RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS AS CHANGE AGENTS
Synergizing Research Talent by Minimizing the “Silo Mentality”
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Introduction
The job responsibilities for research administrators are complex and diverse, requiring resourceful analytical and problem-solving ability; excellent time management and organizational skills; and outstanding oral and written communication skills. In addition, the interpersonal or “soft” skills must be used to influence, persuade, and motivate the research community. As change agents, research administrators can assist in facilitating effective collaboration and eliminating the silo effect.

The Silo Issue
Silos may be defined as “groups of employees that tend to work as autonomous units within an organization.”

As of 2010 the phrase “silo effect” became popular in the business and organizational community referring to a lack of communication and common goals in an organization. The silo effect gets its name from the farm storage silo. A structure designated for one specific grain.

The silo mentality is defined as “an attitude with an organization when the different sections or departments do not share information properly because they do not want to share success with other”, resulting in an inefficient organization. While silos in some cases can be valuable to organizations, organizational silos can block cross-organizational communication, prevent collaboration, and isolate people and teams from one another. Many factors such as building trust, identifying the right team members, establishing good communication and effective negotiation are needed to advance collaborative projects, and to prevent and manage disputes and conflicts.

The Research Environment – Absolute Truth
The research administrator is often seen as the “man in the middle” caught between conflicting goals of the researcher and the research organization. However, research administrators recognize the following absolute truths:

- Integrating various disciplines in research collaborations produce dynamic research synergy

Research Administrators – The New Change Agent
In order to secure new large-scale research grants and contracts, research administrators must view our roles differently by taking an active seat at the table and promoting a culture of interdepartmental, interdisciplinary, inter-institutional research.

Broadening our individual perspectives allow research administrators to see ourselves as the new change agents. We possess the power to promote and advance “win-win” research endeavors. The nature of our job allows us to encourage respect for the knowledge and skills of all researchers; to promote the value of diverse interdisciplinary efforts; to hone our individual skills in managing change; and to work collectively with researchers as they seek to address local, state, national, and global interests and concerns.

Conclusion
As research administrators, we can influence researchers to transition from the silo mentality by improving our problem-solving and decision-making skills; by employing effective communications skills while facilitating collaborations and team building. Utilizing this synergistic approach will allow for a more inclusive and collaborative environment, diminishing the “silos”.

References
http://selectstrategy.com