

Committee on Research (COR)
Minutes of Meeting
October 9, 2013

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 10:00 am on October 9, 2013, in Room 232 of the Kolligian Library, Chair Ruth Mostern presiding.

I. Chair's Report

Chair Mostern updated COR members on the following topics:

--New UC President Janet Napolitano visited UC Merced on Thursday, October 3 and held a working lunch with a group of faculty representing all three Schools. VCR Traina mentioned that during the President's visit with the campus Vice Chancellors, she announced her backing of Project 2020 and expressed her willingness to sign the new campus MOU between UC Merced and UCOP.

--On October 8, the Division Council discussed the new MOU. Division Council members provided input and will address the MOU at the next meeting. Division Council also discussed the various graduate group proposals that were submitted to CCGA. There is concern over CCGA's delay in approving the proposals which impedes our graduate groups' ability to recruit students.

--At the first meeting of the Senate-Administration Library Working Group on October 8, which COR Chair Mostern co-chairs with Interim Head Librarian Donald Barclay, the group discussed its function: as campus stakeholders in the Library, the working group will review the Library's internal strategic materials and external review report and provide a report to the Senate and Administration by the end of the AY 13-14. The report will include recommendations on how a long term consultative structure should be implemented. Chair Mostern will provide COR with updates throughout the year. As the working group is UC Merced's first library consultation committee, the group's recommendations are important to the campus's future development in this area.

II. Consent Calendar

Today's agenda and the September 25 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

III. Limited Submission Grant Proposal

The Office of Research emailed the Deans information about a limited submission opportunity. Faculty were asked to send their applications to their Deans by October 23; the Deans will then nominate certain proposals to go forward to Research Development Services by October 30. The NSF Major Research Instrumentation Program is a limited submission program whereby only three proposals per institution can move forward with submitting an application. If three proposals are submitted, at least one of the proposals must be for instrument development (i.e., no more than two proposals may be for instrument acquisition.) Please note that cost sharing at the level of 30% of the total project cost is required. The source of the cost-share will need to be identified at the pre-proposal stage. More information about the program and the solicitation for proposals can be found at: http://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5260 Full Proposals are due Thursday, January 23, 2014.

Prior to this meeting, a faculty member asked COR to address this issue as it was unclear how faculty members are supposed to identify the source of cost sharing prior to submitting their proposals. VCR Traina mentioned that there is a process in place which was established two years ago and faculty and Deans were notified. The campus has funds for institutional cost sharing, which is intentionally over committed at the proposal stage since the success rate on these grants is low. That pot of money is refilled each year as needed. Essentially, these funds are a commitment that is to be fulfilled if a proposal is successful. If a proposal is successful, the campus will find the money to fund it.

ACTION: VCR Traina will ask Research Development Services Director Susan Carter to send an email reminder to faculty about this process.

IV. Request from UCOP – Research Impact Stories

Prior to this meeting, all campus faculty members were sent an email from the Senate asking them to provide stories of how the sequester and current government shutdown are affecting their research programs. The email included the original request from UCOP's Office of Research and Graduate Studies. Faculty members were asked to submit their stories to the dedicated email address provided by UCOP in addition to sending to senatechair@ucmerced.edu. The COR analyst held a meeting with the Office of Governmental Relations and Research Development Services. The latter two units are interested in using the faculty sequester and shutdown stories in their efforts to support the campus research enterprise. In addition, Chancellor Leland is interested in having some UC Merced-specific research stories for her future advocacy efforts for the campus.

ACTION: COR members will submit their stories to the Senate office.

V. ORU Policy

Vice Chair Marcia, who was previously identified as the committee's lead on this topic, led a discussion on a potential campus Organized Research Unit (ORU) policy. Marcia reviewed the UCOP ORU policy as well as those on other campuses as posted on CROPS by the committee analyst. It is important that the Senate plays a role in commenting on the academic value of ORU proposals as well as their feasibility with the current availability of resources. The AY 2008-2009 Graduate and Research Council (GRC) formulated a draft ORU policy, but the policy did not receive full senate and administrative review across the campus and therefore was not implemented. COR reviewed this policy in today's discussion. In addition to formulating a policy about the establishment of ORUs, the policy should also include processes for periodic review. VCR Traina mentioned UC Davis's practice of establishing Organized Research Projects (ORP) as a temporary measure to fund a group as it is going through formal campus approval.

The committee held a discussion on the definitions and implications of ORU versus Campus Research Unit (CRU). In AY 2010-2011, the GRC formulated a one-page procedure on the review process for a CRU. This, too, was not formally implemented. COR reviewed this procedure in today's discussion.

To assist the committee in formulating a new ORU policy, Chair Mostern suggested reviewing the SpARC proposal that was submitted to GRC approximately two years ago. COR must decide what exactly to require from groups to be formally considered an ORU and develop a flowchart to illustrate what occurs in COR when it reviews the proposals (criteria for evaluation).)

COR members discussed the possibility of requiring the Deans to submit letters for support rather than playing a role in drafting the ORU proposal. Members also suggested the inclusion of wording on a funding sunset clause whereby if a group runs out of funds, it can still function as a “ghost” group. This might be more flexible than language on disestablishment.

A COR member posed the question of whether the Senate should have approval authority over groups that only intend to operate within a School. Other members pointed out that requiring Senate input on all proposals might eliminate the incentive for faculty members to attempt to establish “mini departments” that circumvent wider campus approval.

COR members agreed that the three overarching items to address in the ORU policy are: funding existing units, approving new units, and the periodic review of all units.

ACTION: VCR Traina will send the committee the ORP policy from UC Davis. COR analyst will distribute the SpARC proposal to the committee to assist in the formulation of an ORU policy. The October 23 COR meeting will be rescheduled. At the rescheduled meeting, the committee, led by Vice Chair Marcia, will review the draft ORU policy in detail and decide how to edit (the goal is to have a draft policy to send to VCR Traina and other Senate committees for review before finalizing a formal policy before the end of fall semester).

At the rescheduled meeting later this month, Chair Mostern will also seek input from the committee on the Library Periodic Review Report in order to inform the report by the Senate-Administration Library Working Group. At the November 6 meeting, COR member David Noelle will lead the discussion on the review of the faculty research/travel/shared equipment grants. Lastly, Research Development Services Director Susan Carter will be invited to the November 6 meeting to provide an overview of her office's function as it relates to the campus research mission.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.

Attest: Ruth Mostern, Chair

Minutes prepared by: Simrin Takhar, Senate Senior Analyst