

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2023-2024

To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Committee on Research (CoR) held a total of 16 meetings in order to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's Academic Senate [II.IV.5](#). Beyond these in-person meetings, some additional business was completed via electronic mail discussions.

Areas of Focus

Academic Senate Annual Faculty Research Grants Program

As in the last academic year (see CoR AY 22-23 annual report), CoR utilized funding from the Academic Senate's portion of the MacKenzie Scott campus gift to augment the base funding for the annual Senate faculty grants program. The program was further augmented this year with one-time funds provided by the former EVC/Provost that were rolled over from the last academic year. The AY 23-24 call for proposals was electronically issued to all Academic Senate faculty members on November 14, 2023 with a submission deadline of January 31, 2024. Faculty were notified with award letters on March 8, 2024. CoR funded 30 proposals out of 45 proposals received.

Core Facilities

One of CoR's main discussion topics this academic year was core facilities. In conjunction with ORED and ex-officio committee member VCR Wilson, CoR issued a survey to Senate faculty in fall 2023. In spring 2024, CoR used the results of that survey to generate a detailed and extensive memo addressed to the Chancellor, EVC/Provost, and VCR. The memo outlined the strategic importance of shared research facilities and provided recommendations on space, staff, instrumentation, and management. The memo was endorsed by Divisional Council and transmitted to the administration on April 30, 2024. The EVC/Provost later acknowledged receipt of the memo and stated her future intention to respond to CoR.

Revisions to the Policy on the Establishment and Review of Centers

Background:

In AY 2014-2015, a former EVC/Provost drafted a policy on the establishment of Centers. The draft policy was reviewed by the Senate and comments were transmitted to the EVC/Provost in spring 2015. No action was taken by the administration. In AY 2021-2022, CoR formed a policy

subcommittee comprising CoR members, ex-officio CoR member Interim VCORED Marjorie Zatz, and Assistant EVC/Provost Laura Martin to restart work on the campus Centers policy. The policy subcommittee shared their working drafts with the Chancellor, EVC/Provost, and Interim CFO twice during the revisions process to obtain their input. After several meetings throughout the academic year, and upon incorporating the edits from the aforementioned senior administrators, the policy subcommittee presented the CoR membership with a revised Centers policy in spring 2022. CoR endorsed the revised Centers policy in spring 2022. CoR transmitted the Centers policy to Divisional Council on April 22, 2022. In fall 2022, the Centers policy was issued for a campus wide review. Several Senate committees had comments which CoR's policy subcommittee reviewed in fall 2022 and spring 2023.

In fall 2023, CoR reviewed the comments previously received from Senate committees on the revised Centers policy. CoR approved a final version of the policy on November 8, 2023 and transmitted it to Divisional Council on November 9, 2023. Divisional Council endorsed the policy on December 14, 2023.

Financial Management and Reporting Task Force

This Senate-Administrative task force was formed in fall 2023 to improve financial management and reporting at UC Merced. The CoR chair served on the task force and kept CoR members informed on updates. The task force and associated working groups met weekly throughout spring 2024 and forged cross-campus collaborations to address challenges with faculty participation and feedback. The task force reported to the campus via email at the end of the spring 2024 semester that improvements to the general purchasing process and Concur travel and reimbursement system have gone live, progress was made on faculty support positions in the schools, and financial reports are now being delivered regularly.

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 (untentured). 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. The awardees were recognized at the May 3, 2024 Meeting of the Division of the Academic Senate.

Representation on Campus Committees

CoR had representation on the Periodic Review Oversight Committee and the aforementioned Financial Management and Reporting Task Force.

Consultation

Consultation with VCR

Throughout the academic year, CoR members benefited from updates given by ex-officio committee member, VCR Wilson. The major topics climate action funding opportunities for faculty, updates on job searches in ORED, and updates from the Financial Management and Reporting Task Force.

Consultation with EVC/Provost Dumont

EVC/Provost Dumont spoke with CoR at CoR's invitation to discuss achieving R1 status, developing a budget model that makes the operation of core facilities more sustainable, graduate student funding, and department level staffing.

Consultation with VC/CIO Nick Dugan

VC/CIO Dugan spoke to CoR about systemwide updates on cybersecurity.

Consultation with AVC for Interdisciplinary Research & Strategic Initiatives

AVC Viers spoke to CoR about UC Merced's Agricultural Experiment Station designation. He also consulted with CAPRA and Divisional Council on the same topic.

University Committee on Research Policy Updates

The CoR Chair represented UC Merced on the systemwide University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP). He kept the CoR membership informed of UCORP's main topics of discussion throughout the academic year, including: future of graduate education, challenges with Oracle experienced by a few UC campuses, and the future systemwide Congress on Research (postponed to 2025).

Campus Review Items

- COR reviewed and commented on:
 - GC's Proposed Policy for the Establishment of Undergraduate/Graduate Hybrid Degree Programs
 - Proposal to create a Department of Medical Education in the School of Natural Sciences
 - Draft UC Merced Agricultural Experiment Station mission statement
 - Proposed Center for Africana Studies

Systemwide Review Items

- COR reviewed and commented on:

- Presidential Policy on Affiliations with Certain Health Care Organizations
- Proposed APM Section 672 - Negotiated Salary Program
- Interim Report of the Academic Planning Council Workgroup on the Future of Doctoral Education at the University of California
- Proposed Presidential Policy BFB-BUS-50: Controlled Substances Use In Research and Teaching
- proposed Academic Senate Statement on UC Quality (“Characteristics of Educational Quality at the University of California”)

Respectfully submitted:

COR members:

Tao Ye, Vice Chair, SNS, UCORP representative

Jeanette Cobian, Vice Chair, SoE

Brad LeVeck, SSHA

Arvind Gopinath, SoE

Andrea Joyce, SSHA

Xiaoyi Lu, SoE

Andrea Merg, SNS

Ramendra Saha, SNS (Spring 2024)

Ex officio, non-voting members:

Gillian Wilson, Vice Chancellor for Research

Staff:

Simrin Takhar