



## **Sounds of eRA Podcast Transcription**

**Part six of a twelve part series where Edward Johnson Jr. (a.k.a. Eddie) sits down with Sandra Nordahl, President, Society of Research Administrators International (SRA), to discuss the mission of SRA and the effects of sequestration on research administration.**

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# Lion King Wisdom

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Eddie: Welcome to another “*Sounds of the eRA.*” My name is Edward Johnson, a.k.a. Eddie, and I'm the President of InfoEd International. We're going to be speaking today with Sandra Nordahl. She's the President of SRA. We're going to be speaking about SRA's mission and inner workings and also the effects of sequestration on research administration and its effects on the world around us. Hello, Sandra.

Sandra: Hi, Eddie. Thank you for asking me to participate in your podcast.

Eddie: Glad you were able to accommodate this. In the circle of life, you're planting less seeds, you're getting crops as a result of that, you're not realizing the benefits of those crops because they don't exist. That then has a negative effect on the economy and then that affects your ability in this case to support the non-fed research supporting places like American Cancer, American Heart, which are a couple of the larger nonfederal funding pools, if you will.

So as your point is, it's just a whole circle there that – or spiral maybe that one decision with respect to those seeds has downstream consequences that can be fairly significant.

Sandra: That's exactly right; I think that we have to think globally about how this is affecting the economy because when you – I'm a big fan of NPR and I listen to them quite frequently. But when you think about the economy, our economy and a few other economies really drive the world economy. And when our economy isn't in the best shape possible or things are being done that hinder our economic outlook, and then it affects other markets across the globe. So we have to be very thoughtful about how economic decisions are being made because it will have an impact globally.

And one of the impacts is going to be that we're going to be behind other countries because we haven't devoted the resources that we need to continue to grow our research programs. And the goal of the Bayh-Dole Act was to bring these research innovations to market and we have a fantastic program here at SDSU where we do take these small innovative research programs, we issue many grants for those and then those programs bring technology to the market. So we see that here.

Well, that funding is ending, not necessarily a result of sequestration, but perhaps another program would have begun in its place more readily. I want to explain how critical it is for these small innovative companies and innovative projects to be able to move around in the development phase, so that they can realize marketplace outcomes.

Eddie: Yeah because as I know you know, the large part of the technology transfer office, aside from managing the protection required, which is not a trivial thing, isn't a very expensive thing onto its own. Because when you don't do that well, you leave the door open to other countries with less scruples to go ahead and grab your intellectual property and use it because you haven't protected in all the areas you need to. And the protection of those things is not cheap in any facet, so that costs money.

The other thing that you kind of need to consider, as I know you know, is that marketing is not cheap. The way to get it out there, as you described, is people need to be advertising it, putting it in commercials, it in assertion search engines, picking up the phone and doing all the kinds of things they need to do in order to get it marketed. Even if it's a wonderful idea, it still needs that kind of effort to get it out there.

Sandra: Exactly. And unfortunately, everything in the world takes money. When funding is truncated, or withheld, reduced, whatever term you want to use, it has a negative impact. I'm not saying that we should just spend wildly, but certainly, the thought process needs to be a little more diligent and targeted. When these kinds of impacts need to be made.

Eddie: As you are describing that, you spawned a couple more thoughts in my head. And one of them relates to spiral is a lot of the things that are funded are things like training grants, right. And the idea of the training grant is to help bring young investigators, future investigators up to speed with the technology that's going now. The expectation is in most cases, that those people will grow into researchers. That 5, 10, 15 years down the road, or whenever that happens, they're going to start applying for their own grants.

Well, if things are being less funded, if you will, they are on the low end up the food chain and most of those people are not going to hang in there too long if they're not getting funded right. So you're actually losing potential great investigators because their careers may be getting squashed before they start.

Sandra: Unfortunately, that might be true. I don't have any hard data on that. I do know that our – luckily our national finance foundation projects to support – and I have seen from NIH and the NFF support for training projects here at our institution. So I'm hoping that that isn't the case. But you are absolutely correct in that, or at least I would think that when people aren't being rewarded for the work you're doing or they're not successful in applying for training grants and what have you, that people will leave the research field.

And – or they may go to commercial research, which hopefully at least if they couldn't do research in a nonprofit sense that they would move at least into the area and hopefully be able to be sustained there. But I'm not so sure that that would happen. I think we see problems with maintaining what I like to call the brain drain, trying to prevent the brain drain in the US. We train a lot people across the United States that are not citizens of the United States and I'm all in favor of that. We train the best and the brightest minds across the world and our institutions at the US.

Except I think we fail to retain a lot of those individuals who participate from foreign countries here in the United States. And many of them feel the need an overwhelming need to return to their home country to attend to pressing needs there. So for healthcare issues, what have you? We lose that technology, innovation, the training that we've put into these individuals when they return to their home countries. So we have to think about that as well.

Eddie: I'd like to jump in there.

Sandra: I do think that sequestration and the reduction of funding for programs, such as training programs hurts all aspects of research and innovation. It creates a slowdown of technological advances, inherently hurts the US and allows foreign competition to move ahead. And this is really counterproductive for many areas of our economy.

Eddie: Sandra this has been absolutely fantastic stuff. I'm very excited about the information we've been able to collect from you here. I want to point out that on SRA website on the homepage, there's an entry point to their sequestration resource Center that SRA has been able to put together. It is a fantastic place to go look and see some real world examples of the things that are going on in sequestration, but I encourage you to go take a look at that as well. Because this information is ever evolving and SRA does a great job of keeping that updated.

I would encourage you to bookmark that site and look at it periodically to see what's new in the area. Again, Sandra I really appreciate your time. Fantastic information and I hope you be willing to do this again if there are other things that we should chat about.

Sandra: Great, thank you for having me.