Multinational Research Collaboratives, Interaction Costs and Time to Productivity: An Empirical Model to Support Success

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What’s Needed to Address Vexing Global Challenges?

• Complex Problems Need Equally Complex Research Teams

• “Collaboration” Intuitively Attractive, YET
  – Interplay of personal and scientific values, norms, expectations
  – These may foster or impede productivity
Thus,

- This study was undertaken to understand promising practices in the most complicated collaboratives...those that span nations
Purpose

• To illuminate practices that support collaborative research
  – Interprofessional
  – Multisite
  – International/Multinational
Methods

• Design-Qualitative
• Sampling—Snowball sample, 15 cases, research-intensive institutions in four continents
• Data collection-Open-ended exploratory interviews → Narrative Data
• Analysis—Grounded theory, constant comparative
Results

• Five Distinct Domains of Collaboratives
• Reflect Progressively Complex Interfaces
  – Parallel facility sharing
  – Data sharing
  – Bridging peers
  – Differing Scientific Languages/Academic Cultures
  – Human subjects or politically/culturally sensitive themes
Conceptual Model of Research Collaboratives

- Human subjects or politically/culturally sensitive themes
- Differing scientific languages & academic cultures
- Bridging peers
- Data sharing
- Parallel facility sharing

Time to Research Outputs vs Complexity of Interface
Interaction Costs

- Increased along the x axis
- Reflected not the complexity of the research per se, but the complexity among the interfaces
- Interfaces, as used here, includes expectations
Deceptive Similarities/Deceptive Differences

- Risk — individual
- Instability — high
- Funds as catalyst — not particularly effective
- Administrative champion — not effective

Area of deceptive similarities

Area of deceptive differences

- Increasing human factors
- Increasing complexity of meanings
- Increasing psychological distance

Time to Research Outputs

Complexity of Interface

- Risk — institution
- Instability — low
- Funds as catalyst — effective
- Administrative champion — essential
Implications—What’s Needed For Success?

• A clear, concrete understanding of the goals of each partner, reassessed and reaffirmed at regular internals not to exceed 3 months in new partnerships

• Criteria for
  – Success
  – Abandonment of the project
Further Implications

• Clarification of expectations around intellectual property, including clear definitions of what it means to each partner
• The meaning and cost of research integrity/compliance of each partner
  – Personnel
  – Time
  – Finances
Cost Implications—Financial and Time

• Funding to facilitate the above as well as the research

• These foundational efforts add time BEFORE the perceived beginning of a project
Conclusion

• Researcher new to multinational collaboratives need mentors & evaluators who understand these costs

• Those on a short timeline for proven productivity may be disadvantaged when pursuing multinational research collaboratives
Questions? Thoughts? Answers?