



## **Executive Summary of the Final Report of the RAII Roles and Organizational Structure Team**

**Submitted to the RAI Steering Committee  
February 2006**

As part of the Research Administration Improvement Initiative (RAII) the Roles and Organizational Structure Team was asked to review and understand organizational models in the DLCs, as well as the roles and responsibilities of those involved in research administration across the Institute. The nature of research administration is changing, and the administrative structures within the university setting must evolve if we are to continue to meet the needs of the faculty and our sponsors. These changes are driven by increasing complexity of electronic tools, regulatory and compliance issues, and interdisciplinary, multi-institutional research programs.

A variety of funding models exist for supporting administrative staff across campus, and these funding models are driving the organizational structures and staffing levels of the departments, laboratories and centers (DLCs). Center grants and allocation accounts allow for centralization of most sponsored research administration in research centers and in laboratories. Academic departments primarily rely on Institute operating funds to provide for administrative staffing. With limited Institute funds, many units depend on administrative assistants working in direct support of faculty to manage sponsored research activities. As a result of these varying funding models, it is extremely difficult to change the organizational structure in one DLC, and seemingly impossible to achieve uniformity across the DLCs. The Institute needs to work toward achieving consistent funding levels for the DLCs, or accept the variety of organizational structures that exist, while working to enhance existing models to compensate for weaknesses caused in part by the funding models.

There is an assumption that a centralized organizational structure provides for a greater level of control than a decentralized organization; however, the Team's preliminary review of internal audit findings did not show a difference between centralized and decentralized units. Still, we are seeing trends in decentralized academic areas to gravitate toward greater centralization of pre and post award research administration, and these moves should be encouraged. A preliminary evaluation of staffing across the DLCs indicates that wide variances in staffing exist across the units. These variances in both the numbers and levels of positions are problematic and deserve further evaluation. It is critical that the Schools work to assure appropriate levels of staffing across the units irrespective of the funding model.

Successful organizational models must include clearly defined roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability. The Team has prepared the Life of a Grant Process Hierarchy and the Roles and Responsibilities Accountability Matrix (appended to this document) for administrators to use in reviewing and assigning accountability to individuals within their areas. While it may be difficult to solve the overarching issue of inconsistent funding models across campus over the near term, addressing issues of staffing and accountability will allow us to continue to respond to the demands of an increasingly complex research environment, and to assure effective research administration and a high level of compliance at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The Team's specific recommendations are included at the end of this report.

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