



ILLINOIS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of Sponsored Programs
and Research Administration

1901 South First Street, Suite A
South Research Park
Champaign, IL 61820

July 31, 2015

SPaRC Retreat Committee
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Re. SPaRC Innovation Award Nomination for Kamil Tamimie

Dear Members of the Committee:

I'm writing to nominate Kamil Tamimie, Manager of Systems and Reporting at the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), for the inaugural SPaRC Innovation Award. As illustrated by numerous examples below, Kamil is a dedicated innovator of the processes surrounding research administration at Illinois and she is clearly worthy of this esteemed recognition.

In an effort to streamline internal processes, move towards a paperless environment, and find new electronic efficiencies, OSP has recently instituted many procedural changes to its internal handling of proposals and awards. Additionally, over the past several months, OSP has led the University-wide effort in conversion of the InfoEd proposal tracking system to a new and better system.

Without question, Kamil has been a leader in all of these efforts, providing valuable insight toward the modernization of OSP's processes and systems. I've had the pleasure of working with Kamil on several of these initiatives and have seen first-hand, her ability to quickly isolate and resolve issues as well as effectively envision multiple, feasible approaches to problems. Kamil is an outside-of-the-box thinker with enough practical experience to intelligently challenge outdated practices. She is a respected supervisor, able to effectively implement change with her staff's full confidence. And she is an expert on all of OSP's processes with enough computer-savvy to truly understand and optimize the functionality of any proposal tracking system to the University's benefit.

Following are some examples of Kamil's innovative efforts that she has brought to all aspects of her job:



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Supervision

During her tenure as manager of OSP's four full-time Systems Specialists, Kamil has changed and streamlined the distribution of work among her staff by introducing a bi-weekly rotation of duties and by changing the former staffing model of four desks with individual responsibilities to three task-specific desks and a support person. The rotation ensures that every Specialist maintains expertise in all current processing standards and also provides a variety and balance in the work being completed. The new support role has the flexibility to quickly assist where the volume is heaviest, moving, for example, from the Proposal Login desk during an NIH R01 deadline to the Agreement Login desk at State Fiscal Year End. The support person assumes additional responsibilities that are highly beneficial to OSP, such as providing exception reports from InfoEd to OSP management and auditing other Specialists' transactions, to ensure accuracy and consistency among the staff.

Under the prior staffing model, staff members were fundamentally assigned to one desk and did not rotate regularly between the major responsibilities of the section. Ebbs and flows in desk-specific responsibilities resulted in disproportionate workloads and inadvertent errors under pressure of volume and time. Kamil's new model significantly alleviates the individual burden of heavy volume on any given desk at any given time, which greatly improves efficiency. Further, by virtue of the rotation, this model ensures that each staff member retains critical, expert knowledge of all Specialist functions, crucial not only during high volume, but when staff members are out of the office. Coupled with the more rigorous scrutiny of data afforded by the new support role, Kamil has transformed OSP's administrative core into a dynamic and effective team that operates proactively and efficiently.

Paperwork Reduction

In response to OSP leadership's push for a more paperless environment, Kamil led the effort in purging paper files of certain types of agreements and subsequently designed new workflows for her staff that significantly reduce or eliminate the need for paper.

The magnitude of this task cannot be overstated. Over 6,000 files were physically purged, after having been individually scanned and individually uploaded into each respective InfoEd record. Kamil directed each of these labor-intensive efforts and owing to her planning and leadership, each task was quickly brought to successful conclusion.



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Reporting

Kamil has designed numerous recurring reports that aid not only OSP and OVCR, but also stakeholders in the research compliance units, international programs office, and OBFS units. On top of these standing reports, Kamil responds quickly to frequent ad hoc requests from OSP and OVCR leadership for a wide range of information related to trends in the Illinois or federal government or other University issues related to research. The ad hoc reports are so specialized and unique, that Kamil must build each report separately to capture and filter on countless reportable fields in InfoEd.

To illustrate the uniqueness and complexity of these reports, some recent requests include research utilizing hemp, cannabis, or marijuana; awards from specific sponsors with whom the University is conducting business (Caterpillar most recently, to effectively negotiate a new master agreement); and the top 50 private sponsors in the last 5 years. For these and so many other requests, Kamil has had to rely not only on her expertise of InfoEd, but also her ingenuity in accurately discerning what information the requestor is after.

Even without the unique specifications of each ad hoc report, the InfoEd reporting tool, which is flexible in nature, has some drawbacks which make reporting more complex. A high level of understanding of not just the system itself, but also of OSP processing is necessary in order to build a report to meet the requirements of the request. Kamil is singularly equipped in this regard, having had many years of experience working at OSP and within InfoEd.

InfoEd System Replacement

The task of choosing a better proposal tracking system for the University has been ongoing for over a year, requiring meticulous attention to detail as well as an expert understanding of the current system and office operations to ensure a smooth and complete transition. As the resident InfoEd expert, Kamil has taken the lead on many of these efforts on behalf of the University and has made a significant impact on the critical decisions needed to make the conversion. Examples follow:

A significant portion of the conversion process involves preparing and validating the existing data in InfoEd against the University's accounting system of record (Banner). To this end, Kamil has put in an extraordinary amount of time doing massive filtration



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and analysis of data, ensuring that our current information is accurate and consistent with Banner prior to the conversion. As an example, Kamil recently filtered, found and corrected over 400 records with erroneous project end dates in InfoEd. This was one of many cleanup projects that Kamil identified and initiated by developing her own specialized reports, based on her expertise in InfoEd and understanding of the OSP workflow.

Another aspect of the conversion process is mapping current fields in InfoEd to the corresponding fields in the new system. Kamil has worked very closely with stakeholders on all three UI campuses to determine how fields are currently being used, what a logical mapping might be, and where our internal processes may need changes to accommodate the new system. As one of the subject matter experts of the proposal data, I was impressed and reassured by Kamil's proactive efforts to solicit my and others' opinions on potential usage and outcomes of the new system under a wide variety of circumstances. She clearly understands and appreciates the needs of my Proposal Coordinator team and in making our feedback a priority, Kamil distinguishes herself as a genuine advocate for the end user.

Finally, Kamil has been involved in writing the computer logic to ensure that the numerous funding scenarios and variations between records in InfoEd are accounted for and migrate properly so that no data is lost or misclassified during the conversion. In discussing these logic models at a recent OSP Management Team Meeting, Kamil indicated that she herself developed a preponderance of possible funding scenarios in InfoEd that are now being addressed through logic models that she has helped construct in order to ensure accurate transfer to the new system.

I firmly believe that Kamil's participation in the current system conversion is key to the success of the launch. Her experience and creativity have positioned the University very well to undertake this essential system change while preserving viable historical data. Kamil has an understanding of InfoEd that is unmatched on any of the campuses and we are lucky to have her on the team making decisions, ensuring data integrity and anticipating potential problems. Kamil's contributions have and continue to be invaluable as the University contemplates migration to a new proposal tracking system.



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Summary

Whether by her effective management of our central processing staff, her commitment to analysis and data integrity, or her ingenuity in developing crucial reports, every one of these examples illustrate that Kamil Tamimie is a dedicated innovator in the University's research community. Her contributions have made a noticeable and positive impact to the University, and therefore Kamil deserves to be recognized as an Innovator for research administration at the University of Illinois.

Very Sincerely,

Kathy Dams
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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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