

NEW YEAR,

New Beginnings... Resolve to Get Involved

By Laura Letbetter, Rosemary Madnick & Robyn Remotigue

As we start a New Year filled with setting goals and writing New Year's resolutions, we challenge you to think about how one individual can make a contribution by volunteering within NCURA, beginning with that first small step. Let's focus on how you can set yourself up for a year of achievement. To be successful you have to be willing to take a chance and make a commitment. Here are ten good reasons to resolve to get involved:

1. You are knowledgeable and have areas of expertise that would benefit the community.
2. You can make a difference by engaging with your colleagues for a shared purpose.
3. Having a sense of purpose contributes to your mental and physical health by improving your mood and reducing stress and anxiety.
4. Volunteering promotes self-esteem, confidence, and personal growth.
5. Volunteering helps solve research administration problems and makes an impact in the community.
6. Volunteering allows you opportunities to hone your communication and time management skills.
7. Volunteering offers you experiences of teamwork and creates avenues for leadership growth.
8. Volunteering offers you opportunities to network with others and possibly vet a new career avenue.
9. Volunteering is actually fun!
10. Volunteering is the perfect way to honor a volunteer who has made a difference in your career.



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So now that you know why you should get involved, where do you begin? Fortunately NCURA is a member driven organization with many opportunities to get involved. NCURA's has Volunteer Central <http://collaborate.ncura.edu/volunteer/volunteeropportunities>, where volunteer opportunities are posted on a regular basis. This excellent resource allows you to use search filters to find projects and positions that suit your needs and fit within your schedule.

If you have the opportunity to attend a spring regional meeting or one of the three national meetings (Annual, Pre-award Research Administration, Financial Research Administrators) – get involved. These meetings don't run themselves; they are actually fueled by the many volunteers who make them happen. Doing something small really makes a huge collective difference in the success of the meeting. Take a look at where you are currently in your research administration career. Even if you are new to the field, you can still make a difference. Being new is the perfect time to volunteer at a registration desk or in the hospitality area at either the national or regional level. If like most busy people, you're cautious about overcommitting, rest assured that these volunteer opportunities take only a little time but provide great benefit to the volunteer as well as to the organization. Both venues will provide you with lots of networking opportunities. You will find that old and new members alike participate in these opportunities, and you will benefit from conversations with both. You will begin to develop relationships that will grow as you deepen your involvement.

Whenever you attend an annual or regional conference, do not overlook the importance of attending your region's business meeting. This is where you will meet people who prioritize involvement in NCURA and who will welcome the opportunity to bring others into the fold. You'll learn the latest news in your region, including its volunteer needs, and you'll have the opportunity to put names with faces. Consider introducing yourself to your region's volunteer coordinator. Let him or her know you're interested in helping and also what your time constraints are. Even though many volunteer tasks are handled through online signups, it is still helpful to the volunteer coordinators to have a chance to speak face to face with those who want to be more involved.

Although you may not see yourself presenting now or in the near future, it's not too early to consider the possibility. When you're networking at the meeting, keep an eye out for members wearing a red presenter ribbon and strike up a conversation about it. Ask them how long they've been presenting and how they got started. You'll find experienced presenters are glad to share their experiences and offer tips for getting involved presenting.

NCURA also has options for members who have fewer opportunities to travel. Consider participating in one or more of the online communities available through Collaborate. Communities are based on professional interests, such as Compliance, Electronic Research Administration, Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions, and many more. You will even find a CRA study group! As a member of a Collaborate Community, you can share advice and ask for advice while knowing there is this special connection with your peers. These forums are ideal for seeking solutions to problems you encounter and for assisting your colleagues when they reach out for help. You are able to support and assist one another in reaching professional goals. Members share best practices or new ideas with others who are looking for ways to improve their organization or their own career path. Collaborate also provides an opportunity to use peers as a sounding

board and to develop relationships with friends and colleagues who share the same interest. By taking only five or ten minutes to offer a colleague your professional opinion or a solution that has worked for you, you can make a difference in someone else's work day and create new connections that in turn are beneficial to you. Creating professional relationships is important, and this organization provides a special bond with others who understand the profession. Collaborate is a perfect opportunity to enhance your network without travel and within your own time constraints, since you decide how much time to spend engaging on these forums.

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There is no doubt that becoming involved in any organization is about devoting time and developing meaningful relationships. In many cases, it is about finding the time. However, involvement in NCURA really does pay back in large dividends. So set a goal to get more involved in 2016, and make that goal realistic and attainable. Then think about what you can reasonably commit to and take that first step. Take a chance in the coming year . . . Resolve to Get Involved! ■



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