

Winniford (Ford) A. Simmons, MLIS
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Ford Simmons, MLIS serves as Grants & Contracts Administrator III for the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the Medical University of South Carolina. He has fifteen (15) years' experience creating, reviewing, negotiating and managing grants and contracts. In his current role, Ford reviews, submits and manages Federal and Foundation grants and Data Use Agreements for several academic colleges. He also reviews and negotiates Corporate Non-Disclosure Agreements and Clinical Trial Contracts on behalf of the Medical University of South Carolina. Ford Simmons also created and manages the REDCap intake databases for all University-wide incoming Confidentiality, Data Use and Material Transfer Agreements. Ford Simmons maintains his expertise in all facets of sponsored awards, from Federal, Foundation and Corporate awards through constant learning, especially through his participation in NCURA. Ford has served NCURA as Website Committee Coordinator, Planning and Program Committee member for several Region III Conferences, and is currently the Nominations Committee Chair. Ford has presented twice at Region III Conferences. Recently, Ford published his first article in NCURA Magazine. Previously, Ford was the NCURA Collaborate Committee Co-Chair for the Pre-Award Group. He looks forward to serving NCURA at whatever capacity is needed.

Experience

Grants & Contracts Administrator III

Medical University of South Carolina Office of Research & Sponsored Programs - Charleston, SC
07/2023 - Present

Serves as an expert on Clinical Trial Contracts and Federal/Foundation awards. Manages the proposal and post-award stages of complex corporate contracts in a central office capacity for Biochemistry, Dental Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Microbiology & Immunology, Neurosciences, Ophthalmology, Pharmacology, Pulmonary, Radiation Oncology, Regenerative Medicine, and Urology.

- Reviews and negotiates complex contracts and budgets with external contract research organizations.
- Answers, reviews, and negotiates Confidential Disclosure Agreements.
- Handles federal, foundation, corporate and Veteran's Affairs Personnel Service Agreements, grants, awards, and requests as needed.
- Serves as a consultant on various colleges and departments on corporate contract procedures.
- Trains grant administrators and investigators via classroom grants administration training.
- Serves on Information Technology group within the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs to help formulate, organize, and finalize data requests from internal stakeholders.
- Creates digital presentations for the Director of the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs for internal Board of Trustee and other required meetings.
- Utilizes software to create charts and other data for monthly and annual ORSP research reporting documents.
- Manages the Confidential Disclosure, Data Use Agreement and Master Transfer Agreement REDCap Databases

Grants & Contracts Administrator II

Medical University of South Carolina Office of Research & Sponsored Programs - Charleston, SC
03/2018 - 06/2023

Managed the proposal and post-award stages of complex federal and foundation grants & sponsored programs and contracts for the College of Health Professions, Department of Pediatrics, and Hollings Cancer Center, respectively. Managed Veterans Affairs Professional Services Agreements.

Project Manager

Medical University of South Carolina - South Carolina Clinical & Translational Research Institute (SCTR)
Charleston, SC
01/2015 - 03/2018

Managed professional and educational complex projects, programs, and communication strategies for the South Carolina Clinical & Translational Research (SCTR) Institute and the MUSC Vice President for Research. Ensured daily and long-term program goals and initiatives were met through planning and coordination involving evaluative collaborations with external and internal advisors.

- Improved enterprise-wide research collaborations through multifaceted communication initiatives reaching over 10k faculty and staff.
- Accelerated academic innovations into marketed products through the management of the \$50k SCTR and MUSC Foundation for Research Development Technology Development Grant program.
- Catalyzed NIH-funded collaborations through the planning, development, and management of statewide scientific conferences on a variety of biomedical concerns including Immunotherapy, Human Microbiome and Health Disparities.
- Created striking documents, graphs and charts for MUSC funded investigators for \$1M+ grant applications and renewals.
- Managed and edited SCTR website and created new webpages as required.

Reference & Information Services Coordinator Librarian

Sumter County Library - Sumter, SC
01/2009 - 01/2015

- Answered complex reference questions for library patrons on a variety of topics.
- Assisted library patrons in creating impactful resumes for job placement.
- Created and taught classes for library patrons on career development, job placement, resumes, Microsoft Office, internet accessibility and more.
- Managed a team tasked to create the Sumter County Library Long Range Plan.
- Planned and composed several successful grant funding initiatives to obtain new library resources and services.
- Created and managed the Sumter County Library website and social media pages on Facebook and YouTube.
- Presented on various topics at various civic and social clubs throughout Sumter County.
- Assisted patrons with computer issues on Computer Reference desk.

Education

University of South Carolina – Columbia, SC
Master's in Library and Information Science - 06/2009

Francis Marion University – Florence, SC
BA in English Literature, Minor in Creative Writing – 06/2007

Certificates

- Google Project Management Certificate, 2022
- Google Sustainability Project Manager Certificate, 2022
- MUSC Integrated Departmental Education for Administrators, 2016

Professional Development

- NCURA: National Council of University Research Administrators
 - NCURA Region III Volunteer Award, 2024
 - Co-Chair, Preaward Collaborate Working Committee, January 2023 - January 2024
 - Region III Nominations Committee Chair, 2024 - Present
 - Region III Website & Conference Committee Member, 2020 - Present
 - Website Coordinator, Lead, 2020 - 2023
 - Presented twice at Region III Conferences
 - Recently published in NCURA Magazine

Diversity Statement – Ford Simmons, MLIS

What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you personally

To me, diversity, equity, and inclusion are vital principles for creating an environment where everyone, regardless of their background, feels respected, valued, and empowered to contribute. Diversity is about recognizing and celebrating differences in culture, thought, and experience. Equity is ensuring that everyone has access to the same opportunities, and inclusion is about fostering a sense of belonging where every voice is heard and valued. Personally, DEI is not just about fairness, but about enriching the community and sparking innovation by incorporating a wide array of perspectives and experiences.

What is your personal position on and experience with diversity, equity, and inclusion? Please give examples, and share which experience was the most impactful

My personal position on DEI is rooted in the belief that diverse teams lead to more creative, effective, and inclusive problem-solving. In my career and personal life, I have actively sought out opportunities to champion DEI, particularly in spaces where diverse voices may not always be heard.

In my personal life, it is my goal to fill the day with love. I do this by positively interacting with everyone I meet. At NCURA events, I am always the first one to lend a helping hand. At NCURA social events, I am the first one on the dance floor, always trying to encourage everyone to have a good time. It is important to me that everyone has an opportunity to BE HAPPY. Life is hard and our jobs can be difficult. NCURA exists to support our professional development, not just through education, but also through communication and interaction. I strive to maintain the type of personal interaction that makes everyone feel welcome and a valued member of NCURA.

What are some diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that you would like to see within NCURA?

Within NCURA, I would love to see several DEI initiatives that ensure we are not only talking about these values but actively embodying them:

1. ****NCURA Diversity Conferences****: Establish a dedicated NCURA Diversity Conference focused on meaningful interactions with a diverse membership seeking to establish and ensure diverse perspectives and policies thrive within the organization.
2. ****NCURA Diversity Officer****. While the Select Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is a wonderful champion for DEI causes, I believe NCURA could greatly benefit from an official NCURA Diversity Officer who champions the cause of DEI throughout not just NCURA, but the research administration world.
3. ****Diverse Recruitment Initiatives****. Establish targeted recruitment drives to Grants and Contracts Professionals located at diverse institutions that may be considered smaller or less well known than many of the larger institutions.
4. ****Regular Regional DEI Conversations****. Begin regular Region III DEI Programs via Zoom, Teams or other tool, to ensure membership feels at home and connected to their peers.

Incoming Chair-Elect Nominee – Ford Simmons, MLIS

Personal Leadership Statement

As a leader, I believe in the power of actions over words. I strive to lead by example, setting a standard of integrity, dedication, and empathy in all that I do. My leadership approach is grounded in transparency, collaboration, and a deep commitment to the development of those around me. I understand that leadership is not about directing from the front but about supporting, inspiring, and empowering others to reach their full potential. When I attend NCURA events, I always try to assist others in any way possible. From moving boxes, setting up rooms, joining the Tech Team at the National NCURA Conference, I hope my actions show other NCURA members that if you put the time into improving the organization, you WILL have a richer experience.

My involvement with NCURA at both the regional and national levels reflect my passion for professional growth and community building. By actively participating and volunteering at NCURA conferences and committees, I have had the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of our field, foster connections between peers, and create spaces for knowledge-sharing that benefit both new and experienced research administrators. These experiences have reinforced my belief that leadership is about service - service to the profession, to colleagues, and to the broader community. I have served NCURA since I joined in 2018. I have served regionally and nationally in Committee positions, presented at regional conferences, and published an article. I readily answer emails and complete tasks in a timely manner, because NCURA is an organization that requires leadership to maintain and improve how it operates.

Whether I am contributing to conference planning, facilitating sessions, or handling technical issues, I approach each responsibility with enthusiasm, accountability, and a commitment to excellence. I take pride in not only sharing my expertise but also in learning from others, always seeking ways to innovate and improve.

Ultimately, my leadership is driven by the belief that we are all stronger together, and that by working with intention and purpose, we can make a lasting impact on our organizations, our profession, and the communities we serve. In my opinion, NCURA is thriving when its members are thriving from participating in the organization. We can only ensure NCURA thrives by setting the ultimate example of service.