GRANT PROPOSAL, AWARD, AND ACCOUNT SETUP PROCESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

Office of Organizational Excellence

AGENDA

1. **Background** (Nida Majied)

2. **Discovery** (Susan Klie)

3. **Recommended Improvements** (Lauren Angelo Duck, Charlotte Stalvey, Alysia Bridgman, Michele Hay)

4. **Projected Impact** (Susan Klie)

5. **Next Steps** (Nida Majied)

Nida Majied

BACKGROUND

PROJECT GOALS

The Office of the Controller and Office of Sponsored Awards Management teamed up to prepare for the launch of a new grants management system by first improving the front end of the grants process itself. The project aimed to:

- **Enhance service to customers**

- **Increase understanding of the process and its importance**

- **Reduce time spent on post-proposal error corrections and unnecessary problem solving**

Nida Majied

PROJECT TEAM

Sponsors:
Tommy Coggins, Exec. Dir., Office of Research Administration
Mandy Kibler, University Controller and AVP for Admin. & Finance

Project Leads:
Denise Koon, Grants and Funds Management
Nida Reid, Sponsored Awards Management

Team Members:
Toni Bracey, School of Medicine Columbia
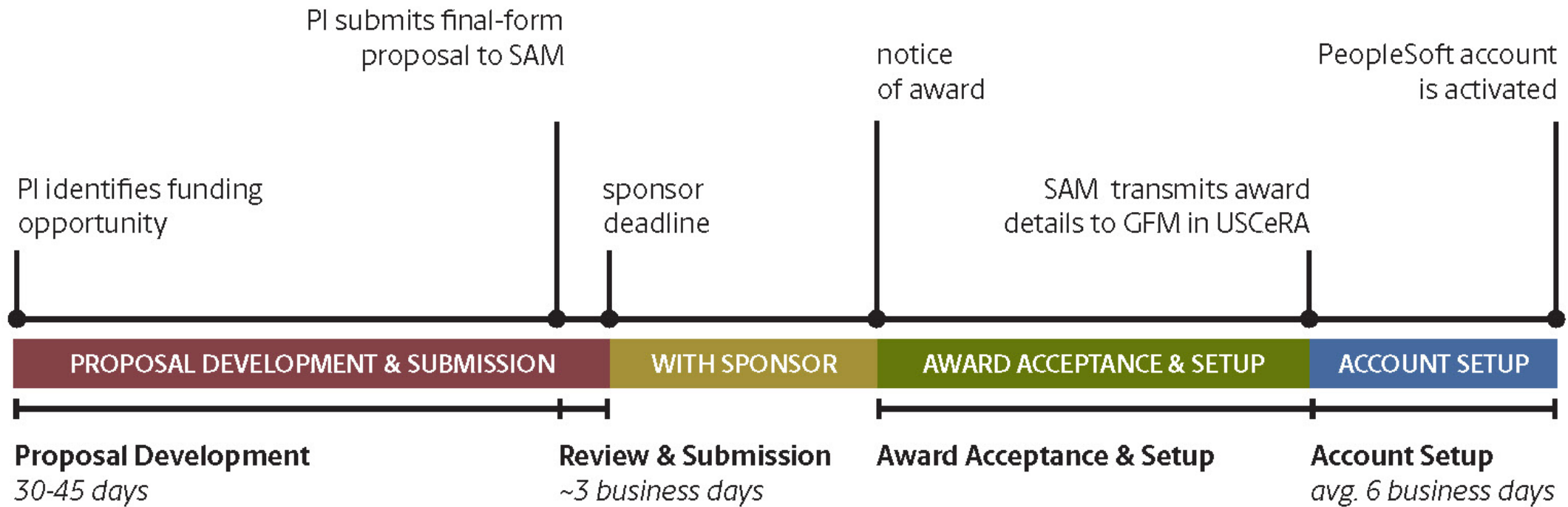**Alysia Bridgman**, McCausland College of Arts and Sciences
Lauren Angelo Duck, Sponsored Awards Management
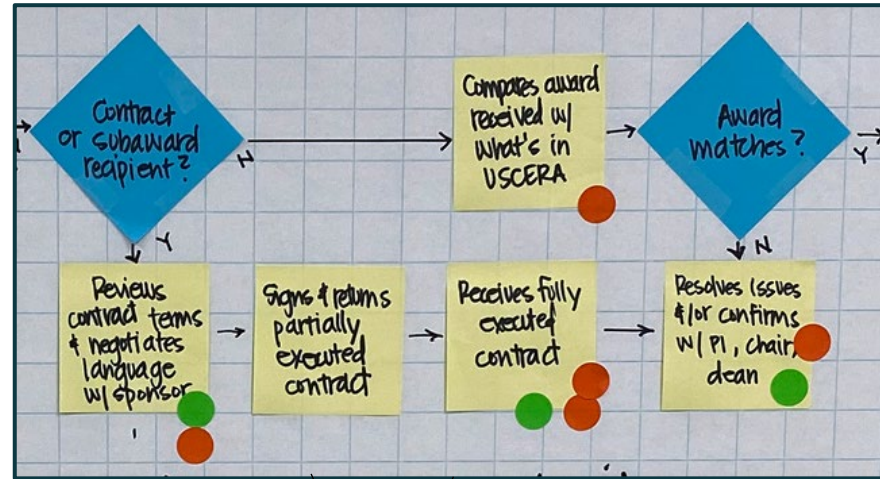**Michele Hay**, Sponsored Awards Management
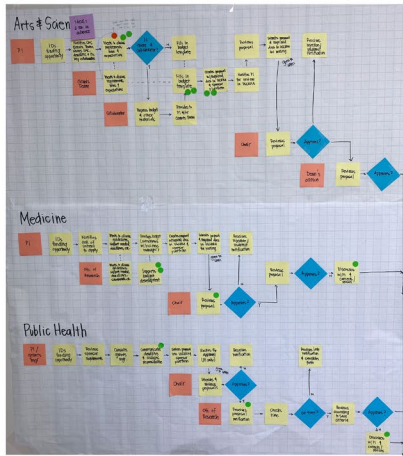**Susan Klie**, Grants and Funds Management
Charlotte Stalvey, Arnold School of Public Health

PROJECT SCOPE

PI submits final-form
proposal to SAM

notice
of award

PeopleSoft account
is activated

PI identifies funding
opportunity

sponsor
deadline

SAM transmits award
details to GFM in USCeRA

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT & SUBMISSION | WITH SPONSOR | AWARD ACCEPTANCE & SETUP | ACCOUNT SETUP

Proposal Development
30-45 days

Review & Submission
~3 business days

Award Acceptance & Setup

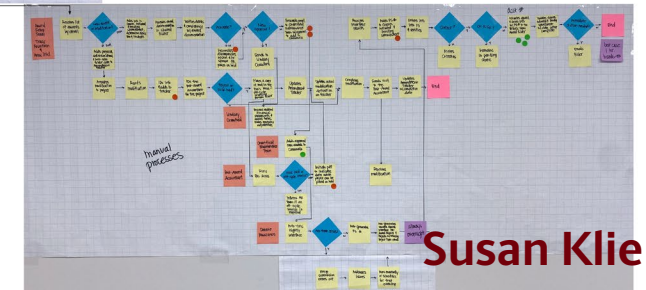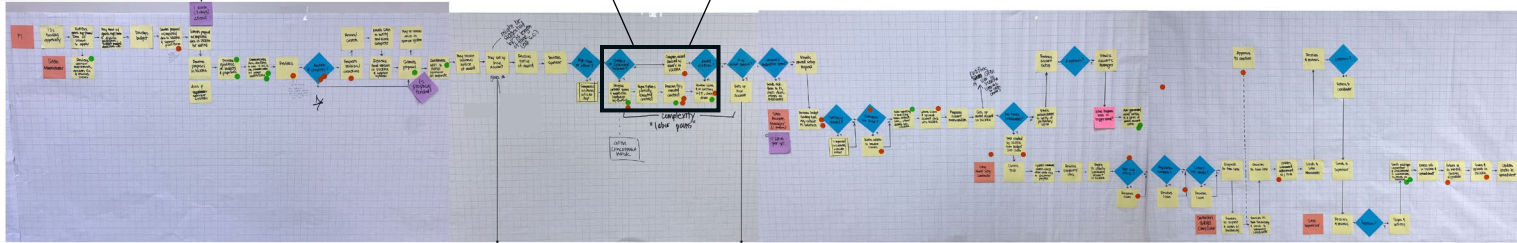**Account Setup**
avg. 6 business days

DISCOVERY

CURRENT PROCESS

Team members highlighted
- added value
- manual work
- redundant steps
- duplicate data entry

Susan Klie

FEEDBACK

Gathered feedback from GFM and SAM staff members, faculty researchers, and academic unit grant administrators at Columbia and Aiken campuses

✅ What Works Well

- Strong support staff across all offices
- Templates and how-to resources
- Separation of pre- and post-award functions
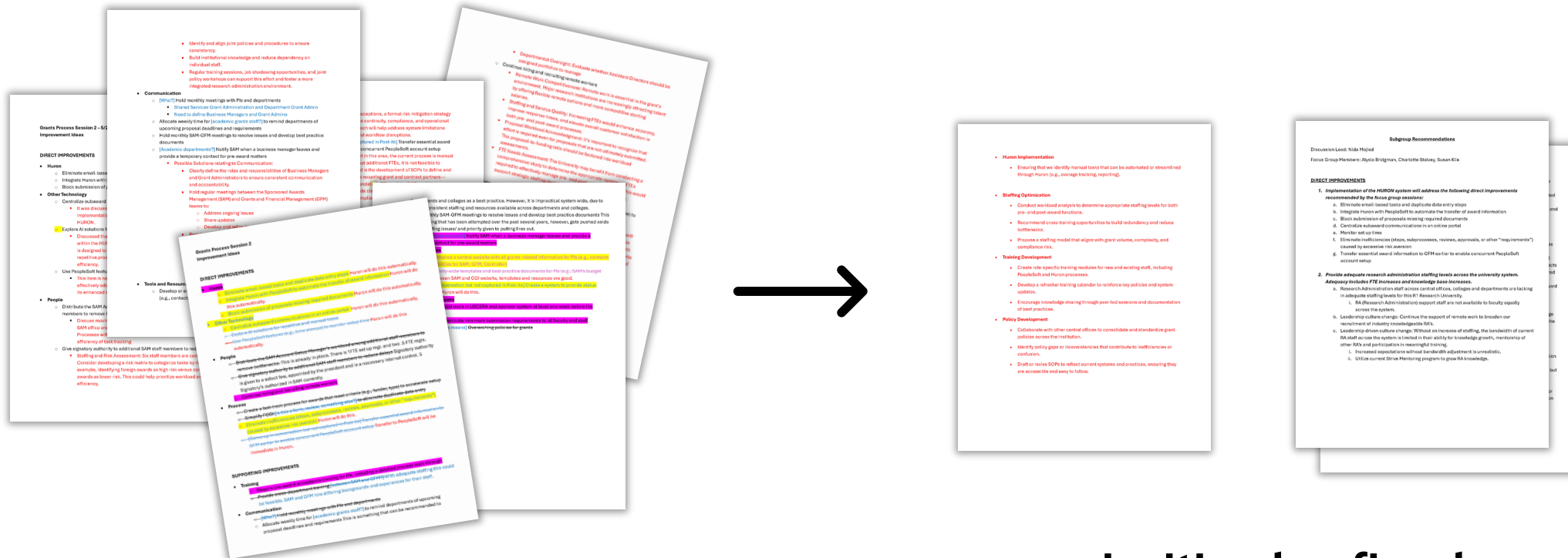
⚠️ Challenges

- Manual data entry and redundancies
- Limited communication
- Subaward delays and complexities

🪄 Wish List

- Real-time tracking and centralized communication
- Enforced internal deadline
- Unified platform

POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

generated ideas

prioritized, refined, and added detail

RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Leverage Huron to reduce errors, manual work, and duplicate data entry and to increase communication and transparency

- Prevent submission of proposals missing required documents
  - Define requirements (documents and systems)
  - Create pre-submission checklist to show progress, alert PIs to missing items
  - Investigate ability for Huron to restrict upload formats (e.g. require Excel for budgets)
- Automate or streamline manual tasks and duplicate data entry
- Eliminate inefficiencies (steps, subprocesses, reviews, approvals, or other "requirements") caused by excessive risk aversion
- Automate the transfer of award information to PeopleSoft
  - Transfer essential information earlier in the process to enable concurrent PeopleSoft account setup
- Centralize subaward communications in an online portal
- Monitor setup time for future improvements

Lauren Angelo Duck

Enforce the internal deadline for more thorough, consistent review

- Begin immediate enforcement of current deadline: three business days before the sponsor's deadline
- Establish and enforce a new proposal submission deadline -- seven business days before the sponsor's deadline
  - Clearly define "final form" submissions
  - Specify submission platforms (e.g., Huron, sponsor portals)
- Require college/school-level review before routing to other units/colleges for review/approvals
- Define exception criteria and process

Charlotte Stalvey

Require training to reduce proposal errors and improve grants management

- Require all PIs to complete research administration training prior to being authorized to submit a proposal
  - Define minimum learning outcomes for required training
    - Possible topics: policies and procedures, basic research administration tips, Huron system use, and PeopleSoft system use
  - Investigate role-based permissions in Huron to enforce completion
- Develop role-specific training modules for new and current staff
  - Create a responsibilities matrix to assign/recommend trainings by role
- Develop a refresher training calendar to reinforce key policies and system updates
- Support training with 3-5 min., on-demand videos on narrow topics (microlearning)
- Encourage knowledge sharing through peer-led sessions and documentation of best practices

Alysia Bridgman

Build staff capacity to support growth, complexity, and compliance

- Enhance employee knowledge through participation in STRIVE program

- Facilitate cross-training opportunities to build redundancy and reduce bottlenecks

- Continue to offer hybrid work agreements to maintain pipeline of high-quality candidates

- Align research administration environment to efficiently and effectively manage the increasing volume of sponsored awards
  - Secure commitment to funding model that supports grant administration operations at a level that advances USC strategic priorities and that is comparable to peer institutions
  - Conduct workload analysis to determine appropriate staffing levels for both pre- and post-award functions
  - Design a staffing model that aligns with grant volume, complexity, and compliance risk
  - Increase the total number of FTEs dedicated to grant administration (both central offices and colleges/departments)

Michele Hay

Clarify departmental and college pre- and post-award points of contact for proposals and awards

- Include directory identifying key RA staff on department/college research administration webpages

- Require a Huron SmartForm (or document) to ID the key pre- and post-award department/college contacts and other staff involved in the proposal and management of sponsored projects

Susan Klie

Standardize web resources for accuracy and consistency

- Establish CGI Hub, GFM and SAM websites as the authorized sources of consistent, current information on sponsored projects
  - Require unit websites to link to these sources

PROJECTED IMPACT
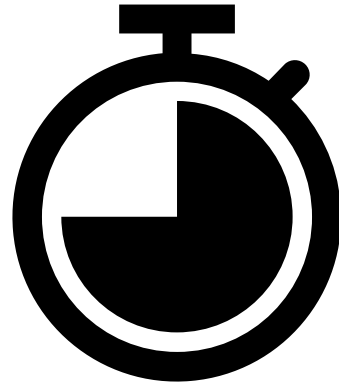
EARLY PROGRESS, LONG-TERM LEAPS
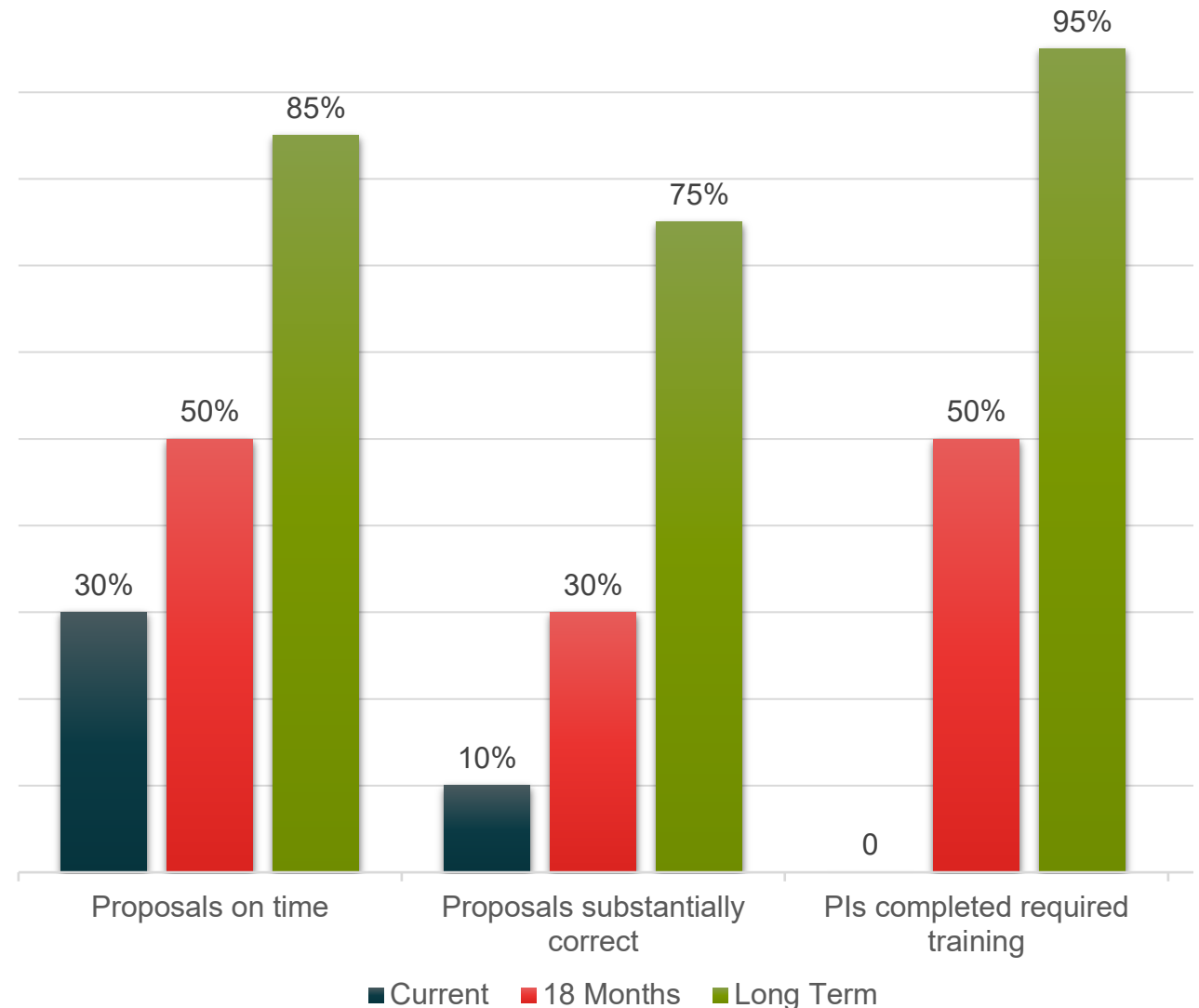
If recommended improvements are fully implemented, over time we estimate:

- On-time proposals will nearly **triple**

- Substantially correct proposals will **increase 7x**

- PI training completion will **reach 95%**

Chart data:

	Proposals on time	Proposals substantially correct	PIs completed required training
Current	30%	10%	0
18 Months	50%	30%	50%
Long Term	85%	75%	95%

NEXT STEPS

Recommended Improvement	Status	Timeline	Point Person	Key Partners
Leverage Huron	In progress	Estimated launch late spring 2026	Nida Majied	SAM, GFM
Enforce internal deadline	Proposed	30-60 days	Dr. Julius Fridriksson, VP of Research	Office of Research, Assoc Deans for Research
Clarify points of contact	Proposed	30-60 days	Elizabeth Renedo	Research Dev, SAM, Dept Administrators
Standardize web resources	Proposed	30-60 days	Elizabeth Renedo	Research Dev, Deans, Chairs
Require training	Proposed	6-12 months	Emily Devereux	Research Dev, SAM, GFM
Build staff capacity	Proposed	Undetermined	Dr. Julius Fridriksson, VP of Research	VPs, Deans

Nida Majied

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP

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