Sounds of eRA Podcast Transcription

Part two 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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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. With respect to SRA, I noticed that most of the people that are involved with the US President for example, this is something you do in addition to your real job if you will, correct?

Sandra: To the day job? Yes. To my day job, yes, it is an addition. I'm very grateful that my organization really supports me in this endeavor. They allow me to do quite a bit of travel that's associated with being President of SRA International and participate in all of the meetings that I need to attend for the Board of Directors in representing the organization and various phone calls, different meetings or the conference calls that I have on a weekly basis.

Eddie: Well, and I'm sure it's a feather in their cap, too, because I know you're at SDSU, San Diego State University, I'm sure they love the attention you're getting because I'm sure that ultimately it reflects well on them, too. Congratulations there. How long is your tenure as president?

Sandra: Our organization is a little bit different. You have to make a five-year commitment to being President of SRA so you step in as President-elect which is a year-long commitment. That begins in October at the conclusion of our international meeting and then you serve as President-elect for a year. You also serve on the Executive Committee on the Board of Directors and then for two years, you're President. That takes place the following year at the conclusion of the international meeting and then you have a two-year term as I mentioned and then you have two years as past President.

The goal here is to provide continuity and for the organization to make sure that the goals continue on in a well-formed pattern. Part of the responsibility of a President-elect I had was to convene and develop a strategic plan for the next five years and that plan is being worked right now, lots of hard work goes into that but it really reflects in the quality of programming that we offer and the educational events that we offer to our membership and to those who want to be members or just want to participate.

Eddie: That's a fantastic model. Listening to that, it's unique in terms of anything that I'm aware of. I'm wondering if we could talk our government in to doing that because it's really a beautiful model if you think about it. You get to run alongside the current administration, find out what they're doing and why they're doing it. It allows you to pick up the ball and run with it as well as start to form your own initiatives and make your own impact that helps the transitioning person.

That's really a great model from what you described.

Sandra: Oh, thank you. We think of it as a great model and it does really create a sense of continuity and structure that is very well-balanced.

Eddie: Does SRA have any full-time people that it employs? I suspect you don't get paid for this.

Sandra: Well, we do have a full-time staff.

Eddie: How many people?

Sandra: In our Executive – we have a CEO, Executive Director, Dr. Elliot Killikowsky. He has been with us for a few years. Elliot was the past President of the SRA. We're fortunate to have him working with us.

Eddie: How many full-time people does SRA employ that do not have other responsibilities?

Sandra: There are seven staff and our CEO, so eight.

Eddie: That's wonderful.

Sandra: Yeah.

Eddie: That's great to be able to do that because I know you've gotten a lot of latitude or at least in terms of your time to put into the things that your position requires but it's nice to see that there are some core people there that have the ability to do SRA's bidding if you will in an unimpeded way so that's very, very good.

Sandra, this has been absolutely fantastic stuff. I am very excited about the information we've been able to collect from you here.

Again Sandra, I really appreciate your time, fantastic information.

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