

**COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**AY 2020-2021**

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Committee on Research (CoR) held a total of 15 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 year, CoR was pleased to learn that in response to previously-transmitted memos to the administration about the need to increase funding for the program, the Chancellor allocated additional, one-time institutional funding of \$100,000, bringing the total amount to \$275,000 for this year's Senate faculty grants program. The call for proposals was modified thusly: each faculty member could request up to \$10,000 in funding (revised from \$5,000) and joint proposals could request funding up to an amount which is a multiple of \$10,000 (revised from \$5,000). Awards will not exceed \$30,000 (revised from \$20,000). The call for proposals was electronically issued to all Academic Senate faculty members on November 5, 2020 with a deadline for submissions of January 25, 2021. CoR members ranked the 58 received grant proposals and selected 26 awardees according to the stated criteria in the call for proposals. All of the funds (\$275,000) that were allocated to the Senate for the grants program were used. Grant recipients, together with their deans, EVC/Provost, and appropriate School staff, were notified electronically with award letters on February 26.

In spring 2021, after consultation with CoR, the EVC/Provost's office announced that due to the delays in faculty research projects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, faculty members who received Senate faculty grants in AY 19-20 would receive a one-year extension to use those funds. The funds must be spent by June 30, 2022. Further extensions will not be granted.

*Senate Faculty Survey on Core Facilities*

In fall 2020, in conjunction with the Interim VCORED, CoR formulated survey to Senate faculty that asked them to weigh in on access and facilities and shared instrumentation for research support. Results would be used by ORED in decisions regarding campus facilities, instrumentation, and other forms of infrastructure. ORED issued to survey on behalf of CoR and

the Interim VCORED to faculty in fall 2020. In spring 2021, CoR submitted the survey results, together with an analysis, to the Senate Chair and Vice Chair.

### *Funding for Conceptualization and Instrumentation Grants*

In responds to CoR's detailed memo to the administration last year on research enhancement (in which CoR proposed a two-part initiative for restructuring and enriching campus research support), and CoR's memo to Divisional Council in July 2020 that emphasized the drastic and negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty research (endorsed in July 2020 by Divisional Council and forwarded to the administration), the Chancellor and EVC/Provost announced on October 26, 2020 their approval of additional, one-time institutional funding for AY 20-21 in support of instrumentation grants and conceptualization grants (\$200,000 each). The Chancellor and EVC/Provost approved this funding as a sign of their commitment to UC Merced's research mission and advancement to R1 Carnegie classification.

In consultation with Interim VCORED Zatz, CoR drafted a new call for proposals in fall 2020 for conceptualization grants and ORED issued it to the faculty. The call articulated that conceptualization grants are designed to support planning for large-scale projects such as program, center, and training grants. Most of these will be interdisciplinary, and most will be multi-million-dollar proposals, but there will be variation across fields. Priority would be given to projects that: 1) build or strengthen cross-disciplinary research partnerships, although single disciplinary projects will be considered; 2) have a high potential for extramural funding; 3) will result in proposals for fully encumbered grants, although proposals to agencies that mandate lower indirect caps will be considered; and 4) new projects over renewals.

Faculty submitted their conceptualization grant proposals via an electronic system managed by ORED. CoR members reviewed the proposals and made its funding recommendations to the Interim VCORED. The Interim VCORED issued award and decline letters to faculty in March 2021.

With regard to instrumentation grant proposals, CoR worked in conjunction with the Interim VCORED to draft a new call for proposals in spring 2021. ORED issued the call for instrumentation grants proposals to the faculty. The call explained that the goals of the UC Merced Research Instrumentation program are: 1) to increase access to shared/multiuser instrumentation for research and research training and 2) to enhance research facilities. An instrumentation award is intended to support the acquisition or upgrade of a multi-user instrument. Appropriately managed and maintained multi-user instrumentation reduces the financial burden of individual research groups and enhances the research productivity of a broader campus community. The program is intended to fill the gap between small equipment that is routinely purchased by individual research labs and major equipment that is supported by extramural instrumentation grants.

ORED issued the call to faculty in spring 2021. Faculty submitted their proposals via an electronic system managed by ORED. CoR members reviewed the proposals and made its funding recommendations to the Interim VCORED. The Interim VCORED issued award and decline letters to faculty in April 2021.

### *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. As in previous academic years, CoR was struck by the outstanding nominees in both categories. The awardees were recognized at the May 4, 2021 Meeting of the Division of the Academic Senate which was held via Zoom.

### *Community and Labor Center ORU Proposal*

CoR and the Interim VCORED reviewed the proposal according to the Senate's ORU policy. CoR submitted preliminary comments to the proposal's lead author and requested a revised proposal. CoR later reviewed the revised proposal, endorsed it, and transmitted its endorsement to the Senate Chair. The proposal then underwent full Senate and campus wide review.

In spring 2021, a larger discussion began between Divisional Council and the administration on the funding of current and future ORUs. On May 3, Divisional Council issued a memo to EVC/Provost Camfield, Interim VCORED Zatz, and Interim CFO Schnier in which they requested that CoR, Interim VCORED Zatz, and the administration work together to prepare answers to certain questions related to the funding of ORUs. On May 13, 2021, CoR consulted with Interim VCORED Zatz and CFO Schnier to answer the list of questions. CoR's answers were transmitted to the Senate Chair on May 24, 2021.

### *CoR/SPO Working Group*

The idea for this working group was conceived in the last academic year. This year, CoR finalized the working group's charge and identified two committee members to serve. SPO also selected members to serve on the working group. The final charge and working group membership were shared with SPO.

## Consultation

### *Consultation with Interim VCORED*

Throughout the academic year, CoR members benefited from updates on various research-related issues from ex-officio committee member, Interim VCORED Zatz:

- Continued improvements to the Sponsored Projects Office (SPO) and grants accounting
- Research relaunch in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Issues surrounding research buildings and chemical supplies
- Occupational health updates
- Funding of future ORUs
- Updates on systemwide cyber security meetings
- reorganizing the Office of Business Development into the Office of Technology, Innovation, and Industry Relations

### *Consultation with Associate VCORED Deborah Motton*

Former AVC Motton (left UC Merced in spring 2021) kept CoR members updated on:

- Efforts to improve and restructure SPO and the centralization of School research administration personnel under ORED
- Human subjects research during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Cybersecurity
- Federal government's continued concern about foreign influence over US research and federal funding agencies' resulting scrutiny of disclosures filed by faculty and researchers.

### *Consultation with Director of SPO*

SPO Director Jue Sun updated CoR members in fall 2020 on the improvements made to SPO.

### *Consultation with Campus Assistant Biosafety Officer*

In fall 2020, Assistant Biosafety Officer Saumik Panja shared updates with CoR on the non-traditional roles that EH&S has taken on during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes quarantine and isolation protocols and service management; research support related to SARS-CoV-2; COVID-19 surveillance research planning using wastewater tracing; decontamination/disinfection protocol set up; medical waste management during the pandemic for different facilities; and a dangerous goods shipping operation.

### *Consultation with Interim CFO*

Interim CFO Schnier presented to CoR in early fall 2020 his proposed indirect cost return and simulation model. The proposal underwent full Senate and campus wide review in fall 2020. The indirect cost return policy is not yet finalized at the time of this writing; the Senate anticipates reviewing a revised policy in AY 21-22.

### *University Committee on Research Policy Updates*

The CoR Chair represented UC Merced on the systemwide University Committee On Research Policy (UCORP). She kept the CoR membership informed of UCORP's main topics of discussion throughout the academic year, including:

- Research informational management systems
- Knowledge Transfer Advisory Committee
- UC ANR updates

### *Carry Over Business to AY 21-22*

In AY 21-22, CoR expects to opine on a policy for establishing a Center. The current policy, which was written by a former EVC/Provost in a previous academic year, is still in draft form.

### **Campus Review Items**

- COR reviewed and commented on:
  - Proposed Name Change of Chemistry and Chemical Biology department
  - Data and Authorship Dispute Boards Policy (transmitted a memo jointly with GC and FWAf in November 2020)
  - Pre-Proposal to Establish the Ernest and Julio Gallo School of Management
  - Proposed revisions to the UCM Senate Divisional Bylaws
  - Proposed distribution of Indirect Cost Recovery (F&A rate) on Research Grants
  - Proposed Academic Planning Targets
  - Proposed Critical Race and Ethnic Studies minor
  - Proposed Master of Data Science and Analytics Program
  - Proposed Writing Studies Major
  - Proposed Master in Public Health Program
  - Proposed revisions to MAPP 500
  - Proposed Minor in Materials Science and Engineering
  - Draft campus strategic plan
  - Proposed Name Change of Literature and Languages Department

## Systemwide Review Items

- COR reviewed and commented on:
  - Proposed Curtailment Program 2020-21
  - Proposed revisions to the Leave-Related Policies of APM 700
  - Proposed Presidential Policy on University of California Research Data and Tangible Research Materials
  - Proposed Presidential Policy BFB-BUS-43 Purchases of Goods and Services; Supply Chain Management
  - Proposed changes to the Universitywide Police Policies and Administrative Procedures
  - Proposed Presidential Policy on Native American Cultural Affiliation and Repatriation
  - Proposed Presidential Policy on Classification of Gifts and Sponsored Awards
  - Proposed Presidential Policy: UC Health Participation in Activities under the End of Life Option Act
  - Proposed revisions to MAPP 016
  - Proposed Presidential Policy SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) Vaccination Program
  - Proposed Presidential Policy – Fee Policy for Graduate Student *In Absentia* Registration

Respectfully submitted:

### ***COR members:***

Kara McCloskey, Chair (SoE), UCORP representative

Jason Sexton, Vice Chair (SNS)

Tao Ye (SNS)

Ma Vang (SSHA)

Brad LeVeck (SSHA)

David Ardell (SNS) – spring 2021 only

Dong Li (SOE) – spring 2021 only

Miguel Carreira-Perpiñán (SOE) – fall 2020 only

### ***Ex officio, non-voting member:***

Marjorie Zatz, Interim Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development

### ***Staff:***

Simrin Takhar