Committee on Research (COR)
Minutes of Meeting
November 6, 2013

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 11:00 am on November 6, 2013, in Room 324 of the Kolligian Library, Chair Ruth Mostern presiding.

I.   Chair's Report
      As there was no Division Council meeting since the last COR meeting, and no UCORP or UCOLASC meeting, Chair Mostern had nothing to report.

II.   Guest Susan Carter, Director of Research Development Services (RDS), provided introduced her staff and provided an overview of her office's function. RDS is staffed by Carter, Analyst Sara McDonnell and two Pre-Award Proposal Development Administrators Vanity Campbell and Jim Fickett. Another Research Administration position will be filled in the near future. RDS aims to be the faculty's first point of contact for pre-award services and proposal development. While there are no formal assignments between RDS staff and School until RDS is fully staffed, currently, most SNS proposals are handled by Fickett, most SSHA proposals go to McDonnell, and most SoE proposals (in addition to those of SNRI and public health-related SNS proposals) go to Campbell. 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. The system will streamline the proposal process by saving data and populating fields for the users. RDS is currently undertaking pilot projects and will strive to implement the pre-award component of the software by January 2014. The entire system should be implemented by fall 2014 and it will become the default proposal submission system for the campus.

      Carter related that RDS can also assist faculty with the writing of the grant but do request a two-week (ideally, more) notice. Currently, RDS is experiencing a backlog of work that occurred as a result of the recent government shutdown.

Carter clarified that currently, the Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) is the only entity on campus that can submit proposals. Faculty have the choice to work with RDS at the beginning of the process to get assistance with their budgets and grant writing before submitting their proposals to SPO for the final review and submission. Or, faculty can choose to work with SPO exclusively during the whole process.

RDS also holds grant writing workshops with untenured faculty every spring. A new project, beginning in late February 2014, will involve taking untenured faculty to Washington, D.C. to familiarize them with granting agencies.   RDS also does grant writing training for graduate students.

Carter concluded her presentation by encouraging faculty members to contact her with any suggestions or comments. In response to a COR member asking how the Senate can help RDS, Carter responded by saying that at the present time, her priority is to forge open communication with her office and the faculty so that faculty are aware of what services she can provide to them. She would be happy to attend further Senate committee meetings and conduct formal presentation of requested. Faculty are encouraged to contact RDS at rds@ucmerced.edu and their emails will reach all RDS staff members including Carter. Other important contact information: spo@ucmerced.edu (SPO staff) and ras@ucmerced.edu (Accounting Services staff).

III.   Consent Calendar

   ACTION: Today's agenda and the October 28 meeting minutes were approved as presented.

IV.   Library
   Prior to this meeting, a draft memo was circulated to COR members that contained COR's comments on the Library's external review report. COR members were also sent the Library's 2020 Space Plan.

COR members held a discussion on the Library's Space Plan. More clarity is needed on the core research issues. The overarching concern is that the Space Plan focuses on the development of common space as a core function of the Library when the campus's research mission should be the core function. COR's main comments are 1) Kolligian Library was purpose-built for library use and COR feels the building should retain its original purpose; 2) it would serve the Library and campus purposes most efficiently if library services were consolidated in one building; 3) perhaps another unit should manage the planning of study halls as COR feels that is not a core Library function. In addition, COR members agreed that the Library's budget needs to increase commensurate with student numbers. COR member reiterated that the memo it sends to the Library on the Space Plan ought to emphasize that COR is providing input and raising concerns rather than handing down directives.

ACTION: COR analyst will finalize the memo on the Library's external review report and the memo on the Library's 2020 Space Plan. The memos will be circulated among the committee for review and approval.

V.   Composite Benefit Rates
Chair Mostern announced that this is only an informational item for the committee. The Office of the President is reconsidering how to proceed on this issue as it received push back from the campuses in spring 2013.   This item will likely return to COR's agenda later in the academic year.

VI.   Campuswide Review Items

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.   COR discussed how to address these questions within the context of the campus research mission. Attracting more diverse faculty and graduate students enhances the research profile of the University. Although it varies across fields and disciplines, there is the possibility of facilitating diversity through target of opportunity hires, pursuing the Presidential Post Doc pool, and cluster hiring .

COR's response to the memo will include the following comments: COR supports the creation for the position of a chief diversity officer on campus in keeping with the practice of other UC campuses. This position will help facilitate our status as a Hispanic Serving Institution.   There are several diversity initiatives worth exploring but the campus must make it a priority to earmark resources to help the initiative succeed.   UCM's graduate student population lags behind our faculty population in terms of diversity.   UCM should also ensure that whatever practices we adopt follow the best practices at other UC campuses.

VI.   Systemwide Review Items

--Cross-campus online courses. COR discussed the problems and opportunities that online courses engenders.   UC Merced's small size and ongoing growth trajectory means that online courses present both opportunities and problems. 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. UC Merced faculty may also welcome the opportunity to teach online courses. COR wishes to point out that UC Merced is in a unique position in which online offerings may have significant implications for our own campus's growth . We need 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.

ACTION: COR analyst will transmit a memo to the Senate Chair with COR's comments.

--Proposed changes to APM 25. COR had no comments.

ACTION: COR analyst will transmit a memo to the Senate Chair with COR's comments.

VII.   Other Business

Division Council sent a request to all standing Senate committees to review the CCGA proposals of Electrical Engineering & Computer Science (EECS) and Sociology. COR assigned one reviewer per proposal.

ACTION: The COR reviewers of the two CCGA proposals will submit their reviews to the COR analyst prior to the November 20 meeting.   Upon conclusion of the November 20 meeting, the COR analyst will transmit COR's reviews to Division Council by the deadline of November 25.

COR members briefly discussed the agenda topics for the November 20 meeting. Vice Chair Marcia will be absent but will submit a draft table of ORU/CRU/MRU definitions to committee members and Chair Mostern will lead the discussion. This table is intended to serve as the foundation of the first draft of a new ORU policy. COR member Noelle will lead the discussion on possible revisions to the criteria for the Senate faculty research/travel/shared equipment grants.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

Attest: Ruth Mostern, Chair

Minutes prepared by: Simrin Takhar, Senate Senior Analyst