

June 9, 2025

To the SPaRC Award Selection Committee,

It is with the utmost enthusiasm and respect that we nominate Dave Richardson for the SPaRC Career Achievement Award. With a distinguished career spanning over three decades in research administration, across three Universities—and more than twelve impactful years at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Dave exemplifies every ideal this award seeks to recognize: leadership, innovation, service, and an enduring commitment to advancing research administration on campus and beyond.

Dave currently serves as the Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation and Director of the Security Management Office. In this role, he provides comprehensive oversight of the University's externally sponsored research portfolio, guiding the full lifecycle of sponsored programs with an unwavering focus on compliance, service, and strategic growth as well as managing the classified research activities.

Dave's contributions are deeply embedded in the very infrastructure of research administration at Illinois. He has been instrumental in implementing electronic research administration tools through START myResearch, reducing administrative burdens on faculty while maintaining high standards of compliance. His dedication to professional development is evidenced by his support and leadership in the Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance (SPaRC) program and SPaRC'Ed certification series, where he not only supports but champions education and outreach across campus. His long history of sharing knowledge through his participation in university-wide strategic committees and leadership search panels demonstrates his holistic commitment to institutional advancement outside of the research enterprise. Dave continues to push the envelope—whether through advancing AI integration, investing in staff development, or championing progressive policies—to position Sponsored Programs Administration as an innovative, responsive, and nationally recognized leader in research administration.

Recently the University has experienced historic disruptions to our research portfolio as a result of the Presidential Executive Orders. Dave has been a strong, respected leader in helping to navigate the federal policy changes and provide guidance to the campus research community. Having experienced various challenges in the Federal landscape over his career, Dave has the ability to see through the current unrest and provide a positive perspective to his staff that “this too shall pass”; keep pressing forward and we will get to the other side. His

ability to navigate these challenges with integrity fosters trust, respect, and credibility in every interaction.

Beyond Illinois, Dave has had a national and international impact on the profession. As a past President and Board Member of the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA), he helped shape national policies and professional development for the research administration community. His presentations and panel appearances underscore his commitment to sharing best practices and thought leadership on a global stage. Just as importantly, Dave sets a strong example for his team, inspiring others to contribute and lead in national forums—significantly enhancing our university’s visibility and reputation as a leader in research administration.

What truly sets Dave apart is his balanced approach to leadership—strategic yet empathetic, detail-oriented yet visionary. His ability to anticipate challenges while fostering innovation creates an environment where others feel empowered to think creatively and push boundaries. Dave exemplifies integrity through honesty, strong ethical principles, and an unwavering commitment to his values.

He fosters professional growth among his team, encourages cross-unit collaboration, and never loses sight of the mission: to support world-class research that drives discovery and innovation. His strong decision-making skills, coupled with his ability to inspire, motivate, and advocate for SPA, make him an invaluable leader. Dave is a true people person. He takes time to engage with employees, often initiating friendly hallway or parking lot chats to get to know them better. His personable nature makes him approachable and fosters a positive work environment.

Dave Richardson has made significant, sustained, and transformative contributions to research administration at Illinois and across the field. His work has enabled researchers to do their best work, brought clarity and structure to complex regulatory environments, and left an indelible mark on the institutions he has served, especially here at the University of Illinois. He is a most deserving candidate for the SPaRC Career Achievement Award.

Sincerely,

Robin Beach, Director Pre-Award

Dan Harmon, Director Data & Systems

Cheryl Howerton, Director Audit & Compliance

Karen Thomas, Director Post-Award

Amy Hubbard, Assistant Director Administration Operations

July 31, 2025

SPaRC Evaluation Committee

Re: SPaRC Career Achievement Award Nomination

Dear SPaRC Evaluation Committee,

We, the OVCRI leadership team, are pleased to nominate Dave Richardson for a SPaRC Career Achievement award. His long tenure as director of SPA and his many and varied contributions to the Illinois research enterprise make him uniquely qualified for this recognition.

In 2013, Dave joined the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. This was a pivotal time in our institution's history, and he immediately set a course to enhance and modernize our research administration infrastructure. His many signature campus achievements include:

- Eliminating a cumbersome, paper-based proposal submission process and implementing and maintaining modern electronic systems, such as the MyResearch portal
- Creating the SPaRC'Ed series and Illini Certified Research Administrator credential
- Integrating post-award support into SPA
- Working with the System to establish the Security Management Office and building out required infrastructure to oversee the sponsored classified portfolio
- Building a strong and cohesive team culture and navigating the "new normal" of a hybrid workforce during the pandemic
- Developing policy to assure consistent and compliant adherence to requirements for all of campus, including:
 - RP-03 "Charging of Facilities and Administrative Costs to Sponsored Projects"
 - RP-05 "Cost Sharing on Sponsored Projects"
 - RP-06 "Eligibility to Serve as a Principal Investigator"
 - RP-08 "Export Control"
 - SPA's own policy guidance
 - Managing incoming Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs)
- Commitment to big picture thinking and data access during federal shifts

Dave's leadership during his time at Illinois fundamentally changed the institution for the better, setting us up to manage our record-breaking year in FY24. But his impact has far exceeded campus boundaries. Examples include:

- NCURA service
- National leadership in the use of AI in research administration
- Helping to co-lead the Joint Associations Group and resetting the way the nation's research enterprise approaches ICR

Finally, beyond Dave's impressive track record, there are a few things that really set him apart from other research administration leaders, including his commitment to maintaining the highest standard of compliance with federal, state, and institutional regulations; problem solving in support of the Illinois research community; and last, but not least, his trademark dry wit and good humor.

Dave has been an extraordinary leader, colleague, and champion for research at Illinois. We can think of no one more deserving of recognition and we urge you to carefully consider him for the SPaRC Career Achievement Award.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Martinis
Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation
Stephen G. Sligar Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology
Professor of Biochemistry



Sharee Robinson
Executive Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation



Patty Jones
Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation in Compliance



Melissa Edwards
Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Chief of Staff