

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024
1:30 – 3:00 PM

I. Chair’s Report – *Chair Ye* **1:30 – 1:40**
Topics TBD

II. Consent Calendar
A. Today’s agenda
B. Draft November 6, 2024 meeting minutes

Action requested: Approval of the Consent Calendar

III. Consultation with VPDGE Hrant Hratchian **1:40 – 2:00**

The following questions were submitted to VPDGE Hratchian in advance of today’s meeting:

- What are the incentives to graduate students and their advisors to submit F31/F32 and equivalent grant proposals? Are there any plans to invest more in this area? How could CoR help in this regard?
- What strategies is the Graduate Division employing to promote expansion/maintenance of enrollment on graduate programs in the wake of the current and upcoming contract changes (i.e., increases in costs for TA/GSRs)? What implications will this have on faculty research and how can the CoR help with the Graduate Division’s strategies?
- To prevent a steep decline in graduate enrollment, it may be important to incentivize PIs to support GSRs through research grants. What are the main uses of the tuition dollars from research grants? Can a portion of these funds be redirected to partially offset the impacts of escalating costs of GSRs?
- Is there any set aside funding, or could there one be, for undocumented graduate students?

IV. Consultation with VC/CFO Kurt Schnier **2:00 – 2:20**

The following questions were submitted to VC/CFO Schnier in advance of today’s meeting:

- The composite benefit rate for postdocs was 15.8% in FY 23, increasing to 34.4% in FY 24, and dropping back to 15.9% in FY 25. Such large fluctuations make it difficult to budget for postdocs. What can be done to mitigate the impacts of such large swings?
- In our last Core Research Facilities and Instrumentation survey, faculty expressed frustration that when a piece of equipment in a facility breaks down, often there is no money to fix it, impeding research productivity for many months. There is a desire for setting up a reserve fund that allows a facility to build up a pool of money from a portion

of recharge incomes. The reserve fund can be used to pay for unexpected repairs or equipment upgrades. This would also provide facilities more incentive to increase revenues. What would it take to establish such reserve funds?

- The current indirect cost return model provides generous support for faculty seeking large grants over \$5 million. However, multi-investigator awards between \$2 million and \$5 million fall into a gap. On one hand, such awards are notably more complex and costly to support than single PI awards, as mentioned in the Shared Governance retreat. On the other hand, the ICDR is too low to provide adequate support. What can be done to bridge this gap?
- CoR is pleased to know that the research expenditure of UC Merced has exceeded \$ 60 million. Are there more details, e.g. a breakdown by departments?

V. Consultation with Office of Research Development **2:20 – 2:30**

**Guest: Kelly Bolcavage, Senior Research Development Officer
(Officer Bolcavage is VCR Wilson’s alternate for this meeting.)**

- A. Faculty Success Initiative (FSI)
- B. Limited Submission process
- C. Funded proposal library initiative

VI. AY 24-25 Senate Faculty Grants Annual Call for Proposals **2:30 – 3:00**

- The draft call is available here.
- Last year’s rubric for evaluating proposals is here.

Campus leadership is discussing the recommendation to allocate the remaining \$100K MacKenzie Scott funds to an endowment.

CoR members will continue their previous discussion on revising the annual call for proposals. At the November 6 meeting, some CoR members were in favor of \$5,000 in order to fund more proposals. A CoR member suggested placing language in the call for proposals that if PIs have a need for more funding beyond \$5,000 for items such as a significant piece of equipment or a collaborative project that requires more money, they should contact CoR and CoR may decide to award additional funds. If CoR were to do this, it would have to be only under exceptional circumstances and the PIs’ special project must be fully explained. The additional rationale would be due to CoR before the grant submission deadline.

Given that the EVC/Provost’s office has stated that it can no longer provide funding for extensions, CoR members agreed at the November 6 meeting that the call for proposals will clearly state that there will be no extensions, and no exceptions. The award letters will also include this language as well as the Senate analyst’s award notification emails. The Senate analyst will also send periodic email reminders to PIs and School financial staff of the funding deadline and reiterate that no extensions will be allowed.

Last year, CoR members suggested the following revisions for the AY 24-25 call:

- Should CoR add language to the call that summarizes its evaluation rubric?
- Should CoR add a table of last year’s winners with the number of years since they were last awarded so potential applicants can see the likelihood of being funded?
- Should CoR revise the evaluation rubric to rank the “reasonableness” of the proposals’ budgets? Last year’s CoR suggested there is a difference between “need” and the “reasonable” nature of budget requests.
- Should the application form on the last page of the call for proposals include checkboxes for seed funding and bridge funding and should PIs be required to check one?

Action: CoR will revise the annual call for proposals for the Senate faculty grants program. The call will be issued to Senate faculty in November or December.

VII. Upcoming Business

- VC Klotzbier and staff in External Relations will attend the December 4 CoR meeting.