

**U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
Subcommittee on Oversight  
Subcommittee on Research and Technology**

**HEARING CHARTER**

***Reducing the Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research***

Thursday, June 12, 2014  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

**Purpose**

On June 12, 2014, the Subcommittees on Oversight and Research and Technology will hold a joint hearing titled *Reducing the Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research*.

The National Science Board (NSB) recently released a report titled, “Reducing Investigators’ Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research,”<sup>1</sup> on administrative burdens facing institutions that receive federal funding for research. The hearing will examine concerns raised and policy actions recommended in the NSB report to eliminate or modify ineffective regulations, harmonize and streamline requirements, and increase efficiency and effectiveness for universities receiving federal funds.

**Witnesses**

- **Dr. Arthur Bienenstock**, Chairman, Task Force on Administrative Burden, National Science Board
- **Dr. Susan Wyatt Sedwick**, Chair, Federal Demonstration Partnership; President, FDP Foundation
- **Dr. Gina Lee-Glauser**, Vice President for Research, Syracuse University, Office of Research
- **The Honorable Allison Lerner**, Inspector General, National Science Foundation, Office of Inspector General

**Background**

In 2009, the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology sent a bipartisan and bicameral letter to the National Academies requesting a report identifying the top ten actions to be taken in order to maintain the excellence of U.S. research

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<sup>1</sup> National Science Board, “Reducing Investigators’ Administrative Workload for Federally Funded Research,” National Science Foundation (NSB-14-18), March 10, 2014, available at: <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2014/nsb1418/nsb1418.pdf>; (Hereinafter NSB Report).

and doctoral education. The request expressed concern that America's research universities were 'at risk' and asked the National Academies to assess the future of research universities by asking what Congress, the federal government, state governments, research universities, and others could do to ensure future success of these institutions -- which now face an array of challenges ranging from unstable revenue streams and antiquated policies and practices to increasing competition from universities abroad.<sup>2</sup>

On June 14, 2012, the National Academies released the report *Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation's Prosperity and Security* detailing ten recommendations for stakeholders to ensure U.S. research universities maintain their capabilities and grow their strengths.<sup>3</sup> Of note, one of the recommendations was to:

“Reduce or eliminate regulations that increase administrative costs, impede research productivity, and deflect creative energy without substantially improving the research environment.

- Federal policymakers and regulators (OMB, Congress, agencies) and their state counterparts should review the costs and benefits of federal and state regulations, eliminating those that are redundant, ineffective, inappropriately applied to the higher education sector, or that impose costs that outweigh the benefits to society.
- The federal government should make regulations and reporting requirements more consistent across federal agencies.”<sup>4</sup>

### **National Science Board**

Sharing this concern, the NSB Task Force on Administrative Burdens (hereafter, “the Task Force”) publically released a report on May 1, 2014 highlighting a growing complaint that there has been an increasing administrative workload placed on federally funded researchers at U.S. institutions, which they say is interfering with the conduct of science.<sup>5</sup>

The Task Force issued a request for information and held roundtable discussions in order to examine which Federal agency and institutional requirements contribute most to research universities' administrative workload. Through such analysis, the Task Force learned that the most common areas associated with high administrative workload included: financial management, the grant proposal process, progress and other outcome reporting, human subject research and institutional review boards (IRBs), time and effort reporting, and personnel management.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Letter to Ralph J. Cicerone, Charles M. Vest and Harvey V. Fineberg, from Representatives Bart Gordon and Ralph Hall and Senators Barbara Mikulski and Lamar Alexander, June 22, 2009, available at: <http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/nas.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> National Academies Press, “Research Universities and the Future of America: Ten Breakthrough Actions Vital to Our Nation's Prosperity and Security,” 2012, available at: [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=13396](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13396).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> NSB Report, *supra*, note 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The Task Force offers several recommendations in its report, including to eliminate or modify ineffective regulations, and to harmonize and streamline requirements.

### **Federal Demonstration Partnership**

In addition, the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP), sponsored by the Government-University-Industry Research Roundtable (GUIRR) of the National Academies, is a cooperative initiative among ten federal agencies and 119 institutional recipients of federal funds whose stated purpose is to reduce administrative burdens associated with federal research grants and contracts.<sup>7</sup>

In 2005, an FDP study of investigators found that principal investigators (PIs) of federally sponsored research projects spend, on average, 42 percent of their time on associated administrative tasks.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the FDP 2012 Faculty Workload Survey, released in April 2014, notes the same percentage of time on average that PIs estimate spending on meeting requirements in conjunction with federally-funded projects. As noted in the survey, “The most commonly experienced administrative responsibilities included those related to federal project **finances, personnel, and effort reporting**. These were also among the most time-consuming responsibilities.”<sup>9</sup>

Further, the FDP is currently helping to lead a payroll certification system pilot project as an “alternative to Effort Reporting that uses a project based methodology and utilizes the concept that ‘charges are reasonable in relation to work performed.’”<sup>10</sup> There are four pilot schools involved in the project: George Mason University, Michigan Technological University, University of California, Irvine and University of California, Riverside.<sup>11</sup>

### **Office of Management and Budget**

The White House Office of Management and Budget provides guidance for the use of federal research funds, and compliance is monitored through a variety of audits conducted on a regular basis.<sup>12</sup> The National Science Foundation’s Office of Inspector General (NSF OIG), for example, which is responsible for auditing grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements funded by NSF, is also auditing two of the above-mentioned four institutions that have implemented new pilot programs to ease time and effort reporting requirements.

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<sup>7</sup> The National Academies website on the Federal Demonstration Partnership, available at: <http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/fdp/index.htm>

<sup>8</sup> NSB Report, *supra*, note 1.

<sup>9</sup> Sandra L. Schneider, Kirsten K. Ness, et al, 2012 Faculty Workload Survey: Research Report, Federal Demonstration Partnership: April 2014, emphasis in original.

<sup>10</sup> Mike Laskofski, “Payroll Certification on Federally Sponsored Projects,” Office of Sponsored Programs, George Mason University, March 2013, available at: <http://osp.gmu.edu/wp-content/uploads/PayrollCertification032013.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Association of American Universities, “University Research: The Role of Federal Funding,” January 2011, available at: <http://www.aau.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=11588>.

In December of 2013, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published new guidance for federal award programs titled, “OMB Uniform Guidance: Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.”<sup>13</sup>

The guidance states, “This reform of OMB guidance will improve the integrity of the financial management and operation of Federal programs and strengthen accountability for Federal dollars by improving policies that protect against waste, fraud, and abuse. At the same time, this reform will increase the impact and accessibility of programs by minimizing time spent complying with unnecessarily burdensome administrative requirements, and so reorients recipients toward achieving program objectives.”<sup>14</sup>

Further, “This reform streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars into one consolidated set of guidance in the code of Federal regulations. This consolidation is aimed at eliminating duplicative or almost duplicative language in order to clarify where policy is substantively different across types of entities, and where it is not... This clarification will make compliance less burdensome for recipients and reduce the number of audit findings that result more from unclear guidance than actual noncompliance.”<sup>15</sup>

This new guidance is scheduled to be implemented on December 26, 2014, after the affected federal agencies respond to OMB on how they will comply with it.

### **Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST) Act**

H.R. 4186, the Frontiers in Innovation, Research, Science, and Technology Act, favorably reported by the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on May 28, 2014, includes a legislative provision on regulatory efficiency which requires the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to establish a working group under the National Science and Technology Council. The working group would be responsible for reviewing federal regulations affecting research and research universities and making recommendations on ways to harmonize, streamline and eliminate duplication of regulations and minimize regulatory burden for research universities while maintaining accountability. The working group is also required to take into account input and recommendations from non-federal stakeholders, and within a year after enactment, report on the steps taken to carry out its recommendations.

The language in FIRST is similar to language included in legislation introduced by Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson, H.R. 4159, which also requires the establishment of a working group to review federal regulatory and reporting requirements.

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<sup>13</sup> Federal Register, December 26, 2013, 78 FR 78590, available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-12-26/pdf/2013-30465.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.