

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2017-2018

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the Committee on Research (COR) held a total of 15 regularly scheduled in-person meetings in order to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's Academic Senate [Bylaw II.III.7](#). Beyond these in-person meetings, some additional business was completed via electronic mail discussions.

Areas of Focus

Administering the Academic Senate Annual Faculty Research Grants Program

One of the main recurring responsibilities of COR is administering the Academic Senate Faculty Research Grants Program. This is a task that requires a great deal of attention and effort. The Committee devoted portions of several meetings during the year to discussing ways to improve the program, including improving the processes leading to the competitive assignment of awards. As in the previous year, \$175,000 was made available for the program by the Provost/EVC.

The AY 2017-2018 COR members made three major modifications to the call for proposals document that the committee had used during the previous academic year. First, Committee members elected to break with the process introduced by the AY 2014-2015 COR of “outsourcing” quality assessment review of the proposals to school executive committees. Secondly, in effort to rely on more objective measures, the time since last Academic Senate award was highly weighted during proposal evaluation, with proposals coming from faculty members who had not recently received an award being preferred. Thirdly, the focus of the program was shifted from evaluating the quality of individual projects to identifying ways in which funding would contribute to the research programs of the relevant faculty. Principal investigators were required to explain in their proposals the potential impact that funding would have on their research program, focusing on how award funding will support their career trajectories. COR would then evaluate the severity of the PIs' obstacles to conducting their research programs, as well as the likelihood that the proposed funded activities would overcome those obstacles and set the research programs on productive future trajectories. Finally, the Committee also agreed that awards should be allocated to the three schools in proportion to the number of proposals received from each school, and an effort would be made to award at least one multiple-contributor proposal submitted from each school.

A call for proposals, providing information concerning the new procedures, was delivered to all Academic Senate faculty members in January 2018. At its April 3 meeting, COR members conducted their final deliberations, and selected awardees were notified on May 5.

Forty-two proposals were received and COR funded twenty-six. All funds allocated to this program were distributed as awards.

Formal Review of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI)

The five-year review of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI), the campus's first established Organized Research Unit (ORU), was completed during the previous academic year. COR's responsibility in the review process was to read and respond to the SNRI's self-study, as provided by Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development (VC-ORED) Sam Traina, who serves as an ex-officio member of COR. At the end of AY 2016-2017, VC-ORED Traina submitted the external review team's report to the COR Chair, indicating that COR could review the report at the beginning of AY 2017-2018.

In Fall 2017, COR members examined the external review team's report. The Committee identified a few aspects of the report that appeared worthy of highlighting. These included the team's recommendations on the governance and administration of the SNRI and the need for well documented evidence of accomplishment: the degree to which the ORU supports the tripartite mission of the University in a manner that extends beyond the contributions that would have otherwise been made by individual faculty members. In October 2017, COR submitted its comments on the external review team's report to the VC-ORED.

Revision of Academic Senate Policy on the Establishment and Review of Research Units

In AY 2017-2018, COR received inquiries from faculty interested in establishing new "core facilities" on campus, asking for details concerning the materials required to produce a proposal for such a facility. The Committee discovered that the policy document on this matter – crafted by the AY 2014-2015 COR – contained insufficient detail to guide the processes of establishment and review of core facilities, and the description of the requirements for an establishment proposal required further specification. COR formed a subcommittee whose members were charged with proposing an elaboration and augmentation of the current policy document, so COR could move forward with future business related to the establishment of core facilities, as well as similar organizational entities, such as "centers". The resulting policy document was discussed and refined by the full COR membership. In May 2018, COR transmitted the resulting document, "Establishment, Review, and Disestablishment of Core Facilities at UC Merced", intended as an expansion to the previously approved Senate policy on research units, to Division Council. Division Council endorsed the policy in May 2018 and submitted it to the Provost/EVC.

COR addressed another issue related to the review of research units during this academic year. During AY 2016-2017, a campus center submitted a proposal to COR requesting establishment as an ORU. COR discovered, however, that the provided proposal was not in compliance with systemwide policies for ORU establishment. This was communicated to the authors of the proposal, and COR opted to postpone further review until a compliant document was submitted.

At the end of AY 2016-2017, the Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC) recommended that the Center, in its current form, undergo a periodic review prior to attempting to establish itself as an ORU. This was prompted by the fact that the Center had been in existence for five years, and policy requires reviews every five years. In AY 2017-2018, in consultation with COR, the VC-ORED, and PROC, it was decided that PROC would henceforth be the responsible entity for managing the reviews of centers, but COR would play a consultative role. In Spring 2018, PROC submitted to COR its proposed procedures for the periodic review of centers, and COR responded with comments.

It is anticipated that COR will, in AY 2018-2019, in consultation with VC-ORED Traina, make further modifications to the Academic Senate research units policy document. The goal will be to generate augmented policy prose concerning the establishment and review of centers, mirroring the work that was done for core facilities in AY 2017-2018. It is expected that this effort will also extend to clarifying the requirements for the establishment of ORUs, and this will facilitate its review of an updated draft of the previously submitted ORU proposal.

Senate Awards for Distinguished and Early Career Research

COR is responsible for the review of nominations for the annual Academic Senate awards for Distinguished Research (tenured) and Distinguished Early Career Research (untenured). In order to execute this duty, COR formed two subcommittees, one for each award, and these subcommittees each selected one nominated individual for receipt of the corresponding award. While all nominees were meritorious, COR was particularly struck by the outstanding nominees in the Early Career category, suggesting that the option of making multiple awards in a given year might become increasingly attractive as the number of junior faculty continues to grow. The awardees were recognized at the April 16, 2018 Meeting of the Division of the Academic Senate.

Bridge/Discretionary Faculty Research Funding

Throughout the academic year, COR members frequently discussed the fact that the faculty have almost no sources of funds to maintain their research programs under unexpected circumstances. Some faculty have hoarded start-up funds to provide a safety net, but this is often inadequate and violates the intention of those funds. The Academic Senate Faculty Research Grants Program can provide a buffer, but these are only available once every year. There is a sense that the schools hold some funds that could be used to support faculty research when needed, but these funds

seem small, hidden, and unreliable. Other UC campuses pool discretionary funds at many organizational levels, giving faculty in need of transition funds multiple options to pursue. This infrastructure does not yet exist on our campus.

The COR Chair attended a meeting of the Academic Senate Committee on Academic Planning & Resource Allocation (CAPRA) in Spring 2018 to explore the possibility of a joint effort to communicate faculty funding needs to the administration. At the end of the Fall 2017 semester, the COR and CAPRA Chairs issued a collaborative memo to the campus Budget Working Group, bringing to the Group's attention the acute problems arising from the lack of adequate discretionary research funds for faculty to tap at times of need. At the same time, COR issued a memo to the VC-ORED requesting information about how extramural funding indirect cost returns are currently used and how they might be redirected to support faculty research programs in the face of unexpected contingencies. The response to this request indicated that this strategy was not viable at the current time.

Accompanying COR's discussions on indirect cost return was a discussion about the lack of research computing support on campus. Some faculty have had to use their start-up funds to maintain laboratory computing equipment, but it was suggested that a more desirable solution would be to allocate some portion of indirect cost returns to the support of research computing distributed across campus. In Spring 2018, the COR Chair met with research computing faculty who were in the process of drafting a proposal for research computing shared governance. They expressed an interest in collaborating with COR in this effort. It is expected that the Committee will revisit this matter in AY 2018-2019.

Purchasing Issues and their Effects on Research

During this academic year, COR members discussed systematic problems in the workflow governing purchasing, grant accounting, and central budgeting. Director of Procurement Joshua Dubroff attended two COR meetings in order to share various improvements in the procurement and purchasing process that his unit has made or is planning. One of the primary goals of the unit is to consider, holistically, the entire supply chain rather than continue the "siloes" approach that has been in place. Director Dubroff informed COR that he met with several groups of faculty and has noted recurring themes in their complaints about campus purchasing, including the outdated CatBuy system, the minimal alignment between the various components/units of the supply chain, and a general lack of standardized processes. In Spring 2018, Director Dubroff shared with COR that the campus is prepared to move forward with adopting a new catalog procurement system. This year, the Chancellor also empaneled a Supply Chain Design Subcommittee that will be tasked with developing strategies for rectifying several of the concerns raised by faculty. It is anticipated that COR will continue to consult with Director Dubroff in AY 2018-2019 in order to stay informed about additional improvements in procurement and offer associated recommendations from the perspective of research faculty.

Consultation on Project 2020 Space

This year, the campus identified UCM Director of Space Planning Maggie Saunders, as well as Ms. Jo Dane and Ms. Leslie Ashor from the Woods Bagot firm, to assist with the design of strategic space plans, re-examining all space allocation on the existing campus, as well as new space becoming available as part of the 2020 Project. Saunders, Dane, and Ashor met with several groups of faculty, including Academic Senate committees, to elicit input on the space requirements unique to certain academic domains, as well as interdisciplinary projects. COR members asserted that productive approaches to supporting interdisciplinary collaborations must begin with grassroots initiatives, with faculty members identifying appropriate opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and the best ways to pursue such work. COR members also encouraged flexibility in the assignment of space due to variance in research functions; specifically, that some laboratories should be grouped based on the use of common methods, or even common equipment, rather than by discipline or other topical categorization.

Limited Submission Proposals

At the request of the Office of Research Development Services (RDS), COR reviewed the campus policy on limited submission proposals. COR members made a few suggested modifications to the policy, including (1) RDS should attempt to notify faculty of limited submission opportunities within five days of learning of the opportunities, (2) RDS should search for agencies/programs that offer limited submission proposals on a regular cycle, allowing RDS to make the faculty aware of these competitions even before a formal call for proposals is made available for a given year, and (3) RDS should submit to faculty a “historical” list of agencies/programs that place limits on submissions, communicating deadlines from recent years, allowing faculty to anticipate the deadlines likely to arise during the current year and plan their workload accordingly.

UCM Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve Dairy Cattle Grazing

In Fall 2017, COR was asked by the Academic Senate Division Chair to review a report entitled “Comparative Grazing Practices between Dairy Cattle and Beef Cattle and the Need to Change Management Practices on the Merced Vernal Pools and Grassland Reserve”, generated by Reserve Director Monique “Mo” Kolster and a group of interested faculty members. The report outlined the negative effects on research and educational programs caused by the grazing of dairy cattle on the Reserve. COR recommended that the VC-ORED assemble a panel of individuals with expertise in relevant issues, charging them with the task of quickly providing recommendations for ameliorating the cited problems. The VC-ORED followed COR’s advice, and, in Spring 2018, the VC-ORED reported to COR that he and appropriate individuals in the

administration were working with the rancher who leases the area from the campus in hopes of modifying the lease to address conservation goals and specific issues facing faculty and students.

Consultation and Monitoring

Consultation with VC-ORED

Throughout the academic year, COR members benefited from updates on various research-related issues from ex-officio committee member, VC-ORED Traina. Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research Compliance & Integrity Deborah Motton served as the VC-ORED's substitute on a number of occasions. One of the main topics of conversation with VC-ORED Traina was indirect cost returns. As mentioned previously, COR communicated to VC-ORED Traina its hope that a sufficient portion of indirect cost returns could be used for the support of faculty research. VC-ORED Traina indicated his support of this idea, and he reiterated his efforts to advocate for a more favorable allocation model for indirect cost returns. VC-ORED Traina also kept COR members informed on the efforts of Deloitte, an independent consulting firm that the campus hired to examine UCM's contracts and grants processes. COR was told that Deloitte will recommend revisions to the contracts and grants workflow, as well as to the training of staff so as to better meet faculty needs. In Spring 2018, VC-ORED Traina and representatives from Deloitte met with the Deans and a group of interested faculty in order to discuss how to begin the process of implementing the needed changes.

Campus Budget Working Group

At the beginning of this academic year, the Chancellor empaneled three campus working groups, comprised of faculty members and administrators: the Budget Working Group (BWG), the Academic Planning Working Group, and the Academic Reorganization Working Group. A member of COR also served on the BWG and kept the Committee informed on the Group's three main tasks: the development of a campus instructional budget, the development of a campus budget policy, and the generation of policy surrounding revenue-generating educational programs. In the Spring 2018 semester, the BWG issued a draft carry forward policy governing faculty incidental funds, requesting Academic Senate review. A central component of the proposed policy is a \$9,000 cap on total accumulated incidentals funds. COR learned that the BWG continues to work on an instructional budget model, as well as a TA allocation model. These are intended to be initially implemented provisionally, during a test phase, to allow for additional analysis and modifications. The Working Group also began discussing, upon receiving COR's memo on discretionary research funding, the allocation of indirect cost returns and the transparency of the allocation process.

Consultation with Director of Policy & Accountability

In the Spring 2018 semester, the Director of Policy & Accountability Sheryl Ireland updated COR members on the implementation of the UCM Interim Policy on Assurance of Laboratory Safety Compliance. This policy document was drafted after receiving input from Academic Senate committees during the Fall 2017 semester. COR members appreciated the update on the interim policy and made two suggestions: (1) laboratory staff and PIs should be provided with periodic reminders about the deadlines of required laboratory training sessions similar to reminders currently sent to employees regarding cybersecurity and sexual harassment training, and (2) the interim policy should be revised to clarify issues surrounding safety violations in multi-occupancy laboratories, where at least one PI using the shared space has committed no safety violations.

University Committee on Research Policy Updates

The COR Chair represented UCM on the systemwide University Committee On Research Policy (UCORP). He kept the COR membership informed of UCORP activities through the academic year, including:

- The five-year review of the Institute of Transportation Studies (a Multi-Campus Research Unit).
- Research Resource Identification Initiative. This initiative involves the creation and maintenance of a database of research resources, assigning a “bar code” to items used in the biomedical sciences (e.g. reagents) to perform experiments. The goal is to increase transparency and precision in the reporting of research results, allowing researchers to detail experimental methods in a way that supports replication.
- The relationship between the UC and the National Laboratories, including the UC bid for the oversight of Los Alamos National Laboratory.
- UCORP approval of a revised Export Control Policy.
- The review of the report from Huron Consulting Group Inc. that provided information about the Office of the President and its participation in a State audit.
- Systemwide efforts to close the UC faculty salary gap.

Campus Review Items

- COR reviewed and endorsed:
 - Proposal from the Humanities & World Cultures Bylaw 55 Unit in SSHA to reconstitute into four departments.
 - Proposal from the Computer Science & Engineering faculty to create a department in the School of Engineering.

- Report from the Academic Reorganization Working Group that recommended the creation of departments across the schools.
- Proposal to establish programs of graduate study in Management of Complex Systems.
- Proposal to create an honors program in Political Science. (COR's endorsement was contingent on the proposal's authors clarifying issues surrounding the impact of the program on faculty teaching load.)
- Proposal to establish programs of graduate study in Materials and Biomaterials Science and Engineering.
- Campus carry forward policy.
- Proposal to establish programs of graduate study in Bioengineering.
- Proposed revisions to Division Regulations to establish High and Highest Honors.
- Revised incentive plan for revenue-generating Master's programs. (COR endorsed this plan but made additional suggestions for revisions.)
- Value to UCM Assessment - faculty retention proposal drafted by the Provost/EVC. (COR generally viewed the proposal favorably, but had several suggestions for improvement.)
- Proposed UCM bylaw revisions to establish a Reserve CAP.
- Proposed Policy on Assurance of Laboratory Safety Compliance.
- Proposed revisions to MAPP 4010 – Academic Student Employees.

Systemwide Review Items

- COR reviewed and endorsed:
 - Presidential Policy on Disclosure of Financial Interests and Management of COI in Private Sponsors of Research and Revised APM – 028.
 - Proposed Presidential Policy on Open Access for Dissertations and Theses.
 - Negotiated Salary Trial Program Taskforce Report. (COR endorsed the taskforce's recommendation to extend the trial for four more years and expand it to other UC campuses, while gathering useful assessment information.)
- COR reviewed and withheld endorsement pending requested revisions:
 - Second Review of Proposed Revisions to APM 285, 210-3, 133, 740, 135, 235 pertaining to the L(P)SOE series. (COR discovered that an important issue raised during the AY 2016-2017 review of these APM sections had not been addressed. Specifically, it was not made clear if the renaming of this faculty series implies shifts in teaching expectations such that Academic Senate faculty with these titles would be able/expected to teach at the graduate level. COR was generally supportive of this second iteration of revisions, conditioned on the response to their question on teaching expectations.)

Respectfully submitted:

COR members:

David C. Noelle, Chair (SSHA) – UCORP representative

Roummel Marcia, Vice Chair (SNS)

Michael Scheibner (SNS)

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Miguel Carreira-Perpinan (SOE) – Fall 2017

Ex officio, non-voting members:

Samuel J. Traina, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development

Staff:

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