves researchers, physical facilities, equipment, and an administrative support system. While they are all interrelated and mentioned herein, this report focuses on the administrative support processes for research development, processing proposals and awards, and the support required to carry out and complete sponsored projects such as human resources, accounting, and the physical plant.

In creating the WVU Research Corporation (WVURC) in 1989, the West Virginia Legislature recognized that the state’s administrative systems created barriers to growing the research enterprise. The legislature charged the WVURC “with the responsibility of serving as fiscal agent for sponsored projects.” In addition, they recognized that the corporation could utilize both corporation employees and personnel of the institution in fully filling its mission. As a private corporation, the WVURC can operate by a different set of rules, policies, and regulations than the University as a state institution but this has not been fully exploited. The corporation was established, at least in part, to provide greater flexibility to the research enterprise. Although some progress has been made in this regard, the full capabilities of the WVURC have not been fully exploited.

The WVURC administrative structure is currently integrated with West Virginia University. WVU’s administrative management team has responsibility for coordination and oversight of WVURC’s policies and processes, and WVU employees serve dual roles in carrying out both WVU and WVURC business functions. The WVU Vice President for Research and Economic Development also serves as the President of the WVURC and WVU’s Associate Vice President for Finance also serves as the corporation’s treasurer and CFO.

**Approach and Methodology**

The Task Force met three times. At the first meeting, the co-chairs outlined and discussed the current administrative structure so that the Task Force members would begin their work with a common understanding. The administrative functions were also discussed and issues were brought out with many anecdotal stories supporting the need to address issues ranging from very specific situations to a need for a broad systems approach to improve efficiencies. The two primary outcomes of the initial meeting were that the number of specific functions was expanded from those of the original charge, and they were ranked according to their relative importance to the overall research enterprise.

The functions were scored by the task force members from 1-10 with the lowest number having the greatest importance, and perhaps greatest concerns. Average scores are shown in parentheses. The functions in order of their rank with the most important as #1 include:

1 (tie) Human Resources (2.4)
1 (tie) OSP-Research Accounting/Academic Interface (2.4)
2 Facilities (Physical Plant) (3.0)
3 Research Development (3.5)
The subsequent meeting addressed each of the functions outlining the real/perceived issues, summarizing recent or current efforts to improve the function, and recommendations for improving efficiency and the quality of work associated with these functions.

It was agreed during the second meeting that faculty views on the administrative support infrastructure should be surveyed, and an electronic survey instrument should be developed. This was accomplished and the survey was conducted from October 12 to 24, 2006. The survey results were summarized and provided to all members of the task force.

A draft of the report was provided electronically to all task force members who were asked to provide feedback.

**Evaluation of the Current Administrative Infrastructure**

**Organization**

The administrative support infrastructure for research is distributed across several units within the university:

- Administration and Finance
- Research and Economic Development
- Colleges and Centers
- WVU Research Corporation

Figure 1 below shows the reporting lines of these administrative units. Figures 2 and 3 show the organization of Administration and Finance and the Office of Research and Economic Development, respectively. The nature and quality of administrative support for research in the schools and colleges varies among them and is usually associated with their respective EBOs. All but one college (CEMR) have an associate dean for research and some have assigned staff persons to assist faculty.

The ‘silo’ organization of the administrative support infrastructure is further complicated by the fact that, with few exceptions, staff members in the various units divide their time between tasks associated with the state and with the WVU Research Corporation which, in many cases, have different sets of regulations and policies under which they function.
Figure 1: Organization of Administrative Support Infrastructure
Figure 2: Organization of Administration and Finance

Figure 3: Organization of Research & Economic Development and the WVURC
WVU Research Corporation:

The WVU Research Corporation (WVURC) was formally established in 1989 as a private non-profit corporation with the sole responsibilities of advancing research and economic development at WVU, managing the intellectual properties for the University, and serving as the fiscal agent for sponsored programs. An advantage of the corporation is that it is not bound by the same state regulations as the University in areas such as human resources, travel, contracting, etc. Instead, it is subject to laws relating its status as a 501 (c) 3 corporation in the State of West Virginia, the federal tax code for non-profits, and policies required by federal agencies in connection with sponsored programs.

The financial status of the WVURC is audited annually by Deloitte and Touche and, without exception, receives reports with no contingencies. The corporation is in stable financial condition. The WVURC Human Resources System and the Office of Technology Transfer are staffed solely by WVURC employees.

The University has not taken full advantage of the potential flexibility of the WVURC. Although there have been recent improvements in this regard, most of the business functions of the WVURC are conducted by university employees who are also performing university business function. Sufficient distinction between the WVURC and University has not been made to WVU employees with respect to policies and procedures resulting in state terms for contracts and other activities (pro-card, etc.) having been applied to WVURC functions, thus, losing the advantage offered by the WVURC.

Grants and Contracts

Funding is required for a successful research enterprise and is one of the primary metrics by which academic institutions are ranked. The primary source of funding for research is from federal agencies followed by the state, industry, and foundations. Grants and contracts from these sources are the primary mechanism used for obtaining support for the research enterprise.

The University processes a variety of types of grants and contracts, of varying complexity, from sponsors representing both public and private entities. Factors contributing to the complexity include:

- The number of investigators (ex. from different colleges), academic institutions, and whether or not a private entity is a partner in the project;
- The nature and requirements of the sponsor differ, i.e., state, private company, foundation, federal agency;
- The need to purchase equipment or services costing $25,000 or more;
- The need to hire personnel;
- Compliance issues (human subjects, animals, hazardous materials, export control, etc.);
- Development of intellectual properties; patenting, licensing, etc;
- Requirement for renovations; and
• If classified work in involved.

Survey Results

The task force wished to solicit input from faculty and administrators and developed an electronic survey instrument. The questionnaire, results, and summary of results are appended to this report. The following describes the characteristics of the survey respondents:

• 233 faculty members responded to the survey
• Of respondents indicating an association with a school or college (N=180), the highest percentage were from the School of Medicine (32.2%) followed by the College of Arts and Sciences (23.9%).
• 77% of respondents indicating a funding status (N=179) checked they were “currently funded.”
• Of the 196 respondents indicating their length of stay at WVU, 87.8% have been at the university for three years or more while 12.2% of the respondents have been at WVU for less than three years.

Summary of Survey Results

This section is arranged according to the major functions, or groups of functions, roughly in order of their relative importance ranking as judged by the task force members. Each subsection includes the major issues with the function and key words representing survey responses.

In addition to responding to questions, the survey offered the opportunity for respondents to provide comments. Some offered constructive suggestions on how to improve the system and others offered anecdotal comments that usually reflected a personal experience. The anecdotal comments are usually negative and often were targeted toward either the Office of Sponsored Programs or Research Accounting which are the administrative units faculty have the most contact with in connection with their proposals and grants. However, negative comments go both ways in that the staff of some units that deal directly with faculty comment that some individuals do not follow university policy and make their jobs more difficult. Rather than address these often isolated instances, the task force attempted to focus on trends rather than on individual comments.

Human Resources

*WVU Human Resources System (Administration and Finance)*: The WVU HR is required to comply with state regulations, some of which are viewed as restrictive and not appropriate for an institution the size and complexity of WVU or for grant-funded projects. Furthermore, the WVU HR unit imposes additional policies and restrictions on those established by the state. There were 68 total responses to the WVU Human HR system portion of the survey.
Survey responses: Difficulties expressed in the survey include that the processes are too long/restrictive and cumbersome, need better policy communication, and problems with post-doc hiring and J-1 visas, hiring decision basis not communicated, better and more information about changing requirements is needed.

**WVURC Human Resources System (WVU Research Corporation/WVU Research Office):**
The WVURC HR System was formally established in January 2004. The intent of the system is to have a more flexible system compatible with a dynamic research enterprise. Eligible employees are those paid 100% by WVU Research Corporation funds derived externally from grants and contracts. The WVURC HR office is staffed with a Director and two HR specialists. The system follows federal guidelines and regulations but is managed such that it does not create a large disparity in salaries and benefits between WVU and WVURC employees. It has grown substantially since its inception in the number of employees.

Survey responses: Quicker and easier, costs prohibitive, challenges with staff salary disparities between WVU and WVURC, nice, helpful.

**Research Development/Research Accounting/Academic Interface:**
This section deals with the continuum from the faculty on proposal development and processing (pre-award) through the post-award process. These functions are performed by units within the WVU Research Office and the offices of Administration and Finance, research accounting.

*Pre-Award (OSP)*

Survey responses: There were 111 total responses to this function that included: Streamline and centralize processes, reduce paperwork, reduce OSP proposal process time (eliminate OSP 5-day requirement), provide proposal preparation assistance, have customer/service-oriented and more OSP staff, provide electronic proposal submission and management software, allow faculty to electronically submit their own grants, provide infrastructure for clinical research, do not have blanket OSP policies for all colleges, assist Charleston faculty, train/make processes clear (including web guidelines) to researchers, provide budget preparation training, allow for blue sheet electronic submission, automate mundane parts of the process, provide more effective and responsive communication between OSP staff and researchers, identify outside grant opportunities, provide on-line tracking system for PI’s.

*Post-Award (OSP)*

Survey responses: There were 84 total responses that included: Improve communication with researchers/PI, provide electronic award tracking system, cooperate with funding agency, be more service oriented, lessen paperwork, provide more education/workshops on process/timelines, provide monthly accounting of grant
activities, enhance website, provide OSP with more staff and support, shorten “Green Sheet”, and funding availability delays.

**Research Development (OSP)**

*Survey responses:* Communicate, collaborate, co-operate, partner, educate, facilitate, expand OSP outreach, streamline processes and paperwork, be service-oriented, provide faculty incentives for large research projects, dispense with budgetary silos, foster teamwork and collaborative research across disciplines, mentor junior faculty, centralize research functions in centers, have additional OSP support in colleges, provide HSC with biostat support (not just part-time faculty and consultants), provide more and better assistance in all phases of research development, provide additional assistance in traditionally under-funded areas (i.e., Humanities), develop flexible OSP policies that don’t treat all research projects the same, increase OSP staffing with more knowledgeable staff

**Research Accounting and Expenditure Tracking and Budget Management (Administration and Finance)**

*Survey responses:* There were 27 (RA) and 64 (ETBM) total responses to these functions that included: Need user friendly understandable information and communication, provide More Guidance/Information (Better Definitions) Concerning ORACLE, Provide Update Dates, Deal with Inaccurate Entries and Error Fixes, Oracle Access Issues for PI’s and Departmental Accounting Staff, Address Time Delay Issue (ORACLE 2-4 Weeks Behind) Which Makes Shadow Systems Necessary, Automatically Generate Timely Monthly Update, Incompatibility Between Scientific and Accounting Thinking, System Not Well Understood by Most Faculty, Unacceptable Time Delays with Account Opening for Spending, PI Lack of Process/Accounting Understanding, Additional Information Needed for PI, Need to be More Service Oriented/Supportive to Research Personnel and Accountable, Communicate More with PIs- Include PI in Agency Communications

**Facilities (Physical Plant) (Administration and Finance)**

*Survey responses:* There were 31 total responses to this function that included: Extreme Response Variability, More Timely Response on Cost Estimates and Maintenance, Too Slow, More Grant Co-ordination with Grant PI, Fees Too High, Workmanship Quality Concerns and Band-Aid Fixes

**Business and Procurement Services (Administration and Finance)**

*Survey responses:* There were 31 total responses to this function that included: Streamline and Make Process Efficient, Improve Process to be “Timely” and Competitive, Process Not Clear, Excessive Paper Trail, Focus on Problem Solutions not Hindrances, Provide Accessible and Timely Order Status Verification Information, Equipment Purchasing with State Funds Difficult
Research Compliance (WVU Research Office)

Survey responses: There were 61 total responses to this function that included: Communicate, Centralize Processes for User Accessibility, Be Responsive to Researcher Needs, Educate and Inform about Constant Process Changes and Researcher Duties and Obligations, Improve Turnaround Time to be “Timely”, Recognize Research Differences Between Science and Humanities, Deal with Lengthy and Complex IRB Processes and Conveyed Information Inconsistencies, Develop Clear Policies, Get Rid of Burdensome Procedures

Technology Transfer (WVURC/WVU Research Office)

There were 212 responses to the two questions. About half of the respondents have not used tech transfer services but most of those who appear to be aware of the office seem to generally agree that the processes are adequate.

Others

Asset management and payroll were not considered to be among the highest priorities for administrative infrastructure improvement and were not included in the survey.

Challenges to Growing the WVU Research Enterprise

One of the goals for the research enterprise is to increase the total sponsored program funding to $200M. There were 115 respondents with comments about the challenges to reaching this goal. It was recognized by the respondents that we need to be competitive with other institutions in hiring new faculty. There will also be increased competition for decreasing funds available at federal agencies and unpredictability of agency cycle of awards.

The respondents offered the following internal challenges to research growth:

- Infrastructure
  - Infrastructure growth not kept pace with rising number of grants
  - Problems with internal “research service” processes
  - Lack of infrastructure investment
- Personnel/faculty issues
  - Competing time demands/workloads
  - Lack of world class research faculty
  - Need competitive faculty and stronger PhD/Graduate Programs
  - Establish connection between graduate education and research graduate students
  - Need more department staff to handle research needs
  - Need more research facilities and lab space
- University culture and awareness of the challenge
Dean’s support for sponsored research
Need for “business model” operations
Awareness of real cost necessary to accomplish goal of increased research

Changes Recommended to Increase Sponsored Project Activity

Respondents were asked to indicate the three most important changes for increasing sponsored research activity at WVU. These responses are categorized as 1) Changes in research processing, 2) Changes in the Research Offices (OSP and WVURC), 3) Changes related to faculty, and 4) Changes in research plans and overall university culture.

• Changes in research processing
  o Streamline procedures/processes
  o Develop a seamless process and get rid of process obstacles/barriers
  o Have shorter turnaround time for deadlines
  o Provide online award management, online financial reporting systems, electronic forms and better tracking devices
  o Provide more grant writing training/seminars and proposal development workshops
  o Help identify and develop a better system for identifying funding sources
  o Focus more attention on non-traditional sources of funding and for the humanities
  o Provide more flexibility in the grant proposal stage

• Changes in the Research Offices (OSP and WVURC)
  o Run OSP as a business and have performance expectations for staff
  o Hire more staff and more efficient/competent staff
  o Have better wages/incentives to attract more competent staff
  o Have more communication and improved communication between OSP and researchers
  o Staff should be more service oriented/have a service mentality and treat the researcher as a customer
  o Make research staff accountable by making them part of the ‘research team’
  o Provide greater staff oversight ‘to see that the job gets done’
  o Do complete overhaul of the offices

• Changes related to faculty
  o Mentor junior faculty
  o Give more credit for sponsored research in the promotion and tenure process
  o Hire college deans that are supportive of research
  o Provide incentives/reward faculty (additional release time, workload flexibility) who bring in more funding
  o Increase interdisciplinary appointments and cross/campus collaborations
  o Hire faculty who come with existing grants and place them in a leadership role
• Changes in research plans and overall university culture
  o Have HSC’s plan include more than basic research
  o Provide a culture of ‘genuine’ administrative support

Recommendations for the WVURC

• Take full advantage of the flexibility offered by the WVURC
• Eliminate the dual functions of WVU administrative personnel so that individuals are responsible for either WVU or WVURC functions.

Administrative Support Infrastructure Evaluation

A general evaluation of the current administrative support infrastructure reveals the following:

• The administrative support for research is not organized for efficiency. The support functions for research are distributed across the central administrative organization/structure of the university with no central authority.
• The organization lacks a senior level officer who is solely responsible for integrating the grants management, planning, financials, human resources and administrative function that support researchers.
• There is insufficient responsibility for pre- and post-award business functions at the level of schools and colleges.
• Researchers spend too much time taking care of administrative issues, e.g., placing and following up on purchase orders, processing paperwork, hiring employees, identifying potential funding sources and preparing proposals, etc.
• Inadequate training/educational programs for PIs and college-based grant support personnel.
• Research support is not a priority in some administrative support units.
• There needs to be more communication between research administration, deans, faculty, college business offices, and administrative units. Perhaps a constant reinforcement of the organization’s strategic research plan should be an integral component of this process.
• The efficiency of the grant management process could be improved within the colleges and among central administrative units.
• More personnel are probably needed to accommodate current and anticipated growth of the research enterprise.
• More training and cross-training of administrative personnel at all levels of the organization (central and college) should be required.
• Faculty are divided as to the extent to which others are responsible for non-technical contents of proposals. However, defining the role of the “PI” is an essential element to solving this issue.
• Greater accountability should be part of the administrative process.
• The need for accounting ‘shadow’ systems should be eliminated by improving the timelines and accuracy of entering data into the Oracle system.
• There is a need for expanding current efforts to provide grants workshops and grant writing assistance to faculty
• The current system may work okay on simple grants but there is overall dissatisfaction with the system on complex sponsored programs
• Work with the legislature to lessen the restrictions so as to provide more flexibility in the state HR system – eliminate university policies that reduce flexibility
• Staff the facilities division so that it can be more responsive to the needs of the research enterprise in a timely and cost-effective manner

Specific Recommendations:

• Utilize the WVURC as an effective tool to increase the research holdings of the organization. Its flexibility should be understood and utilized.
• Incorporate a customer- (researcher-) oriented philosophy into the research support functions of the university—with regular performance reviews and formal ‘customer’ feedback.
• Develop ways which allow WVU Human Resources to be more responsive to the needs of the researcher; for instance, where the WVURC Human Resources system is not a viable option.
• Implement a seamless electronic system for grants and business processes.
• Incorporate a ‘customer- (researcher-) oriented’ philosophy into the research accounting system for grant administration that provides timely, flexible reporting and/or enhanced accessibility of grant account status is critical.
• Place OSP personnel in the colleges to assist faculty in grant preparation, e.g., budget preparation, proposal development and institutional application approval.
• In addition to grants workshops, invest in additional WVU personnel trained to assist faculty in grant development on a continuing basis.
• Benchmark selected peer research universities for best practices.
• Improve communications between research administration, deans, faculty, college business offices, and other administrative units.
• Integrate the various college-based research agendas into a cohesive organizational research plan and communicate the plan throughout the organization.
• Define the roles of central administrative personnel, college-based administrative personnel, and the research faculty.
• Develop a “research intelligence” function that integrates the overall research plan with potential funding opportunities/agencies. This unit’s activities should also include a planning function, which tracks proposals and estimates future funding levels based on those applications and grantor award patterns. It should also perform environmental scans to determine changes in research focuses and funding levels.
Overall Recommendations

A conclusion by this Task Force is that the administrative support infrastructure for research is in need of more than a ‘piecemeal’ fix. Therefore, the Task Force recommends the following:

1. A ‘systems’ approach in designing an organizational structure and efficient processes rather than have each functional unit respond to the recommendations in this report ‘in a vacuum’. To accomplish this, WVU should engage an appropriate outside consultant that can work with a WVU team in developing a visionary systems approach to policies, processes, and organization, with input from the colleges as well as central administration that will provide the support required for advancing the WVU research enterprise.

2. A Strategic Planning and Management Team should be formed for the purpose of working with the consultants in streamlining the administrative support infrastructure for research. The team should be co-chaired by the Assistant Vice President/WVURC Secretary and the Associate Vice President/WVURC Treasurer. Team membership should be management level representatives from the major research administrative support infrastructure units, i.e., OSP, SRA, Facilities, WVU and WVURC Human Resources, Research Compliance, Technology Transfer, and a research faculty member. The Team will report to the Vice Presidents for Research and Economic Development and for Finance and Administration.

3. WVU and WVURC need to invest in the tools and technology infrastructure needed to support research and financial administration. Clarity about roles and responsibilities, effective training mechanisms and improved communication and information access are crucial components that will need to be addressed in order to improve research support services.

4. Finally, many of the issues in this report are being addressed. In view of the relatively short timeframe under which we are working to reach goals of the strategic plan, both research administration and finance should continue moving forward in taking the necessary steps to build support capacity and establish policy.