Good morning!! I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be here and to share some personal thoughts about research development!! I owe a debt of thanks to David and Rachel for the gracious invitation, and for organizing this wonderful event with a very full and powerful agenda. I hope we can make this a conversation rather than a presentation, so I’ll try to make my points quickly.

I also want to extend my appreciation to Alicia, who I’m blessed to have as a colleague, and who has been of immeasurable value in what she has done for OU and the broader research community, including as president of NORDP. She is the one who opened my eyes regarding research development, and she patiently continues to teach me every day about so many things. She is perhaps the poster child of a key point I will make later in this presentation, namely, the importance of future research executives coming from non-traditional pathways.

Now, you DO realize that I am a meteorologist and a vice president for research, correct! I just want to be sure. The first of those makes me inaccurate at best, and the second – well, it probably just makes me scary and very hard to figure out most of the time! I hope you will tolerate both as I proceed!

Seriously, I am a huge believer in and advocate for research development at my institution and also nationally. I see the world through the lens of a long-time faculty member and researcher, member of the National Science Board for 10 years, current chair of the Council on Research Policy and Graduate
Education in APLU, and as someone who spends a great deal of time on the Hill in Washington working on a broad array of science policy issues.

To be honest, I don’t think ANY of that qualifies me to speak with authority or intelligence about much of anything (!), but hey, that’s never stopped me before! So here we go!

I’m going to start by making a rather bold statement, and although I stink as a weather forecaster, I believe this prediction is accurate – partly because it already is coming to pass (which is one of my secrets to weather forecasting).

Specifically, I believe research development is THE most important innovation in the research enterprise that we will see in our lifetime. Let me repeat that statement....

Not the BRAIN Initiative, not regional centers, not innovation hubs, not the Bayh-Dole Act, not the smart phone or tablet. But research development.

Why would I say such a thing? How many of you believe it?

Let me clarify right up front what “I” mean by research development. When I became VPR, I was struck by the fact that OU, like most universities, has all manner of resources for students – tutoring, mentoring, internships, clubs and numerous organizations and resources to help students succeed. But what did we have for our faculty? Pretty much nothing! We bring them in, give them a start-up package, run them through various orientation sessions, make them aware of internal funding opportunities, and then we wish them well. Of course, we interact with them in many ways, but what do we really DO to help them be successful scholars?

We had no mechanism to help faculty think long-term about their scholarly programs, develop and nurture ideas, build teams, understand the university and how they fit in to the bigger picture of its mission, identify funding, develop competitive proposals, link with major labs and companies, etc – and no mechanism to do these things via a very personalized, one-on-one
approach. In a nutshell, that is what research development means to me, and I see it that way because Alicia not only has that view but demonstrated the clear value of that approach in creating her center at OU. And has it ever paid off! So yes, I’m a believer and I drink the Kool-Aid every day!!!

In this presentation, I hope to convince you of the truth of my bold statement that research development is THE most important innovation in the research enterprise that we will see in our lifetime, and in so doing illustrate the important ROLE that EACH of you CAN and MUST play, individually and collaboratively, as research development professionals. I also will illustrate the vital role of NORDP – not only to you, as YOUR professional organization, but more broadly for the nation.

Yet I also see something else and hope to convince you of it as well. Namely, research development as a transformative force for YOUR INSTITUTION – as a means for driving culture change and bringing new ideas to the table that can ONLY come from the research enterprise and that can only come from YOU! This is well beyond the traditional notion of research development, but that’s the key. Therein lies the power – seeing yourselves in a new and broader way.

And as a consequence of that, I see research development as a new pathway for individuals who aspire to positions of senior research leadership. In other words, I’m saying that the traditional pathway toward attaining the position of vice chancellor or vice president for research – which for the most part involves the standard academic ladder of being a researcher for 20 years and perhaps a chair or director along the way – will in the future be supplemented with individuals, JUST LIKE SOME OF YOU, who have taken NON-traditional paths within academia but who are eminently qualified and in fact bring a NEW and DIFFERENT and HIGHLY VALUABLE dimension to the VCR/VPR position.

I don’t know how many of you are entertaining that thought right now, and I won’t ask for a show of hands. If you are, that’s terrific. If not, then I hope you will consider it after hearing this presentation and hopefully attending the
talk Alicia and I will be giving tomorrow about a national survey of VPRs/VCRs – which I think you’ll find very interesting but also HELPFUL to you as you think about your career trajectory and the manner in which the VPR/VCR position is deployed across academia. And I can tell you there’s no standard model!!

As I’ll mention a bit later, national survey, which will result in a published paper or two, will itself serve as a mechanism to help you drive change and to bolster the argument I just made about the need for new, innovative pathways for research executives.

Now if you’re with me so far, you have to be asking yourself the “elephant in the room question.” That is, we’ve gotten along “just fine” without research development in the past, so why do we need it today? Why has NORDP grown so large so quickly? Why are people attracted to research development? Is the world really THAT different?

I believe it is, and I see research development as a new and powerful – in fact, an ESSENTIAL -- mechanism for achieving the bold goals in research to which this nation aspires, but which are becoming increasingly elusive for a number of reasons.

So how do I convince you of that?

I want to talk about three things:

• The first topic concerns the research enterprise in the United States, including universities, and some of the challenges we face. In doing this I want to stress the importance of you seeing the big picture, and illustrate why you should care about and be engaged in the research ecosystem, as some call it, in ways other than you might have imagined

• The second topic concerns where each of you can be going, and your role as research development professionals and your personal aspirations and career trajectory
• And finally, the third topic concerns the role of NORDP – its value, and how you can help it achieve its full potential.

**To the first point about the global research enterprise and the importance of you seeing the big picture**, the United States is in a very precarious position with regard to global research competitiveness. You’ve read the reports and seen the data, so I won’t belabor the point here. But I do want to cite a few statistics.

China now spends the same percentage of its GDP on research as the US does, and soon China will overtake the US. In actual dollars, the US still spends twice as much, but the troubling fact is that the gap is narrowing – VERY rapidly. South Korea, Brazil and Germany likewise are investing heavily while US investment is decreasing.

Of course, we absolutely WANT other countries to develop their capabilities and collaborate with us, but if we continue our present course of failing to increase our investment in research – which all of you know better than anyone is the foundation of our economic competitiveness, health, and national security – then we are in serious trouble and will lose our position of world leadership. The jobs and technologies follow the people. China has learned this.

Ironically, support for research has never been stronger in the White House or on the Hill, yet decisions about research budgets are made in ways difficult to understand because they’re driven to a large extent by political expediency. We have a huge debt in this country, but if we eat our seed corn by not funding research, then we have nothing left for the future.

And no one on either side of the aisle has the political courage to tackle the real problems of the budget, namely, entitlement programs. The R&D budget is a sliver of the total economy, yet it is targeted for deep cuts with sequestration. It just doesn’t make sense, and that’s because it’s not logic, but rather politics.
Add to that, faculty and researchers are faced with numerous, large, unfunded, unnecessary or ineffective compliance burdens. As you know from the Federal Demonstration Partnership, on average, 42% of the time spent by faculty on Federally funded research is spent on administrative matters. This is an ENORMOUS waste of taxpayer dollars!!!! The National Science Board recently released a report on this very topic and that, along with many other efforts by AAU, APLU and COGR, give reason for hope that change may be coming. NORDP has not, to my knowledge, been part of that conversation, but it’s not too late to become involved. And I hope you will.

We all know about the high costs of tuition, the large expense associated with physical science and engineering research, the general misunderstanding of higher education (get a degree, get a job), and the attack upon certain disciplines that study topics that are politically sensitive or controversial, such as social, behavioral and economic sciences and climate change. Part of the problem is the “cutsey” way we portray research in an attempt to make science attractive to kids. That’s fine, but it can also bite us.

This all sounds very negative, and indeed, the challenges are significant. However, my point is that we have NEVER BEEN IN A TIME LIKE THIS – ever before in the history of the modern research enterprise. Thus, we need a new approach – and research development professionals are a big part of it. In fact, I am very optimistic about the future because we as a nation have always risen to the occasion. But my confidence is buoyed by all of you.

You are poised to help address numerous challenges in very substantial ways because you are on the FRONT LINES with faculty and researchers. Agencies can tell faculty they have to describe the purpose (not practical relevance) of their basic research in ways the public can understand, but who is going to teach them to do that? ONLY YOU!! I cannot tell you how important this is and the challenges we now face from not doing it very well in times past.
Because you, as research development professionals, are on the FRONT LINES with faculty, you can help tell the story better than anyone about how certain unnecessary compliance regulations stifle research and harm productivity. Individual faculty see this from THEIR perspective. YOU see it from the perspective of faculty across entire institutions in an integrative and comprehensive manner.

And you also can speak about those very important and essential compliance policies that contribute very positively to ethical conduct, safety of human and animal studies, and overall transparency and accountability.

New initiatives such as open data are going to create new models of collaboration and sharing that are going to challenge faculty and their institutions in ways we cannot even imagine. Engaging with these and other initiatives represents part of YOUR role in helping build research and shape the future, and this requires that you see the big picture and understand not only agency grant requirements, but broader directions and strategies as well.

In that regard, you are vitally important for providing input to agencies regarding the most effective manner for structuring research initiatives, and in dealing with serious challenges such as broadening participation and using research as a mechanism to transform education at the undergraduate level. We are doing VERY poorly in this regard despite massive investments over a few decades. It is very important that agencies understand the concept of research development and everything you bring to the table! Without you, we simply will not achieve.

**To the second point about you individually, and your role and career trajectory.** It is easy to see research development as involving transactional work with faculty – such as working on proposals, centers, and big projects. We all agree such things are vitally important. But in addition to those things, you also are a force for driving change in your institution in ways that are impossible to do otherwise. Why? Once again, because you work directly with faculty and are close to the action, you become aware of, understand, and are in a position to find solutions to problems – including
those involving institutional culture – that others don’t see or simply do not want to confront.

Because you operate on the front lines in a super competitive environment, you can drive change that helps people think bigger and make such thinking part of the institutional culture. You can show the need for success in research of taking risks on big ideas and providing incentives to do so. You can note that success in research requires hiring faculty in new and creative ways, such as in thematic clusters across colleges and departments – rather than having colleges and departments operate in isolation, focusing simply on making sure certain courses are taught.

By virtue of operating on the front lines, you are in a position to help identify and address challenging situations for female faculty, and other underrepresented groups, making sure your institution pays attention to such matters and works to prevent problems from occurring in the first place.

In universities, we trumpet the importance of collaboration and interdisciplinary research, yet at the end of the day, we reward what INDIVIDUALS have done in teaching, research and service. That runs completely counter to how we need to go about addressing some of our most challenging research problems today, and you can drive change in your institution by bringing to light, and helping put in place, progressive tenure and promotion policies that reward both individual as well as group achievement.

When I think about research development professionals and the importance of the things I just mentioned, it strikes me that you have a daunting responsibility because you play a major role in developing people. This requires special interpersonal communication and other skills because, ultimately, research development, like research itself, is about relationships. Everyone – and this is especially true for faculty – has a story to tell and everyone is anxious that it be heard! People often hide behind a mask of a smile or their tile or intellect or CV when something deeper inside is in need of expression or of being addressed. We need to create a comfortable
environment where people feel free to share and where information will be kept confidential and used in a way that will help them rather than hurt them.

This in fact has happened at OU, where CRPDE has become a place of safety and trust – a haven where faculty and researchers can share issues confidentially – things they’d never take to their chair, dean, provost, or even colleagues. And this helps us greatly in driving institutional transformation – such as our keepers list, where we identify high value targets for poaching via many different measures and get out ahead of retention situations in a collaborative manner with deans, chairs and the provost.

By building that sort of trust, and having valuable information and insight (the latter is key because information can be obtained from anywhere), you unlock talent in people and show them pathways and opportunities they otherwise would not see. You help them understand and adjust, and this drives change in the culture of the institution – toward boldness, excellence, and satisfaction.

My mom never explained to me where research development professionals come from! But I sense in talking with Alicia and others that you come from many backgrounds, often from sponsored programs. Moving into research development represents a huge transition. I can see it might be easy to get mired in transactional activities, guidelines and checklists. Those things are VERY important!!! But don’t let them define you.

A good part of the program this week involves the VERY important topics of metrics and assessment. Those things are exceptionally important, but I hope you will be careful to not be slaves to them. Ultimately, research and research development are about people, and sometimes we simply know when something is working or not working. This is especially true when thinking about culture change within an institution. Measuring it is difficult, and evidence for change has a long time scale. But you know when it is occurring. It is said that people respond to what is inspected rather than to what is expected. I say this: Let data guide you rather than drive you.
But how do you help drive institutional transformation if you’re buried 2 levels deep in your organization? That’s a difficult challenge indeed, but presentations such as the one I’m now making, the CRPGE survey and follow-on journal article that you will hear about tomorrow, and NORDP itself are all mechanisms to make your individual voice louder, and to make what you do clearer.

The final point I want to make about you and your career is that research development professionals represent a new pool of research executive leadership. Although many if not most VPRs and VCRs will continue to come from traditional backgrounds and pathways, I firmly believe that we NEED, in the ranks of VPRs and VCRs, people from non-traditional pathways who bring unique expertise and experience. In other words, research development professionals. And at the end of the talk, I will share three things I ask of you and three things that I will DO for you to help bring about this change.

And now to the third and final point, let’s talk about NORDP the organization. NORDP is at a VERY critical stage in its history – rapid growth is a sign of health but just like a child that’s growing quickly, it needs to be fed almost continuously. You are doing a GREAT job of nurturing and feeding NORDP!!

Given how important research development is to the future of research – if you’ve bought my arguments thus far – I believe NORDP is even more important because it is the key steward of professionals and the entire notion of research development, apart from the home institution itself. NORDP has grave responsibilities but because is owned and operated by its stakeholders, it controls its own destiny. And that’s a VERY good thing.

It’s interesting to realize that human beings are the ONLY organism on the planet that can dream about the future, and also bring it to pass. That point is terribly important as you dream about and envision the future of the research enterprise, your own future, and the future of NORDP.
From my own perspective, I see the value proposition for NORDP as three mutually interacting elements.

First, I see it becoming a trusted agent for government funding agencies and policy organizations in providing assessments and reactions to ideas and plans about research in the broadest possible context. COGR, or the Council on Governmental Relations, does this in a superb and compelling manner for research policy. In fact, it has become the go-to organization, sometimes quietly, by many agencies that want to explore trial balloons for all sorts of things. No such organization exists for the front lines of research itself. You may wish to think about NORDP aspiring to such a role.

Agencies often need the institutional perspectives, and VPRs aren’t always equipped to provide them as VPRs are not on the front lines like you are. You have enormous value to agencies, but we have to get the word out about who you are and what you do.

An effort is now underway within the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to develop a holistic, government-wide structure for planning research – priorities, mechanisms, etc. What role could NORDP play? Note how APLU, AAU and COGR played a huge role in developing the Uniform Guidance, and likewise, they are involved in the American Academies effort. What might be the role of NORDP?

Finally, NORDP is an important mechanism for helping develop capabilities and competencies of research development professionals, of showing the value of research development, of networking all of you together so you can collaborate and share ideas and best practices, and for helping usher in a new generation of research executive officers from non-traditional pathways. I know you have been working on the first two, and I challenge you to take up the third.

In concluding, I would like to give you a homework assignment, and I have one as well.
For you,

- I ask that you work with purpose to help agencies, and individuals in your own institution, understand what you do and see the bigger picture of research development professionals as strategic partners in executing a national research agenda, and in driving change in your institution -- change that cannot be achieved in other ways. And this isn’t just about STEM!
- I ask that you think about your own professional development as leaders of people, not checkers of lists, and as future research officers. I see you as a key part of the future of research leadership in this nation. Do you?
- Finally, I ask that you work to reach the next generation early, and in a very personal and relational manner. It's not only about writing proposals and landing big projects, but about helping people develop themselves and their careers.

Now here is what I pledge to do!

- I pledge to help Federal agencies understand the importance of research development and NORDP, starting with the National Science Board, and help them see the importance of NORDP as a partner in shaping and executing the national research agenda, much like COGR does for policies.
- I also pledge to create pathways for research development professionals in organizations such as APLU and AAU, and to help VPRs, provosts, and presidents understand the value of research development and promote you, and create opportunities to develop you, as future research executives. In fact, NORDP is now a member of APLU, and within CRPGE, we are setting up a structure for non-VPRs and VPRs-to-be to attend meetings and become involved in
activities. Research development professionals must be seen as more than “proposal developers,” and if your own boss doesn’t get that, I’ll help in these and other ways.

• This last one may seem weird and selfish, but it’s something I can do and control, namely, continue helping Alicia with research program development at OU and promoting it as an EXAMPLE success story, and a way for my counterparts to see what research development is if they don’t already.

CRPDE has been visited by many other institutions because those institutions wanted to better understand the concept of research development and see how we do things at OU. In these visits, and to my fellow VPRs, I relate how I have learned about research development from Alicia and others in CRPDE. And that shows to other VPR’s that we need to be willing to listen and learn and support research development as an essential practice of our broader research enterprise. I personally see CRPDE as one of two lenses in a pair of binoculars. I’m the other lens. Together, we pretty much see everything in focus.

In closing, I would like to say that our biggest challenges are the following: We risk too little, rescue too quickly, reward too frequently, and settle too easily. Being a VPR, and being a research development professional, means creating an environment for valuing and pursuing high-risk, high-reward activities; allowing people to make mistakes and learn from them, not become crushed by them; setting high bars and rewarding achievement but also encouraging and resourcing those who are on an upward trajectory; and not settling for mediocre when excellence is within reach.

Thank you again very much, and I look forward to working with all of you!