The Office of Research Costing Compliance (RCC) at Duke University is a multi-functional training and monitoring unit, providing training and professional development to research administrators, business managers, lab managers and PIs. As a part of RCC’s training mission, the Duke University CRA Study Group has been specifically designed for those who are preparing for the CRA exam. Initially the review program was a small initiative, spread on a rotating basis among the various central offices at the University. In 2007, RCC assumed leadership and began to develop a more formal review structure. In the past three years, Duke’s CRA Study Group has significantly expanded resources provided to the participants, and the results have been most positive.

The number of Duke CRA Study Group participants who pass the CRA exam has progressively increased since 2010, with a 100% success rate of the most recent group in Spring 2013. Duke research administrators’ overall success rate in passing the CRA exam after participating in the Duke CRA Study Group is nearly 80%, surpassing the national success rate of 71% published in RACC’s Spring 2013 In Focus newsletter. Participants of Duke’s CRA Study Group account for a 39% increase since 2010 in CRAs at Duke. This speaks to both the motivation and tenacity of Duke’s research administrators and the benefit of the information gained in the CRA Study Group sessions.

Kristy Ford, Administrative Manager, leads Duke’s CRA Study Group, using hundreds of slides that have been tailored to the specific needs of each group of participants. Through a series of 8 2-hour review sessions, Duke’s CRA Study Group participants review and discuss the slides and a multitude of other resources. During the sessions, they also share their own experiences and knowledge of topics being discussed. The information and discussions often prompt CRA Study Group participants to attend more in-depth training at Duke on topics that will be on the exam. Information sharing becomes their greatest asset as they prepare for the exam, and the relationship formed benefit them throughout the coming years.

The continuously growing population of CRAs at Duke, along with institutional training and professional development opportunities, has developed a greater level of professionalism in Research Administration. Duke University has the highest number of CRAs, with 64 CRAs and 1 CPRA who are in positions of varying levels within the departments and central offices at Duke. This distribution allows CRAs to be involved in policy and process decisions and the development of new electronic research administration technologies at the institution. Duke University’s Research Costing Compliance offers a variety of training opportunities for research administrators, including its own certification programs geared towards different levels of experience and the annual Symposium for Research Administrators. The continued professional growth of research administrators at Duke provides the necessary support to our researchers who focus on improving lives through breakthrough research.

If you have a topic or an article that you think would be of interest to the general RACC membership, please forward it to Joan Campbell for inclusion in a future issue.