Challenges and Best Practices in Stimulating Multidisciplinary Research

Leigh Botner, University of Delaware

Liz Constantine, University of Iowa

Karen Eck, Old Dominion University

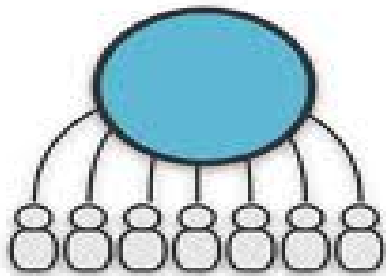**Katie Keough**, Syracuse University

Jessica Venable, Virginia Commonwealth University

Description

❖ This presentation focuses on the challenges in developing multidisciplinary research teams and collaborations comparing both centralized and decentralized institutional structures.

❖ **Challenges** and **Best Practices** in four categories:

- ❖ Technology
- ❖ Networking & Communication
- ❖ Faculty Incentives
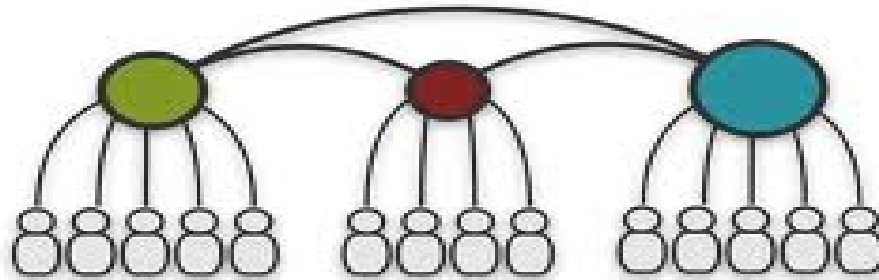- ❖ Institutional Structure & Policy

To be or not to be

Centralized   **versus**   **Decentralized**

- Not enough staff

- Local pockets of knowledge
- Redundancies and cross- purposes

What about hybrid models?
- Takes time to build bridges

Technology – Challenges

❖Gaps in information; effective dissemination

❖Lack of software to help faculty find collaborators on campus; CV's and Bio's not updated or available

❖Working across institutions:

 ❖Multiple IRB's

 ❖Different timeline for approvals

 ❖Sharing proposal information and data

BestPractice

- Let's hear from the panel
  - How does your institution address these challenges?
  - What worked and didn't work?

- Let's hear from the audience
  - What are your challenges?
  - How do you address them?

Networking & Communication – Challenges

❖ Difficulty getting information out in timely manner

❖ Different definitions of multi/inter/trans-disciplinary

❖ Need more awareness of Science of Team Science issues related to large group, new & multidisciplinary projects

❖ Lack of project management skills and abilities to plan and organize large, complex multidisciplinary proposals at department/college level

❖ Limited time & staff for centralized office to train department/college administrators

❖ Working across institutions:

   ❖ Timely communication, completing work on time, knowing who to contact

BestPractice

- Let's hear from the panel
  - How does your institution address these challenges?
  - What worked and didn't work?

- Let's hear from the audience
  - What are your challenges?
  - How do you address them?

Faculty Incentives – Challenges

❖ No clear incentive to conduct interdisciplinary research unless lead PI who receives public credit and F&A

❖ No structure or incentive to keep groups of faculty working together (no admin support, incentive to organize/attend meetings)

❖ Disincentive to participate in interdisciplinary research if faculty's college/department places less weight on these projects compared to individual efforts by faculty

❖ Although seed funding available for multi-college, multidisciplinary projects, no incentive to keep these faculty working together once the project period ends and they submit required proposal to external funder

BestPractice

- Let's hear from the panel
  - How does your institution address these challenges?
  - What worked and didn't work?

- Let's hear from the audience
  - What are your challenges?
  - How do you address them?

Institutional Structure & Policy– Challenges

❖ Decentralized campus structure for research admin; no RD resources in central sponsored programs office so RD left to individual colleges

❖ College with RD unit seen as not research intensive by other centers/groups; difficult time forming partnerships with other researchers on campus

❖ No structure or incentives for individual faculty members to participate in interdisciplinary research or groups to continue to work together

❖ RD offices vary in organization and management depending on academic unit; difficult to provide consistent level of assistance

❖ Hard to maintain equity as different policies by college/school on F&A distribution and percent course buyout

- Let's hear from the panel
  - How does your institution address these challenges?
  - What worked and didn't work?

- Let's hear from the audience
  - What are your challenges?
  - How do you address them?