

Committee on Research (COR)
Minutes of Meeting
December 4, 2013

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 10:00 am on December 4, 2013, in Room 324 of the Kolligian Library, Chair Ruth Mostern presiding.

I. Chair's Report

Chair Mostern updated COR members on the December 3 Division Council meeting: meeting from December 3:

-- Start up funds. Provost Peterson and VP for Budget and Planning Feitelberg are discussing changing the extension policy on faculty start up.

--Provost's revised course buyout policy. Division Council members agreed the revised policy is problematic and all Senate committees were asked to submit comments.

--ORU policy. When Chair Mostern informed Division Council members of COR's upcoming revised ORU policy, Council members pointed out that the importance of not groups of faculty who want to form their own research entity but prefer not to seek formal Senate-Administrative approval. These include Centers, Institutes, and Laboratories. Council members also inquired how core facilities will be incorporated into the new ORU policy. COR will take this under consideration when drafting the policy. The Office of Research should be encouraged to develop their policies parallel to those of the Senate.

II. Consent Calendar

ACTION: Today's agenda and the minutes from the November 20 meeting were approved as presented.

III. ORU Policy

COR members briefly reiterated their previous discussion of the draft ORU table which will serve as the foundation of the new policy. COR members discussed how core facilities should be recognized in the new policy.

ACTION: The ORU table will be revised to add core facilities as a fourth category. COR members will submit suggested language to Chair Mostern and Vice Chair Marcia for inclusion into the policy. Committee analyst will research the review process for core facilities on other UC campuses.

IV. Start Up Funds Memo

Prior to the meeting, a draft memo was circulated among the committee which outlined the committee's concerns over the tightening of the parameters around the extension of faculty start up funds. COR members briefly discussed the memo and agreed to forward it to Division Council.

ACTION: Committee analyst will transmit the memo to Division Council

V. Course Buyout Policy

Provost Peterson recently submitted a revised course buyout policy in response to the Senate's concerns over the original version. COR members expressed concern over various aspects of the revised policy: 1) it disincentivizes research in favor of teaching thereby hindering the overall research mission of the University; 2) it creates a sliding scale as it unnecessarily ties faculty members' salary to the cost of buyout; the policy should contain a transparent accounting of the actual cost of replacing a faculty member's teaching, and 3) it places too much power in the hands of the Deans by imposing a hidden indirect cost on faculty grants.

ACTION: Committee analyst will draft a memo detailing COR's concerns and will circulate among the committee for review and approval before transmitting to Division Council before the December 13 deadline.

VI. Conflict of Interest Policy

In response to Division Council's suggestion that each Senate standing committee adopt its own conflict of interest policy, COR reviewed the policies of other UC campus CORs. The issue most relevant to COR is that faculty members cannot vote on their own grant proposals or those of relatives. COR members inquired whether it would be more efficient to institute one policy that covers the whole Merced Division and should be drafted by the Committee on Rules & Elections as such a policy is under its purview.

ACTION: Committee analyst will draft a memo stating that COR chooses not to adopt its own conflict of interest policy at this time; rather, the committee believes that only one policy should exist for the entire Division.

VII. Systemwide Review Item

--Self-supporting Graduate Professional Degree Programs Policy (SSGPDPP).

COR members discussed SSGPDPPs in general terms. Self-supporting programs are ostensibly dependent on tuition to sustain themselves. As such, COR members expressed concern for the research and teaching enterprise mission of the University, as faculty would be recruited not for their contributions to research and teaching, but on their ability to recruit students in order to generate more tuition. COR is also wary of situations in which a state-funded program is combined with a private, self-supporting program. This could create a cross-cannibalization effect whereby one program overpowers the other. COR advises that self-supporting programs be tied to a regulatory structure and subject to Senate oversight. COR members agreed that further review of the specific, proposed policy changes is needed.

ACTION: Committee analyst will draft a memo that details COR's general concerns with SSGPDPPs and circulate among the committee. The committee members will add their comments about the proposed policy changes

suggested by systemwide. Committee analyst will then transmit the final memo from COR to Division Council by the deadline of January 13.

VIII. Research/Travel/Shared Equipment Grants

The COR member tasked with leading the discussion began by summarizing the past difficulties in reviewing these grants. There was a lack of expertise which made it difficult to adequately assess the quality of the proposals. There was also no mechanism in place to track whether the reviewers made good choices in allocating funds to faculty members. The COR member related that he previously reviewed the grants criteria at other UC campuses: some are need-based, some are geared toward inter-disciplinary proposals, some are for new research projects only, some are for funding-gap relief (for faculty who need bridge funding in between larger, extramural awards), and some focus only on junior faculty eligibility (rank-based criteria).

COR members held a lengthy discussion on the options for AY 13-14. To what degree can we assess quality of proposals across disciplines and Schools? Could we engage in a partnership with the Schools to assist in the ranking process but still retain authority over disbursing the funds? There was also a discussion about establishing more than one pot of money for more than one criterion versus a cost-sharing model. COR members also discussed the role of graduate groups in helping COR assess the quality of the proposals.

COR members generally agreed that the first draft of a revised policy will be a hybrid model with the Schools/ORUs/graduate groups that will be need-based, prioritized for untenured faculty or tenured faculty who are changing their research focus, and include provisions for separate pots of money for separate criteria.

ACTION: The COR member tasked with revising the policy will construct a draft to be circulated among the committee before the next meeting in mid-

January 2014. The final call will be distributed to the campus at the end of January.

IX. Mechanical Engineering CCGA Proposal

COR members discussed the lead reviewer's comments and agreed with his points.

ACTION: COR voted to move the proposal forward in the process.

Committee analyst will transmit a memo containing the COR lead reviewer's comments to Division Council by the deadline of December 9.

X. Other Business

--December 18 meeting is cancelled.

--Committee analyst will send the proposed spring meeting schedule to committee members.

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

Attest: Ruth Mostern, Chair

Minutes prepared by: Simrin Takhar, Senate Senior Analyst