



## **Sounds of eRA Podcast Transcription**

**Part five 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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# No Seeds...Yes, Famine

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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. Now thinking about the effects of the future as a result of sequestration because there's obviously immediate things that are affected, but looking forward, Sandra, what do you see are things that might be the result of this? Or maybe you might predict are going to happen as a result of the cuts that are in place today, as well, as the cuts that are happening or expected to happen in the future?
- Sandra: Well I think some of the effects might be really when you think about it, the eventual outcome of the economy of the United States. I think that we are stymieing commercialization and that begins at the beginning.
- Eddie: I was going to say – well commercialization I suspect you're reference to are the offshoots of the results of research, which in many cases, flows through a technology transfer office –
- Sandra: Right.
- Eddie: Which mission is largely to license that technology and technology transfer is relatively new. I think it came out of the Bardot act back in 1984, but anyway –
- Sandra: Right.
- Eddie: The universities have the ability to retain the title of the things that they invent using federal money. The idea is that at the universities – the institutions I should say are much better at marketing it. Because the whole idea of investing in this stuff is to make the world a better place and that's going to involve drugs and devices and software or any other thing that has intellectual property associated with it. And by disseminating that, distributing that the world becomes a better place, the world sees the benefits of the research.
- So I believe what you are saying is the result of the research being constrained, reduced that, that part of the commercialization you expect will be affected as well?
- Sandra: Right. Well I expect that, I expect there to be a reduction of jobs and those jobs are either the researchers or they research support staff that support the faculty members and their staff. The graduate students, the undergraduate students and post stocks that have positions – when budgets are cut, the research funds are also being cut as well because it's an easy area that doesn't have the impact, like I mentioned earlier.
- It's an easier area to cut so you see this job reduction low – with the job reduction there's a slowdown. I mean, many of the agencies are reducing their research budgets while other

countries are increasing their research budgets. I think Francis Collins was on the Chris Matthews show and he stated that China and India had increased their bio medical research support by 20 percent each in a one-year period and other countries like Germany and Brazil have increased their funding by 10 percent.

While we are declining our funding by a -5 percent. If that trend continues, our position in the global economic environment and the scientific arena is going to be really hurt. You don't see commercial – you won't see, commercialization moving to the market as quickly and these other countries that have increased their research funding are going to leap ahead of us.

Eddie:

That's a great, great analogy because I usually like to think about economies and countries that they're tied to going up and down. It's kind of like a tide change, right? The money might be flowing in the US, the economy, the stock market are doing well and mean while some other company it's low tide, right? And now I think as loose analogy, you would say, "The tide is going out right now." Well actually, I would argue maybe the tide is holding. I wouldn't say it was coming in, but it's at least holding.

It hasn't quite replaced where it has been. But to your point I think it's fantastic that if you think of this research – these aren't your words, but this is not what your words have kind of brought up in my head, if you think of it as being seeds for the future crops and your planting less then you got to expect less props. And if you have less crops and if you have less crops, you're not going to make as much money and you are going to have less seeds. Is that kind of what you're saying?

Sandra:

That is what I'm saying. So if you use that crop analogy you are at this point in time, being able to plant less seeds. And when your planting less seeds, you may not be getting the newest, latest, greatest innovation that people are thinking of because the pay lines are being significantly decreased and fewer projects are being funded and those that are funded are ready are being reduced. We've seen that at our institution, and it is not – it isn't as rewarding as it has been in the past to be an research administration, if you look at it from that financial angle only.

But I know that if we have lots of wonderful projects Countrywide aren't being funded because of the sequestration. I see the – let's put it this way Eddie, I see a lot more declination notices than I had ever in the past. And they are coming in every day. It's not that are faculty members aren't trying to propose, it's that the money isn't there to fund their projects. And those projects are going to go by the wayside, and perhaps not to be funded unless they can find funding elsewhere, beside the federal government

And that money as well as been impacted by sequestration because organizations that are charitable organizations, or nonprofits, it's kind of a – I wouldn't call it a trickle-down effect but it's kind of across the board. So if you have people that are being laid off, those people have less resources to give the people that would be charitable donations. Some of those organizations, I know that I give to the American Cancer Society and a few other organizations; they have less money to fund research.

Eddie:

I think the seed analogy applies there as well or at least the training grants or another aspects of seas that are being planted. So –

Sandra: Right.

Eddie: Sandra, this is been absolutely fantastic stuff. I am very excited about the information we've been able to collect from you here. I want to point out that on the SRA website on the homepage, there's a entry point to the sequestration resource center that SRA, has been able to put together. It is fantastic place to go look and see some real world examples of the things that are going on at sequestration, but I encourage you to go take a look 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 that area. Well, again, Sandra, I really appreciate your time. Fantastic information and I hope you will be willing to do this again, if there are other things that we should chat about.

Sandra: Great, thank you so much for having me.