

# Research Office Unit Summary

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## UNIT NAME:

Research Office

## UNIT SUMMARY AND RESPONSIBILITY:

The Research Office serves the faculty and students of WVU – supporting and promoting excellence in their research, scholarship, and creative activities. We are the principal advocate for research and scholarship, and creative activity at WVU, both internally and externally. The office works to facilitate collaborations between faculty, industry, and government. The divisions of the office support the faculty by helping them navigate external funding processes, procedures, and compliance requirements as well as providing infrastructure essential to supporting their research, scholarship, and creative activities.

## UNIT HEAD COUNT COMPARISON:

Based on Raise File Information:

- **FY 2018:** 80 FTE
- **FY 2022:** 91 FTE
- Growth was in OSP and Compliance Staff to address substantial and sustained growth in Research Activity across WVU
- Six positions were eliminated in 2023 as part of budget reduction

## UNIT BUDGET COMPARISON:

From 2018 to 2023:

- WVU's externally funded expenditures grew from \$155M to \$231M (up 28%).
- Indirect cost recovery grew from \$26M to \$39M (up 38%).
- Total research office expenditures increased from \$14.2M to \$16.6M (up 17%)
- Research office personnel expenditures increased from \$10.4M to \$13M (up 25%).
- 2023 expenses included growth in OSP staff and OSP salary increases, \$540k to meet market, and a 1-time \$810k expense for Huron to cover OSP staff shortages.
- Staffing for Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance increased 33% and 91% respectively.
- Reflective of growth in transactions handled in both areas - 27% growth in OSP transactions, aligned with expenditure growth, and 100% growth in compliance transactions.
- There was no change in the executive level staff – 1 VP and 3 Associate VPs
- Expenditure peers KSU and UO have 1 VP and 4 and 5 AVP's, respectively.

## UNIT BENCHMARKS:

Externally supported expenditure peers are Kansas State University and the University of Oregon.

INSTITUTION	# OF AVPs	# OF OSP STAFF
WVU	3	30 (24 in 2022 due to vacancies)
KSU	4	30
OU	5	25

- 50 Transactions is NCURA Benchmark Workload, due to staffing shortages WVU is running 100 or more at a given point in time currently.
- OSP Transactions increased.

### CONCLUSION STATEMENT / REVIEW OUTCOME:

Growth in research office budget was due to growth in staff to address strong growth in external funding to WVU. There was 27% growth in OSP transactions, aligned with expenditure growth, and 100% growth in compliance transactions with staffing growth of 33% in OSP and 91% in compliance.

Research Office Expenditures as a percentage of Total Externally Sponsored Expenditures decreased from 9.2% to 7.2%, indicating increased efficiency RO operations relative to the WVU growth.

#### RO Actions Underway:

1. The University's electronic research administration (ERA) system will be upgraded to a modern R1 ready platform developed by Huron. Currently, the WVU Research Office utilizes a combination of the Kualu Cloud software provided by Kualu Inc., a customized legacy version of the Kualu Foundation software; manual processes; and additional software to support research. This patchwork of solutions creates an inefficient work environment for the research office staff, a dissatisfying result for the WVU research community, and increases compliance risk. The new system will replace the current electronic research administration platform with a system that is more efficient and eliminates manual processes. The new system, locally known as Research Connect, includes the development of a central Research Operations Portal. This portal provides one location to access systems, forms, guidance, and other operational research office services and will complement a new RO website. The vendor has been selected and the contract signed, and the implementation phase has just begun. We are starting with the OSP module first as it is our greatest need. It is scheduled to go live in March of 2025. Implementation of compliance modules will follow. Full implementation of all modules is estimated to occur within three years. This represents an \$8M investment in research support funded through bonding.
2. Extensive work is ongoing for workload management, development of streamlined processes, documentation of operating procedures and tracking of performance indicators. The documentation of current state workflows for the entire research administration lifecycle is underway, which will directly inform areas of operational duplication and gaps in services that will require intervention and redeployment of resources particularly in the Office of Sponsored Programs. Collaboration with units to build surge capacity for large deadlines is beginning in a pilot phase with the HSC preaward team.
3. Over the last five years, the RO has elected not to replace departed administrative assistants (AA) and instead move to a shared assistance model with 3 remaining AAs covering a few tasks for all units (e.g., P-card, travel reconciliation, large meeting scheduling etc).
4. Discussions are underway regarding improved research commercialization strategies and attendant structural and operational changes. This work is being undertaken in collaboration with OGC and HSC.