RA Spotlight: John Maher
by Rosemary Hanlon

I sat down for a chat with John Maher in November. I caught up with him in Electrical Engineering & Computer Science (EECS). If I wanted to talk to him in December, I’d find him at IMES – Institute for Medical Engineering & Science – at least this month! Because John is now an Interim Administrative Officer for the School of Engineering (SOE) – floating to serve as a Senior Administrator for SOE units in transition. John’s attitude and experiences at MIT are a perfect match for this interesting and challenging position.

John’s research administration career at MIT began as an Office Assistant in the Department of Biology and later, as a Financial Assistant in the Center for International Studies/Political Science. He stepped away from campus for a few years to achieve a personal goal of gaining his CPA and worked in that field for several years. It wasn’t long before John succumbed to the siren call of MIT; he missed the many personal interactions and mentors he had at MIT and returned to Biology. Encouraged and challenged by his mentor, Alison Salie, John took on supervising roles and other tasks that lead him to become a Senior Fiscal Officer for Picower Institute for Learning and Memory.
For many people, starting over in a new job in a different department every couple of months could be very stressful. However, John is such an outgoing and communicative person, I doubt that will ever be a problem for him! I’ve answered dozens of questions for John over the years, but we’d never met in person. However, within minutes, we were laughing as if we had been great pals for years. We talked about our similar experiences at offices around MIT, we talked about growing up in the area, and how we both came to work at MIT on the recommendation of a friend. John’s communication skills and his ability to put people at ease is an enviable trait. Some lucky departments will also benefit from John’s passion for research administration. He actually likes deadlines, and finds training and supporting his staff as the most rewarding parts of his job. Having support from his own mentors, John believes it is his mission to pay it forward. His words of advice to anyone who will listen starts with “…always let people know when they are doing well and take every opportunity to reach out and connect with colleagues across campus.” He also reminds his staff never fear asking for help, because your questions help others learn and grow too. John says you can ask him the same question repeatedly but “at the 21st time, I’ll get a little surly, but I’ll give you the answer!”

If you happen to see John Maher crossing campus with a storage bin – his personal collection of research administration reference materials, checklists, and training guides – don’t worry, he’s not leaving. John is just transporting his portable office to another temporary AO assignment.

Is there a research administrator you’d like to shine the spotlight on? Send suggestions to ra-help@mit.edu with “spotlight suggestion” in the subject. Thanks!
VPF Corner
Did you know that VPF posts recent news and announcements on their website? Check them out at http://vpf.mit.edu/news
They published a great tip on how to make the payment process run smoothly in Buy-to-Pay (B2P) when submitting an invoice on an existing B2P purchase order.

Audit Division website redesign
Did you ever wonder...?
How do audits work?
What are the benefits of an audit?
Why was my group selected for an audit?
How should I prepare for an audit?
What are audit ratings?

An upcoming audit can naturally bring up many questions. The new Audit Division website strives to answer these questions and take the myth out of who they are, what they do and what they do not do.

Pursuing an opportunity highlighted in an external 2016 Quality Assessment Review, Audit redesigned their website to serve as a key resource for communication and information sharing with the MIT community. It began with a discovery phase to determine the best design layout and focus for the website featured sections. A second phase of the project addressed web page content, starting with an editorial guide to ensure clarity and consistency. The Audit team hopes you’ll find the information on the site to be useful—and that you’ll get to know their team a little better along the way.

The Audit Division has a special message to the members of the MIT community both on campus and at Lincoln Laboratory who participated in focus groups during various stages of the project:

“Thank you for sharing your thoughts. You told us what information you need. We listened and worked closely with our designer and writing teams, who skillfully translated ideas into layouts and words. We want to further express our thanks to Minerva Tirado, VPF Strategic Sourcing Analyst, who guided us through the vendor selection process and provided valuable input throughout the project.”

The project was managed by Kim Ahern, Manager of Audit Quality, and Brigitte Tersek, Senior Administrative Assistant.

We hope you’ll stop by to visit our new site and share your feedback at mitaudit@mit.edu.

Hub News flash: Watch for upcoming details for a “Topic in Research Administration” event on MIT Audits scheduled for March 28, 2018!
OSP Corner

Changes to Key Person Maintenance:

As of the 12/2/17 KC update, there is a strategic change in Key Person Maintenance on Awards that lifts some work off DLCs. No longer will Key Person confirmations be performed by DLC Administrators or Principal Investigators at Award stage. Instead, OSP will confirm Key Person(s) at the time of new Award setup in KC, based upon sponsor requirements, review of those listed on the development proposal, and those named on the Sponsor award notice. As a reminder, the number of key persons identified in a project should be minimized to reduce administrative burden; any change to the effort of key persons may require sponsor prior approval. Contact your OSP Contract Administrator should you wish to make any changes to the Key Persons listed on your awards. See the OSP page on Key Personnel for additional information. [https://osp.mit.edu/grant-and-contract-administration/managing-projects/key-personnel](https://osp.mit.edu/grant-and-contract-administration/managing-projects/key-personnel).

Announcing the OSP Service Tracker (OST)

OSP is pleased to announce the campus-wide roll out of the Office of Sponsored Programs Service Tracker (OST). This tool enables you to send requests to OSP for changes to your awards, and to track those changes through the process. It’s fast and easy to use. You will be able to see “where is it” and “what’s next”. You can also set priorities for your items, for example, telling us that a change is urgent and should be done before other requests. This helps us better manage the services we provide to your department. OST has been in pilot phase with a few departments and we are currently rolling it out to those departments interested. The OST system will be available beginning December 14th and please reach out to osp@mit.edu if you would like to participate. Ask RA-Help if you need information regarding the OST overview sessions.

KC System to System updates

OSP and RA Help are collaborating on quality assurance testing of recently updated Grants.gov forms for KC S2S opportunities. Most of the forms are to support PHS/NIH submissions due on or after January 25th 2018 and we are on target to upgrade KC with these forms to meet this deadline. The most significant impact comes from how PHS revised the definition of clinical trials and created a new Human Subjects and Clinical Trials form. We are coordinating efforts the relevant stakeholders to understand how the PHS change impacts current policy and practice for the use of human participants in MIT research.
Grants.gov News:

Bye-Bye Adobe, Hello Workspace.

December 31st marks the end of an era for Grant.gov’s downloadable Adobe PDF proposal submission process. Existing Adobe PDF opportunities can only be submitted until March 31st 2018, if the sponsor has not deactivated the PDF option. KC’s System-To-System (S2S) is often the most efficient method for many federal proposals, with personnel, address details, and MIT Institutional data automatically populated to the supported forms. While we recognize some federal sponsor submissions may necessitate using different methods like Workspace, NSF Fastlane, or NIH ASSIST, using these external systems increases administrative burden from the need to re-key the data - duplicate entry. KC is the institute system of record for proposal submissions and should be used for all federal agency proposals submissions unless the solicitation or funding opportunity requires another method, system, or is not supported by KC S2S. OSP and RA Help are coordinating efforts to support those infrequent submissions using Workspace, which is an online cloud-based environment where you can fill out and edit the same forms used in KC S2S proposals and the retiring Adobe PDF forms. Workspace access begins with establishing a Grants.gov user ID. You only need an ID to be added as a ‘participant’ to a Workspace by a Workspace Manager. More information on MIT’s use of Workspace is forthcoming as we refine how to incorporate this submission method into the Institutional review & approval process.

User Attached Forms – prior versions available at Grants.gov!

Speaking of S2S submissions, here at the helpdesk, a frequent request has been help with User Attached Forms. For most, the problem has been getting the correct form version needed for your System-To-System (S2S) proposal. Previously, the Grants.gov website only provided the most current version, but active funding opportunities often need prior versions. As of the November Grants.gov upgrade, you can now access all prior form versions using the new Form Items Description (FID) screen. See our latest Quick Card for details, available at our Quick Card page (kc.mit.edu/quick-reference-cards) for complete instructions including such popular requests like how to identify which form version you need, how to get forms from Grants.gov, and some hot-from-the-helpdesk tips to understand the form’s minimum required fields. As always, if you’re in a pinch, just ask us at ra-help@mit.edu and we’ll help you identify which version and supply the form you need.
Recommended Reading: NCURA’s October/November E-Magazine

You probably get lots of emails full of information that you don’t always have time to fully appreciate. Some linger in your inbox with the intention of reading the full article or following the link to the website for related content. You print some to read on the train ride home, or save a copy to a folder thinking “I’ll find it if I need it later.” If you are a member of NCURA (National Council of University Research Administrators), you received the email about the October/November NCURA Magazine - electronic only edition. If you didn’t download it, then you should go back and follow the link, or login to NCURA.EDU and retrieve the PDF magazine. ALL of the articles are on communication, and you will learn something from every one. One particularly inspired piece is “Know/Feel/Do: Three Questions to Improve Communication” by Melanie Hehl. The author related a technique used by many course content creators to help them define the message in their class materials. Hehl explained how this technique can be effective beyond classroom materials, and used every day to improve conversations, especially email, where the “feel’ aspect is often missing or misinterpreted. She described a scenario of having to get progress report information from an unresponsive PI and used the Know/Feel/Do technique to develop an effective message. She analyzed what the most important facts that she needed the PI to KNOW (just the critical information); thought about how she wanted the PI to FEEL (that she would help and support the process); and clarified what she needs the PI to DO (clarified action items and a timeline).

This article was just one of the take-away tips from the October/November 2017 edition. You might find more!
RA Help Tip: Are your people Active?

It’s not what you think: we’re not asking about fitness routines. We’re trying to improve your KC employee search results! Have you ever tried to find a person to add to your KC proposal, but they don’t appear in your search results? You found them in the MIT online directory, so you try again pasting their name in to avoid typos and even tried searching by their email address – but still with no luck.

You’re not doing anything wrong. It is just likely that the person record is currently set to ‘inactive’ in KC due to an update from the data feed from MIT HR. So what to do?

1. Search the View Person query from the KC home screen in the Personnel channel.
2. Click the ‘Both’ radial button for the Active Indicator option when you enter your criteria.

If you click to open the search result, if the Active field is “No”, then contact ra-help@mit.edu. Give us the person’s name and we can make the person record active.
Educational Offerings for Research Administrators
(registry via atlas.mit.edu –MIT Certificate required)

Topics in Research Administration
Gifts vs. Grants; Implications for Indirect Costs Dec 7
Speakers: Claude Canizares, Richelle Nessralla, Lorry Spitzer, Shawna Vogel
MIT Export Control Jan 23
Speaker: Janet Johnson
Audit FYI for the Research Administrator Mar 28

RAP Sessions (Research Administration Practices)
Industrial Proposal Preparation: Tips & Resources Dec 11
Understanding the data in SAP and KC Jan 10

Kuali Coeus Proposal Training
Non-S2S Proposals (two 1/2-day sessions) Jan 30-31
System-To System Proposals (two 1/2-day sessions) Feb 27-28
Budget: rates & personnel Oct 18

Fundamentals of Sponsored Programs
Fundamentals: Sponsored Project Closeout Dec 13

Financial Management & Post Award Administration
Accounting Fundamentals Dec 13
Concur Travel Expense Drop-in Session Dec 20, 27
Buy-to-Pay (B2P) Drop in Session Dec 13, 20
Introduction to Travel and Expense Reporting Jan 17

Questions, email address is: RA-Help@mit.edu
RA Support website is: research.mit.edu/mit-research-administration-hub