

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2013-2014

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

In its inaugural year as a standing Senate committee separate from the former Graduate and Research Council, the Committee on Research (COR) held a total of 16 regularly scheduled in-person meetings and conducted some business via email with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's Senate [Bylaw II.III.7](#).

At the first meeting of fall semester, COR members outlined four overarching goals the committee would work on throughout the academic year and identified the committee members who would serve as lead on the issues: 1) draft policies on the establishment and review of organized research units (ORU, CRU, Centers, and Core Research Facilities), 2) establish the committee's role in campus lab safety, 3) reexamine the criteria in the call for proposals for the annual Senate faculty research and travel grants, and 4) determine the campus's indirect cost return model and make recommendations on future allocations. While COR conducted regular Senate business throughout the year, these four issues served as the guidepost for much of the committee's work.

Establishment and Review of Research Units

While the Graduate and Research Councils previously attempted to draft policies on research units in AY 2008-2009 and AY 2010-2011, neither of these prior efforts made it through the formal Academic Senate or administrative approval process to the implementation stage. COR judged that it was imperative for UCM to have a comprehensive policy by which research units are approved, implemented, funded, and periodically reviewed. 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. Finally, any new policy must include the three main points of funding existing units, approving new units, and the periodic review of all units. In drafting these comprehensive procedures, COR members analyzed the procedures on other UC campuses, the ORU process followed by UCOP, and the systemwide Compendium.

In February 2014, COR submitted to Division Council a cover memo explaining the justification and background for drafting research units policies as well as (1) a table outlining different types of research units on campus (multi-campus, organized, centralized research units and core facilities), (2) a flow chart of the processes that proposals for establishing a research unit must go through for campus approval, (3) the review criteria for evaluating such proposals, and (4) the criteria for five-year reviews for existing research units. Division Council then asked all standing Senate committees to opine on the proposed research unit policies. The Committee on Academic Planning and Resource Allocation (CAPRA) and the Committee on Faculty Welfare, Diversity, and Academic Freedom (FWDAF) raised minor issues with the policies and in July 2014, COR members met to revise the policies to address the two committees' concerns.

COR then submitted its revised policies to the Senate Chair with the request that he ask standing committees to review the revised policies and ask Division Council to vote prior to the start of fall instruction so that the policies can be implemented in time for AY 14-15. In August 2014, Division Council voted to approve the policies and the Senate Chair submitted them to Provost/EVC Peterson with the intention of implementation for fall 2014.

Lab Safety

In in the last academic year, there were many critical issues involving faculty labs. While COR is advisory, the committee believed it must nonetheless be cognizant of the external regulations and state laws pertaining to lab and field research safety. COR selected one committee member to keep COR apprised of pertinent lab safety issues.

During the AY 13-14, COR discussed 1) the need for clarity on the health care for GSRs in addition to that of graduate students, undergraduate students, visiting researchers, and lab volunteers; and 2) the need for clarity on PIs' personal liability in case any of the aforementioned individuals experience an accident in the lab. Input on these issues was solicited from Acting Dean of Graduate Studies Chris Kello and Assistant Dean Concon.

In the last academic year, an attempt was made to formulate the Campus Safety Committee but the Committee on Committees did not select faculty members to serve. In spring 2014, ex-officio COR member Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) Sam Traina provided a draft charge for the Campus Safety Committee which COR reviewed. The

Committee on Committees completed the slate of faculty members and the committee was officially convened.

Annual Senate Faculty Research and Travel Grants

COR conducted lengthy and careful discussions the eligibility criteria for the annual Senate faculty research and travel grants program. To aid its discussions, COR analyzed the criteria used by other UC campuses.

Some potential changes COR considered were gearing the grants towards: 1) untenured faculty members who need bridge funding (as done on another UC campus), 2) faculty members who have specific research needs (e.g., equipment, data), or 3) faculty members who are attempting to apply for extramural funding (as done on another UC campus). Other issues COR debated were how to distribute funds equitably across the Schools, how to assess quality of proposals across disciplines and Schools and whether COR should involve the Schools in the proposal reviewing process, how to balance funding numerous small need-based bridge funding proposals versus fewer larger-scale proposals and how to weigh proposals from faculty members who have already been awarded a Senate grant against faculty members submitting a first-time proposal.

In February 2014, COR submitted the call for proposals to all Senate faculty. The committee then submitted a memo to Division Council, requesting that Division Council work with Provost/EVC Tom Peterson and VCR Traina to develop and implement a mechanism to ensure that future Senate funds grow in proportion to the size of the faculty.

Upon conclusion of the awards process in spring 2014, COR submitted a second memo to Division Council to relate that COR received a high number of meritorious proposals that could not be funded due to the severe lack of adequate funding provided to the Senate. Moreover, while COR members were as conscientious as possible with rating each proposal against various criteria, the funding issue was an obstacle the committee could not appropriately surmount. The traditional, flat-rate funding is not sustainable as the faculty continues to grow. If funding is not increased proportional to faculty growth, the annual Senate faculty grants process will be in jeopardy, as faculty will not see the incentive of spending an inordinate amount of time drafting a proposal when the likelihood of funding is so low.

COR also discussed the grants process for the next academic year, and made note of the various suggestions to next year's COR: 1) generate a form which all PIs are required to fill with the objective information that COR needs to make the objective components of the assessment more clear, 2) carefully consider how to weigh each criterion, especially that of PIs' previous funding, 3) during the fall semester, ask each School executive committee to develop criteria for quality reviews and send these criteria to COR for comment, and 4) encourage faculty to submit joint proposals.

Indirect Cost Return

UCM is undergoing another change in its rate calculation, thereby making this issue a timely one for AY 13-14. To prepare for its recommendations to the administration, COR members studied the distribution models and rate calculations of other UC campuses. COR's aim this year was to encourage budgetary accounting transparency in the allocation of indirect cost return and to ensure that the funds are used to support the campus's research enterprise. Discretionary funds – formerly called opportunity funds – are important to the faculty in light of the changing of the parameters of extending start up packages.

In spring 2014, COR drafted a proposed indirect cost return model and submitted it to Vice Chancellor for Business & Administrative Services, Michael Reese and Vice Chancellor for Planning & Budget, Dan Feitelberg. Both VCs attended a COR meeting in the spring semester where they related that this year represents a fresh start for the campus for reevaluating indirect cost return and what works best for UCM. COR members informed the VCs that if start up funds are moved to non-research related purposes, the equivalent amount of money should be cycled back into the campus research enterprise. Many faculty keep their start up funds beyond the normal time period due to the lack of unit/departmental, unrestricted funding available for faculty. Moreover, while the Senate continues to maintain its annual faculty research grants program, the amount of funding allocated to this program by the Provost/EVC has not risen in proportion to the growth in faculty numbers.

It was agreed upon by all parties that any indirect cost return model should provide to faculty flexibility, predictability, and transparency. Another meeting was held in August 2014 with COR members, VC Reese and Feitelberg, VCR Traina, incoming Controller Michael Riley, and incoming AVC for Finance Donna Jones to continue the

conversation as the next academic year draws closer. It was agreed that COR and the administration would work closely together in AY 14-15 to communicate the new policy to faculty.

COR also conducted the following business:

Open Access Policy

Interim Head Librarian Donald Barclay provided COR members with updates on the Open Access policy. The policy was approved by the systemwide Senate in the last academic year and the implementation this academic year is being handled by the California Digital Library (CDL). While authors will not be “punished” for not uploading their work according to the Open Access policy, federal agencies are requiring publications to be accessed openly in certain circumstances. Faculty members have the option of obtaining a waiver or an embargo from their publishers if they do not want to upload their work at this time. The test campuses are UCSF, UCLA, and UCI implemented the policy on November 1, 2013. In May 2014, the systemwide Senate reviewed the policy. All campuses will be affected by the end of 2014.

Open Access policy will not apply retroactively, rather, only to published work going forward from this point. All scholarly publishers are notified and should be prepared. Authors are encouraged to review the Open Access policy to determine whether the policy applies to conference proceedings and book chapters in addition to peer-reviewed articles.

Senate-Administration Library Working Group

In the last academic year, a joint Senate-Administration Library Working Group was formed in response to concerns with the communication challenges between the faculty and the Library as well as the Library’s contribution to the campus’s research mission. Since the Working Group was not populated in a timely manner, the Committee on Committees this year finalized a slate of faculty members, undergraduate, and graduate students to serve on the AY 13-14 Working Group. COR Chair Ruth Mostern and Interim Head Librarian Donald Barclay served as co-chairs of the Working Group.

As campus stakeholders in the Library, the Working Group was tasked with reviewing the Library’s internal strategic materials and external review report and provide its own report to the Senate and Administration by the end of the AY 13-14. This is UCM’s first library advisory committee; equivalent committees are already established on other campuses.

The Working Group held three meetings in fall 2013. Members elicited feedback from their constituencies on the Library's external review report and made recommendations intended for inclusion in the Working Group's final report to the Senate Chair and Provost/EVC.

COR was one of the constituencies whose feedback the Working Group solicited on the Library's external review report. COR stated to the Working Group that it strongly believes that an excellent and adequately funded Library is critical to the research mission of UCM and COR hopes to see the Senate develop a collaborative and positive relationship with the Library. COR also expressed its hope that Senate advocacy can help rectify the problem that the Library's budget and resource allocation have not increased substantially since the opening of the campus. The committee related to the Library its many concerns with the report, including items related to space, collections, education effectiveness, and management.

The Working Group submitted its final report in January 2014 to the Senate Chair and Provost/EVC. The report include recommendations on how a long term consultative structure between the Library and its stakeholders should be implemented, the Working Group's support of the creation of a permanent Library and Scholarly Information Advisory Committee with a membership and charge akin to such committees at other UC campuses, and the recommendation that the Library, as an academic unit, needs a budget that grows commensurate with student and faculty growth.

Division Council was asked to opine on the final report, specifically the main recommendation that a standing committee of the Senate be formed to deal with library and scholarly communications issues, as currently done on other campuses. Division Council did not vote on this item but will carry it over to AY 14-15.

Visit of UC President Janet Napolitano

In fall 2013, President Napolitano visited UCM and met with various constituencies including faculty members. COR representatives attended the invited session of Senate members and President Napolitano to share insight on topical issues facing UC Merced.

Updates from VCR Sam Traina

Throughout the academic year, COR members benefited from updates on various research-related issues from VCR Traina, an ex-officio committee member. In addition to providing the committee with information on indirect cost return and the systemwide Vice Chancellors meetings, VCR Traina informed the committee about systemwide research initiatives such as the Presidential Grand Challenge Initiative. Campus VCRs were asked to provide recommendations on the formulation of such a program and which research foci on their campuses would be eligible. The proposals must be multi-campus collaborations but are independent of MRUs and the main criteria for proposals may include the distinctiveness of the research foci and its potential impact. In addition, VCR Traina related to COR that President Napolitano expressed her desire to grow the area of technology commercialization to keep California industries viable and competitive; to achieve this, funds may be allocated to licenses for UC intellectual property.

Director of Research Development Services Susan Carter

COR also heard updates from Director of RDS, Susan Carter and her staff. RDS aims to be the faculty's first point of contact for pre-award services and proposal development. One of RDS's current projects is the implementation of an integrated, online submission system which RDS will help faculty to use. It will be analogous to NSF's Fast Lane and will become the default proposal submission system for the campus. RDS also holds grant writing workshops with untenured faculty every spring semester and also conducts grant writing training for graduate students. In addition, a new project will involve taking untenured faculty to Washington, D.C. to familiarize them with granting agencies.

Sequestration

As a result of the federal government shutdown in fall 2013, the UCOP Office of Research asked for UCORP's assistance in collecting stories from faculty members at the ten UC campuses that illustrate the negative impact that sequestration is having on their research programs. All campus faculty members were subsequently sent an email from the Senate requesting stories of how the sequester and current government shutdown are affecting their research programs. COR worked with the office of Governmental Relations and Research Development Services on these stories in an

effort to support the campus research enterprise and to use in future advocacy efforts for the campus.

Faculty Start up Funds

This academic year, Provost/EVC Peterson announced his intention to reexamine the parameters around start up funds and their extension. COR submitted a memo to Division Council that stated while the committee understands the Provost/EVC's dilemma of asking UCOP for financial support when there is seemingly "unspent" money already on campus in the form of start up funds, these funds should be viewed as encumbered rather than unspent, as faculty members routinely count on their start up funds to pay for a range of items and salaries in the absence of departmental and extramural funding. COR offered its support to the Provost/EVC but emphasized that sweeping start up funds before establishing an alternative funding source will be cause irreparable damage to the faculty and the campus's research mission. COR expressed its hope that the Senate will be provided with a plan detailing where the start up funds will go and what the alternative funding source is, as the campus's core research mission cannot be fulfilled without adequate faculty research support.

Emergency Funding for Faculty

A common theme facing COR throughout the academic year was the lack of bridge funding for faculty members who face an unexpected shortfall in research funds. The committee noted that there are a number of circumstances that might cause this problem to occur, and that the Office of Research periodically receives requests from faculty who are in this situation. The Senate is not well positioned to administer an emergency fund source that requires rapid turnaround; therefore, COR requested that Division Council work with the Provost/EVC VCR Traina to establish in the next budget allocation cycle, an emergency fund source, controlled by the central administration, to be used by faculty members experiencing gaps in funding.

Planning for AY 14-15

At its last meeting of AY 13-14, COR outlined a list of suggested issues that next year's committee should conduct reviews of the following: shared facilities (with RDS Director Susan Carter), the grants preparation and management system with Research Accounting staff and Sponsored Projects staff, and Institutional Review Board and

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee issues. Finally, next year's COR should call one joint meeting with COR, Graduate Council, and the new Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate Division.

Systemwide Review Items

- APM revisions. COR opined on several proposed revisions to various sections of the APM as requested by systemwide and Division Council.
- 2010 CITRIS Report. It was discovered by Academic Council that standing Senate committees were never invited to opine on the academic review of CITRIS. This year's Division Council issued the directive for standing committees to review the report. While COR had no comments on the report, the committee reaffirmed its enthusiasm and support for CITRIS and its benefit to the UCM research agenda.
- Online Cross-Campus Courses. Robust systemwide online courses might constrain our growth by making it more difficult to justify hiring faculty in certain fields. On the other hand, they could also provide opportunities for our graduate and undergraduate students, some of whom may be intellectually isolated, to be more engaged in the system. COR pointed out that UCM needs to be mindful about reconciling the growth of our own programs, faculty, and students with the offering of remote, online courses in ways that advantage our campus.
- Self-supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs Policy (SSGPDPP). Self-supporting programs are dependent on tuition to sustain themselves and as such, the COR was concerned for their potential to impact research and teaching enterprise mission of the University, for instance creating the risk that faculty may be recruited and evaluated not on the basis of their contributions to research and core teaching, but for their ability to recruit students to self-supporting programs in order to generate more tuition. COR was also wary of situations in which a state-funded program is closely conjoined with a related private, self-supporting program. This could create a cross-cannibalization effect whereby one program overpowers the other. COR advised that self-supporting programs be tied to a significant regulatory structure and be subject to Senate oversight.
- University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) updates. UCORP discussed the following major issues this academic year: Open Access policy, composite

benefits rate, Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives (MRPI), lab safety, and the Portfolio Review Group (PRG). UCOP acknowledged that MRPI is drastically underfunded and consequently allocated \$3 million for the program this year and at least \$6 million over the next two years. The PRG is the committee tasked by UCOP with reviewing all UC programs that are funded through the UC Office of Research. School of Natural Sciences Dean Juan C. Meza was UCM's representative on the PRG this year. The PRG issued two reports which required reviewing by each campus Senate's COR. UCM's COR was pleased that PRG supported increased funding for the MRPI program and the natural reserves but was concerned that the PRG was critical about the California Institutes for Science and Innovation (CAL ISI). COR recommends that a faculty representative from UCM be named to PRG next year.

- University Committee on Library and Scholarly Communications (UCOLASC) updates. UCOLASC discussed the following major issues this academic year: Open Access policy, off-site storage facilities, and copyright issues for graduate students working as GSRs.

Campus Review Items

- MAPP. As per procedures, in the spring semester, APO, in conjunction with the Provost/EVC, submitted a set of proposed revisions to the MAPP. COR had no comments on the suggested revisions.
- PhD Program Proposals. COR reviewed the following PhD proposals and judged that they enhanced the research mission of the campus, related appropriately to the campus's current research profile, and that the research areas emphasized in the proposals had the potential for extramural support: Mechanical Engineering, Sociology, and Molecular Cell Biology. COR recommended their approval.
- Physics PhD proposal. COR suggested that the proposal could be strengthened in the following ways: by including a compact summary of this dual justification for establishing a new graduate program, by providing some support for the choice of the three focal research areas of specialization, by clarifying staffing needs, and by exploring how the proposed program could contribute to

establishing UCM as a world leading institution in some broad strategic research areas consistent with campus-wide planning.

- Electrical Engineering & Computer Science (EECS) PhD proposal. COR suggested that the proposal could be strengthened by a more thorough discussion of what the research fields are and why they are the research foci of the proposed graduate program, by explicitly stating what these research connections are and how they fit within the particular research theme, and by further discussing the directions of growth in research areas within EECS. In reviewing the revised EECS proposal, COR still had concerns about particular components of the proposal. COR requested that EECS submit a cover memo that indicated which section of the proposal addresses the following points: 1) intelligent systems and distributed systems are the research foci of the program. 2) if the EECS faculty members are “anticipating to transition towards off campus cloud based system”, then this should be stated explicitly.
- Public Health major. COR’s two main concerns with this proposed major in SSHA were 1) the planning for public health and health sciences - including medical education, HSRI, the nascent public health bylaw group, and the proposed public health undergraduate major - is occurring on a piecemeal basis, simultaneously, and on many fronts. COR recommended that all health-related initiatives be presented in a comprehensive, holistic package and strategically aligned with the 2020 Project. 2) the lack of a single organizational structure to administer and plan the public health major and how the absence of this guiding entity will impact the campus research mission. COR therefore recommended that approval of the public health major be delayed until one organizational structure can be established to manage public health and human health educational activities without interference in the research mission.
- Community Research and Service. COR opined on this proposed minor in SSHA and found it sound in the advancement of the campus research mission.
- Course buyout policy. COR opined on the Provost/EVC’s proposed course buyout policy and had three major concerns: 1) by imposing a buyout cost that is higher than the actual cost of a lecturer hire, it disincentivizes research in favor of teaching, thereby hindering the overall research mission of the University. 2) it creates a sliding scale since it ties the cost of buyout to the faculty members’ salary rather than the real cost of hiring a replacement lecturer. Instead, the

policy should be based upon a transparent accounting of the actual cost of replacing a faculty member's teaching. 3) It places too much power in the hands of the Deans, who are the sole arbiters of buyout requests, and who can effectively use buyouts to impose a hidden indirect cost on faculty grants in order to fund unrelated activities in the Schools.

- Diversity hires. The Committee on Faculty Welfare, Diversity, and Academic Freedom suggested late in the spring semester that in light of the announcement of the severely limited numbers of new faculty FTEs next year, the Provost/EVC should consider allocating the few positions based on diversity considerations. COR strongly agreed that diversity is essential to research excellence. However, in light of the Provost's May 1 letter to faculty about the limited number of new FTE lines for next year, COR believed that any competitive process to allocate such limited resources at this point in time would be a significant burden to faculty with little impact on diversity given the small number of lines in play. COR suggested that the best way to support the campus's research enterprise is to develop thoughtful, long-term strategic academic focusing plans that include diversity considerations.
- Smoke and Tobacco-Free Policy. In January 2014, UCM officially became a smoke and tobacco-free campus. Senate committees were invited to comment on the policy. COR was concerned by the second exception to the policy that states "UC Merced Institutional Review Board-approved medical research, only if tobacco use is integral to the research protocol." COR suggested removal of the word "medical", which would then allow the exception to cover all research at UC Merced, including behavioral studies. COR did not want the policy to be too restrictive as to impede the research mission of all disciplines in the University.
- Senate-Administration Library Working Group report. COR endorsed the Working Group's recommendations in fall 2013.
- Library's 2020 Space Plan. As part of Project 2020, the Library submitted to the administration its plans for future space. COR strongly believed that an excellent and adequately funded library is critical to the research mission of UC Merced. COR hopes to see the Senate develop a collaborative, positive relationship with the Library, and we trust that Senate support can assist the Library in obtaining resources adequate to a research university as it continues to serve the campus's research mission. However, COR's concerns with the Library's 2020 Space Plan

were: the plan called for developing new spaces instead of restoring KL to its original purpose, study hall spaces should be managed by another unit rather than the Library, there are significant deficiencies in the Library's core legacy print collection, and the plan did not make any reference to an expansion in Library staff and equipment (e.g. scanning and recording facilities that are needed for digital project development), nor to the needed core IT infrastructure that is required for expanded bandwidth and data curation.

- Enhancing diversity. Division Council issued a memo to all Senate standing committees with a list of four overarching questions about diversity of UCM faculty and graduate students. Attracting more diverse faculty and graduate students enhances the research profile of the University; and diversity-friendly policies (such as improved family leave support for graduate students) can also assist with retention of diverse graduate students and faculty. COR recommended investigating the feasibility of creating the position of a chief diversity officer on campus. In addition, although the possibilities vary across fields and disciplines, there is the possibility of increasing faculty diversity through target of opportunity hires, pursuing the Presidential Post Doc pool, and cluster hiring. Finally, UCM's graduate student population lags behind our faculty population in terms of diversity, and COR recommended identifying initiatives to recruit and retain a more diverse graduate student body.
- Medical Education Task Force. A task force was previously formed on campus to plan the future trajectory of the medical education initiative. Professor Paul Brown from SSHA debriefed Division Council on the task force's findings and Division Council subsequently drafted a charge for a future medical education task force. COR emphasized the importance of ensuring that that the medical education effort does not utilize resources that are earmarked for established campus research programs in terms of resources and funding.

Respectfully submitted:

COR members:

Ruth Mostern, Chair (SSHA) – UCORP and UCOLASC representative

Roummel Marcia, Vice Chair (SNS)

David Noelle, (SSHA)

Jason Hein, (SNS)

YangQuan Chen, (SoE)

Ex officio, non-voting members:

Sam Traina, Vice Chancellor for Research & Economic Development

Student Representatives:

Brandon Stark, Graduate Student Guest – fall term

Edwin Gibb, Graduate Student Guest – spring term

Staff:

Simrin Takhar