

2015 Profile of a Research Administrator

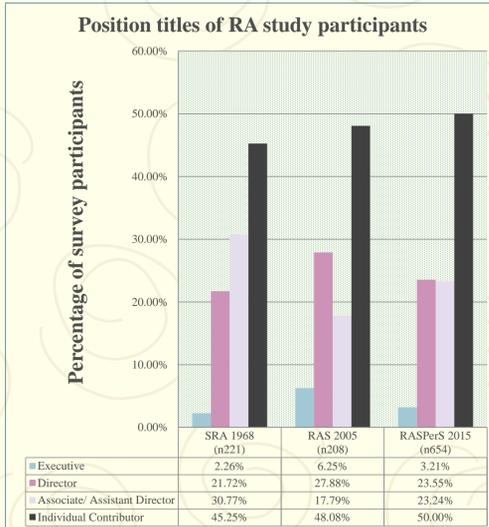
Jennifer Shambrook, Ph.D.¹, Vernet Lasrado, Ph.D.¹, Thomas J. Roberts, Ed.D.², and Thomas O'Neal, Ph.D.¹
¹Office of Research & Commercialization, University of Central Florida, ²College of Education, Florida Gulf Coast University

Study objectives:

1. Describe the modal characteristics of research administrators
2. Show how modal characteristics have transitioned over time
3. Identify potential areas of concern for the profession

RA Demographic Profile Studies

Figure 1. Job category comparisons of sample populations show study similarity.



Study similarity: The study populations were all made up of research administrators (RA). However, if one study had mostly executives while another study had mostly individual contributors, it would confound any between-study comparisons of salary, education and possibly years of experience. Figure 1 shows between-study comparisons of the sample of participants by job title categories. Statistical analysis was performed using Chi-squared test for independence. Here, the hypotheses are tested by computing the Chi-squared statistic using contingency tables. Results of the statistical analysis indicated the job categories of the samples from the different studies were **not statistically significantly different**.

Figure 2. Descriptions of the four major RA studies.

Study	Year	Sample Size (N)	Method	Geography	Membership	Purpose
1968 SRA Survey	1968	221	Paper based	Nationwide US	SRA members	First survey to attempt to characterize occupational group known as research administrators; and make recommendations for the benefit of the profession; Recommendations included: Establishing a journal; Creating a job placement bureau; Establishment of professional standards; Organize a series of seminars on the subject of research administration; Learn more about wage and salary; Periodically repeat demographic survey
2005 RAS	2005	230	Paper based	Regional (Southeastern US)	NCURA members	Define demographic characteristics of research administrators (RAs); Establish current baseline data to assist in the establishment of need for formalized education in research administration; Determine perceptions of value for Certification in Research Administration; Determine how RAs entered the field; Recommendations included: Broaden survey participant cachement area; Explore RA curriculum development
2010 RASPerS	2010	1,188	Internet based	Nationwide US	NCURA membership	Expand upon 2007 RASPerS objectives using established measures for stress, work/life balance, and health behavior; Purposefully collect demographic data in order to validate, expand and update regional demographic from 2005 RAS and 2007 RASPerS; Recommendations: Explore associations between salary levels and other demographic factors such as education, experience, credentials and gender; Repeat study again in five years in order to establish possible trends in demographic data and/or stress
2015 RASPerS	2015	652	Internet based	Nationwide US	Resadm-listserve	Expand upon two previous RASPerS study as related to stress and health behavior; Further study of research administration demographics; Perform statistical analysis of multiple data points of between study variables; Recommendations: Perform additional study of research administrators as a group with regard to demographic, stress and health behavior data; Perform more in-depth analysis of associations related to variables such as work/life balance, gender, position title, education, RA function, and age groups.

Figure 3. Research administrators have gone from almost exclusively male to almost exclusively female over time.

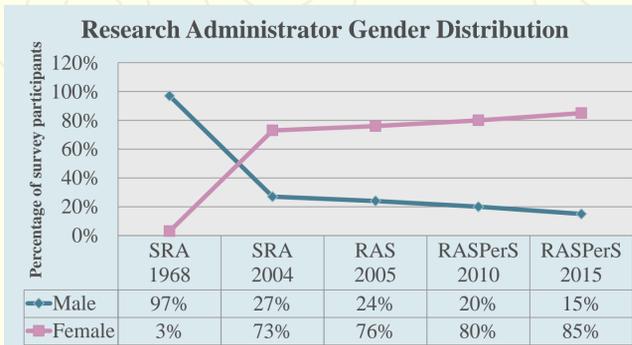


Figure 4. The number of RAs with Master's degrees is on a statistically significant upward trajectory.

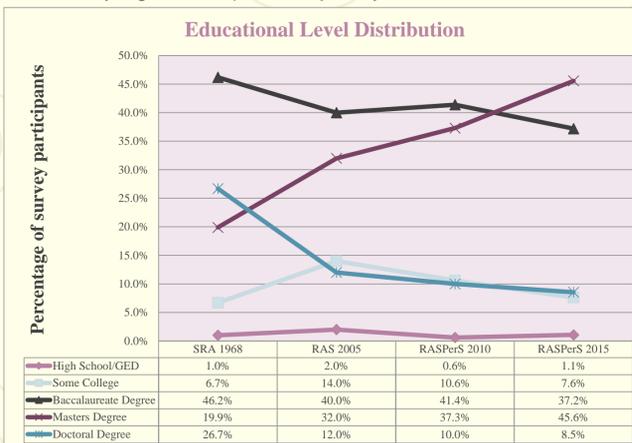


Figure 5. The percentage of RAs making less than \$50K per year has decreased while RAs making >\$75K and >\$100K has increased during an economic period when median salaries in the United States have remained essentially flat (BLS, 2014).

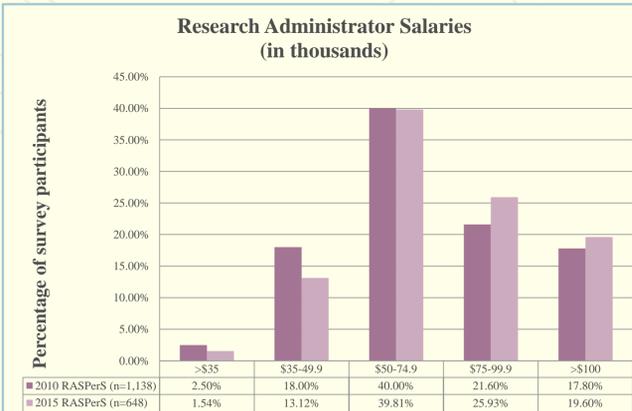


Figure 6. Overall, this indicates a trend toward an aging of the overall occupational group. The 60 plus age group is the fastest growing and the 40-49 age group is the fastest declining.

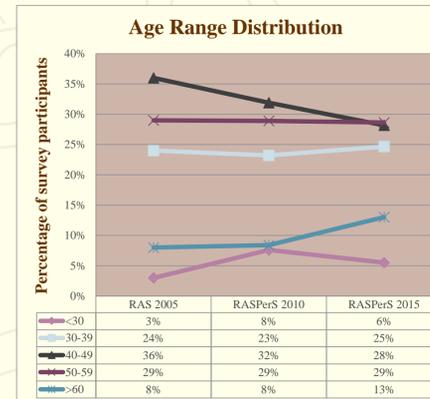


Figure 7. The percentage of RAs in the lower years of experience group is declining while higher years experience is increasing.

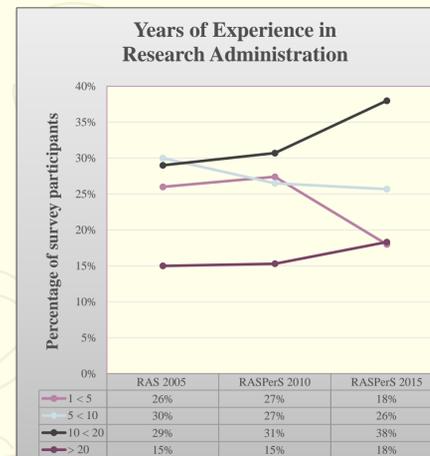
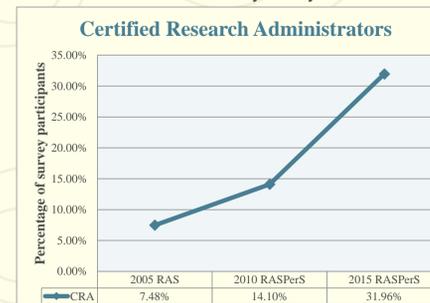


Figure 8. Acquisition of the CRA credential has almost doubled every five years.



RA Modal Characteristics

Figure 9. The RA profession is a rapidly transitioning field with a change in every variable since the first study in 1968.

Year	Gender (%)	Age Group (%)	Education	Salary Range	Experience
1968	97% male	30-39 years old	Bachelor's degree	Manage a portfolio of less than \$1M	
2005	79% female	40-49 years old	Bachelor's degree	\$40-\$50K salary range	5 to 10 years experience
2010	80% female	40-49 years old	Bachelor's degree	\$50-\$75K salary range	10 to 20 years experience
2015	85% female	50-59 years old	Master's degree	\$50-\$75K salary range	10 to 20 years experience

Conclusions: Research administration has transitioned from a profession populated by men in their thirties with a bachelor's degree to a profession of women in their fifties with a master's degree.

Potential areas of concern: The number of new (>1-5 years of experience) people joining the profession is declining while those who are expected to soon leave the work force (>20 is growing.) Commensurately, those in the age groups under the age of fifty is decreasing while those in the age groups over fifty is increasing. The age group of ≥60 years of age is the fastest growing age group. A scarcity of experienced research administrators is predicted if current trends continue.

Recommendations: Efforts should be taken to determine what steps need to be taken to attract new people into the profession and retain those in the younger age and experience groups in order to avoid a scarcity of qualified research administrators in the future.

Bibliography
 Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*, Median weekly earnings, 2004–2014 on the Internet at http://www.bls.gov/medwage/2014/red_20140423.htm (visited September 21, 2015).
 D'Agostino, D., Lasker, L., Niven, D.T., Procter, R., & Stevenson, B. L. (1969) Profile of a Research Administrator. *SRA Journal*, Vol. 1 (1), pp 1-7.
 Roberts, T.J., & House, J. (2006) Profile of a Research Administrator. *Research Management Review*, Vol. 15(1), pp 41-47.
 Shambrook, J. (2011) Research Administration Salaries: How Do We Measure Up? *NCURA Magazine*, May/June Vol. 43 (10):20-22.
 Shambrook, J. & Roberts, T.J. (2011) 2010 Profile of a Research Administrator. *Research Management Review* Spring/Summer 2011 Vol. 18, No. 1, 19-30.
 Shambrook, J., Roberts, T.J. & Triscari, R.S. (2011) Research Administrator Salary: Association with Education, Experience, Credentials or Gender. *Journal of Research Administration*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp 87-99.