

**Committee on Research (CoR)**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**January 24, 2022**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 10:30 am – 12:00 pm on January 24, 2022 via Zoom. Chair Jason Sexton presiding.

I. Consultation with Senate Chair Westerling

Chair Westerling requested this consultation with CoR members so he can update them about his meeting with the campus Director of Cyberinfrastructure and Research Computing. He requests CoR's input in advance of his upcoming meeting with the EVC/Provost.

Chair Westerling explained that given the concerns about the potential for hacking researchers' servers, UCOP has mandated a particular security software to be installed on machines. The issue is that this software slows down the machines' performance and faculty researchers are unable to conduct their work. The policy does not allow for the accommodation of these faculty researchers. In addition, researchers are asked to sign a broad waiver which they are reluctant to do because they are unclear whether they are accepting liability and financial responsibility for a potential cyberattack.

UC Merced faculty consulted with an expert in computer security at UC Santa Cruz who informed them that they were able to implement the UCOP policy at their campus by ensuring there was no personal account information and by blocking links to other IP addresses on campus. They were therefore able to mitigate cybersecurity risks without compelling faculty to sign the waiver. Senate Chair Westerling suggested that UC Merced adopt the same implementation strategy. He acknowledged there are costs involved but those should be borne by the campus rather than the researchers. He suggested that this request be made to EVC/Provost Camfield.

Interim VCORED Zatz pointed out that a bigger issue is that research is not being prioritized on campus. With regard to the UCOP mandate, UC Santa Cruz found a solution that recognized both the primary importance of faculty research and the critical need for cybersecurity. It would be helpful if UC Merced was to establish a research infrastructure pot of money to pay for various things like broken equipment, the costs associated with the UCOP cybersecurity mandate, etc.

Senate Chair Westerling suggested that CoR consider drafting a memo to campus leadership about the importance of Senate consultation in creating campus policies that affect faculty research in general.

CoR members agreed it would be helpful to consult with the appropriate IT staff. Senate Chair Westerling also suggested consulting with Senate Vice Chair Patti LiWang in anticipation of her role as Senate Chair next academic year.

**Action:** per CoR's request, the committee analyst will invite the following individuals to a CoR meeting: CIO Ann Kovalchick, Deputy CIO Nick Dugan, Director of Cyberinfrastructure and Research Computing Sarvani Chadalapaka, and Senate Vice Chair Patti LiWang.

II. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda
- B. Draft December 6 meeting minutes

**Action:** the Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

III. Consultation with Interim VCORED Zatz

A. BSL3 updates

In December 2021, a team from Irvine came to certify the BSL3 building. The process is nearly finished. The team also conducted trainings with UC Merced faculty, graduate students, research staff, EH&S staff, and with first responders in the community. Campus biosafety officer Aparupa Sengupta has left UC Merced and EH&S is searching for her replacement. UC Merced is receiving assistance from the UC system in the interim. Some faculty are ready to begin BSL2 work in the BSL3 facility. David Gravano in ORED will assist on a temporary basis.

B. Climate initiative

The UC VCRs submitted a climate initiative proposal to the Governor. The \$185 million climate initiative is in the Governor's budget and the VCRs are hopeful it will be approved. Last week, the VCRs answered questions from the Legislative Analyst's Office. \$100 million is for seed and matching grants related to climate resilience; \$50 million is allocated for innovation hubs across the state; and the remaining funds are to be allocated to work force development. Once the initiative is approved by the legislature and governor, a call will be issued for the grants competition. Interim VCORED Zatz added that seed grants will have to have some matching funds (e.g. federal, philanthropic, etc.) but they cannot be state funds. Proposals can be multi-campus or single PI.

C. The Achievement Rewards for College Scientists (ARCS)

Interim VCORED Zatz announced that the national board of ARCS voted unanimously for UC Merced to be its 51<sup>st</sup> member. Interim VCORED Zatz will receive the official letter tomorrow and the news will be announced on the campus website. \$10,000 in graduate student fellowships will be made each year. The first programs this year to receive fellowships will be Environmental Systems, Cognitive and Information Sciences, and Physics.

D. Research Strategic Planning meetings

Interim VCORED Zatz and CoR Chair Sexton both serve on one of the committees. Interim VCORED Zatz reiterated the importance of prioritizing faculty research and the need to make budget requests that speak to the philosophy of achieving R1 status. Either ORED or the VCORED or the EVC/Provost needs to maintain a pot of money that funds faculty research infrastructure needs such as broken equipment. In addition, the campus needs to clarify who is responsible for research infrastructure issues.

E. Protected Research Time policy

The policy limits faculty to one course release a year and a maximum of three courses in five years. Interim VCORED Zatz is working with EVC/Provost Camfield on making the policy more lenient.

F. VCORED search

Interim VCORED Zatz announced that the search for a new VCORED is launching soon and encouraged CoR to be involved.

IV. Labor and Community Center ORU proposal

The Senate has re-launched the review of the ORU proposal. CoR endorsed the proposal in fall 2020, but the committee is invited to review it again. The proposal – including all supporting documents plus CoR's endorsement memo – were made available to CoR members before the meeting.

Interim VCORED Zatz stated that she is still supportive of the ORU proposal. They have been successful in acquiring funding and buy-in.

Prior to this meeting, a CoR member volunteered to serve as lead reviewer of the ORU proposal to determine if CoR needs to make additional comments (beyond what the committee included in their original endorsement memo).

**Action:** the committee analyst will distribute the lead reviewer’s comments to the committee when they are ready. CoR’s comments are due to the Senate chair by Friday, February 4.

V. Review of Senate Faculty Grants

The deadline for faculty to submit proposals is January 24 before midnight. CoR members discussed a possible rubric for review as well as a timeline. CoR members also discussed how to handle potential conflicts of interest.

**Action:** after the submission deadline, the committee analyst will send CoR the following items to facilitate their review of the grant proposals: 1) review rubric, 2) individual review assignments, and 3) a Box link to access the proposals.

VI. Response to Research Impacts Memo

On October 6, 2021, CoR, FWAF, and GC sent a joint memo to the Chancellor and EVC/Provost about the campus obstacles to faculty research. The Chancellor and EVC/Provost responded on November 1.

CoR members reviewed a draft response to the Chancellor and EVC/Provost’s comments as prepared by a CoR member. CoR Chair Sexton pointed out that some faculty on campus are unaware of the Senate’s role and how the Senate advocates for them. He encouraged CoR members to keep their colleagues informed by sharing with them the CoR/FWAF/GC joint memo on research infrastructure.

Interim VCORED Zatz suggested that the Senate send periodic announcements to the faculty about major issues it is working on. She offered to include such announcements in the weekly ORED communications, but the announcements would be more appropriate coming from the Senate. Interim VCORED Zatz also suggested that CoR invite Interim CFO Schnier for a consultation before the committee drafts a response to the Chancellor and EVC/Provost’s comments as Schnier is currently working on a few of the issues CoR is concerned about.

**Action:** CoR Chair Sexton asked CoR members to review the draft response document regarding research infrastructure and procurement and send their input. He also requested CoR members’ input on the [online faculty tool kit](#). The committee analyst will invite Interim CFO Schnier to a future CoR meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.

Attest: Jason Sexton, CoR Chair