

Samantha J. Ellithorpe

· 828-226-5773 · ellithorpe.samantha@gmail.com · linkedin.com/in/samantha-ellithorpe ·
· Cullowhee, NC ·

A results-oriented and purposeful Research Administrator with experience in research development, proposal development, and process improvement. Proficient in overseeing multiple projects simultaneously, identifying and interpreting compliance requirements during the pre-award stage, developing and maintaining project timelines and budgets, and fostering collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Recognized for strengthening team performance, improving processes, and implementing effective methodologies that enhance research operations and support organizational success.

KEY COMPETENCIES

Proposal Development & Submission
InfoEd Grant Management Software
Documentation & Technical Writing
Strategic Planning
Operations Management

Budget Development & Tracking
Project Management
KPI Development & Reporting
Cross-Functional Collaboration
Compliance Review

Stakeholder Relationship Building
Problem Solving
MS Suite
Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200) Application
Training Development

EDUCATION

Western Carolina University
Bachelor of Science | Magna Cum Laude

2015

Western Carolina University
Master of Entrepreneurship in Innovation and Leadership

May 2026

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Pre-Award Service Manager
Western Carolina University

2023 - Present

As Pre-Award Manager, I provide strategic leadership for Pre-Award Services at Western Carolina University, overseeing proposal development, research development, process improvement, reporting, and faculty engagement initiatives that strengthen institutional research capacity and advance the university's research mission and funding goals.

- Submitted over \$105.59 million in sponsored research proposals and assisted with the intake and transition of more than \$30.45 million in awards across a diverse portfolio of federal (45%), state (11%), foundations and nonprofits (26%), industry (3%), and other (15%) sponsors.
- Supported institutional research growth, contributing to a more than 42% increase in requested proposal funding and over 30% increase in awarded funding over the past 3 years.
- Streamlined proposal intake and scheduling processes, reducing the time from PI proposal notification to the first proposal development meeting by 66.7%.
- Assisted with pre- to post-award transition process improvements, reducing award setup times by over 71% (from 42 days to 12 days) through workflow optimization and enhanced cross-functional coordination and collaboration.
- Assisted with the development of *Granting Success*, a comprehensive sponsored research support website featuring training resources, policies, institutional data, and proposal development tools to enhance faculty engagement and user experience.
- Designed and implemented an excel-based proposal and award tracking system that streamlines the intake process, enhances annual reporting capabilities, and supports data-driven decision-making.
- Wrote over 32 standard operating procedures (SOPs), 10 sponsor-specific proposal development guides, a Budget Template User Guide and formula archive, a Pre-Award Decision-Making Handbook, and an InfoEd User Manual to improve consistency, facilitate staff onboarding, and ensure continuity of pre-award operations.
- Provide comprehensive budget development and review support for sponsored projects, ensuring proposed costs were reasonable, allocable, allowable, and consistently aligned with Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200), institutional policies, and sponsor-specific funding requirements and limitations.
- Coordinated subaward package requests, performed subrecipient risk assessments, and identified and escalated potential compliance, financial, and regulatory concerns to the Compliance office.

As General Manager, I led the strategic direction and day-to-day operations of a residential real estate investment group specializing in long-term residential rentals, overseeing a portfolio of 108 rental units. As the driving force behind a six-person team, I orchestrated strategic initiatives to enhance organizational performance through innovative processes, technology modernization, and operational excellence. I directed budgeting, financial performance, trust account management, bookkeeping, monthly account reconciliations, property operations, and capital improvement projects while developing standardized process documentation that strengthened internal controls and improved efficiency. My commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement consistently reduced costs, streamlined operations, and delivered strong financial returns for investors.

- Served as the primary liaison between property management, ownership/investor groups, contractors, and maintenance teams, ensuring timely communication and project execution.
- Developed and managed a \$10M+ annual operating budget; oversaw bookkeeping, expense tracking by property, monthly financial reporting, account reconciliations, and trust account compliance while ensuring strict segregation of funds and preventing commingling across properties and accounts.
- Prepared remodeling and capital improvement budgets for individual properties, and aligned renovation investments with property performance goals, market conditions, and owner return-on-investment expectations.
- Created acquisition budgets, cash flow projections, and valuation models to guide property purchases and offer strategies.
- Recovered over \$120,000 in outstanding funds through financial audits, account reconciliations, and process improvements.
- Developed and maintained comprehensive process documentation, standard operating procedures, and financial workflows that improved consistency, accountability, and operational efficiency.
- Led the standardization of move-in and move-out procedures across the portfolio, reducing processing time by 40%, improving the quality and consistency of inspections and documentation, and maximizing security deposit recovery for property damage repairs.
- Designed, launched, and managed the company's website, and incorporated digital property listings and virtual tours that expanded marketing reach and increased prospective tenant engagement. The website continues to serve as the organization's primary online marketing and leasing platform.
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive task management calendar to track monthly, quarterly, and annual billing and invoicing deadlines for multiple properties, ensuring continuity and seamless role transitions.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE

North Carolina Notary Public Issued by the North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State Notary #202226300228	2022 - 2027
--	--------------------

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Society of Research Administrators International (SRAI)	2023 - Present
National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA)	2023 - Present

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

2025-2026 Gold Award for Staff Excellence Western Carolina University	<i>Nominated</i>
Future of the Field Award Society of Research Administrators International	Awarded 2025
2024-2025 Star Staff Award Western Carolina University	<i>Nominated</i>

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Using Process Mapping and Cross-Functional Collaboration to Reduce Award Setup Times

Scheduled for October 2026

Society of Research Administrators International Annual Conference

Conference poster presentation featuring a case study on the redesign of Western Carolina University's pre-award to post-award transition process, highlighting improvements in operational efficiency, cross-functional collaboration, and reduced award setup times.

Managing the Pre- to Post-Award Handoff

July 2026

Society of Research Administrators International Coffee Talk

This session focused on the transition from Pre-Award to Post-Award, exploring handoff timing, roles in award negotiation, operational tools, award setup, communication, and compliance throughout the research lifecycle.

Do's and Don'ts of Cost Share

November 2024

North Carolina Research Administrators Alliance Conference

This presentation provides comprehensive guidelines for effectively incorporating cost share into budgets, emphasizing best practices for compliance, avoiding common pitfalls, and ensuring accurate and accountable budget management.

Bridging the Silos: Sponsored Programs and Export Control

May 2024

Association of University Export Control Officers (AUECO) Annual Conference

This presentation provides insight into the different attempts at identifying gaps and strengthening processes in the application of Export Control laws and standards in relation to the award preparation process in Research Administration

INTERNAL SERVICE AND COMMITTEES

University Strategic Planning Committee

Nominated September 2026

Society of Research Administrators International

Judge – 2026 College of Business Student Innovation Showcase

April 2026

Western Carolina University

Research and Scholarship Conference Undergraduate Research Expo & Graduate Research Symposium Planning Committee Member

2024 - Current

Western Carolina University

Provost Scholarship Development Award Proposal Review Committee Member

2023 - Current

Western Carolina University

EXTERNAL SERVICE AND COMMITTEES

Curriculum Reviewer for the LevelUP Micro-Credential Program Society of Research Administrators International	Appointed September 2026
Board Member Heritage Christian Academy Board of Directors	Appointed August 2026
NCURA Region III Spring Meeting Planning Committee Member, Proposal Reviewer, and Pre-Award Track Chair National Council of University Research Administrators	July 2026 – March 2027
Chair – Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions Thread for the 2026 Annual Conference Society of Research Administrators International	May 2026 - July 2026
Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions Collaborate Community Working Group Committee Member National Council of University Research Administrators	January 2026 – December 2027 2-Year Term
Speaking Proposal Reviewer for the 2026 Annual Conference Society of Research Administrators International	January 2026 – October 2026
Odyssey Program Committee Member Society of Research Administrators International	November 2025 - Current Renewable 2-Year Term