

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
January 27, 2025

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 11:30 am on Monday, January 27, 2025, in room 344 of the Ruiz-Administration Building, Chair Tao Ye presiding.

I. Chair's Report – *Chair Ye*

A. Updates on issues related to Facilities/POPD

Chair Ye summarized his discussion with POPD staff. The main topics included delays in research buildings, delays in laboratory renovations, and campus power outages. VC Okoli indicated to Chair Ye that AVC Boyd is working on these various issues and communicating with faculty. Several of these issues were articulated in the memo that MCB faculty issued to the Senate (including CoR) in fall 2024. This memo was previously shared with CoR.

VC Okoli and his staff will join the February 10 CoR meeting for a consultation.

Action: CoR members will forward their requested talking points for the February 10 consultation to the committee analyst by Friday, January 31. The analyst will forward the talking points to VC Okoli on that date.

B. Executive Orders

Federally-funded research pertaining to DEI is uncertain under the new presidential executive orders. UCOP is gathering information from faculty about letters they may have received from federal funding agencies. A CoR member pointed out that it is not just DEI research – some NIH and NSF reviews are paused and study sections have been cancelled. He added that faculty members, particularly untenured faculty, need guidance and information on how to proceed with submitting federal grants.

II. Consent Calendar

A. Today's agenda

B. Draft December 18, 2024 meeting minutes

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

III. Consultation with Interim EHS Director Thomas Lee

Interim Director Lee presented a series of slides. These slides were previously shared with CoR members. Interim Director Lee discussed the various accomplishments from EHS since February 2024, the next steps, and plans for the next 90 days, including laboratory safety culture initiatives and laboratory accidents follow up. He briefly summarized the findings from the Lab Safety Follow Up Audit, M24A005, in August 2024 before moving on to present the Staff and Resource Assessment summary and what EHS could do with additional FTE lines. EHS is under resourced and understaffed. A CoR member asked about staff retention. Interim Director Lee replied that this is a significant issue as the required skill sets are difficult to find. EHS wants to build a culture of supporting researchers and encouraging partnerships and inclusivity. Unfortunately, prospective staff find better opportunities elsewhere. Managing expectations within budget constraints will be a challenge.

IV. Consultation with VCR

A. Executive Orders

VCR Wilson stated that UCOP is providing communication templates for VCRs to issue to their faculty. The template first has to be reviewed by relevant individuals in legal affairs and governmental relations. Once approved, VCR Wilson will distribute the communication to UC Merced faculty. She acknowledged that Senate leadership has contacted her about this. It is important for the campus VCRs to speak with one voice.

B. Proposed establishment of a mass spectrometry core facility. VCR has received a preliminary proposal and will seek CoR's feedback. Chair Ye and VCR Wilson acknowledged that the Senate has a policy on the establishment of core facilities. But Chair Ye would like CoR to consult earlier in the process on draft proposals than what the policy states.

C. SPO updates

VCR Wilson informed CoR that she has drafted a communication about SPO which is under review by the EVC/Provost and Chancellor. Once it is approved, she will issue the communication to faculty. She plans to conduct a strategic planning exercise whereby she will assess all the divisions that comprise ORED, starting with SPO and CGA. She will take a multi-pronged approach: 1) assess the current processes and pain points and identify needs, 2) prioritize needs, and 3) action planning. VCR Wilson plans to formulate an advisory group of faculty and relevant staff who will be tasked with reviewing the results of a survey that VCR Wilson plans to issue, as well as participating in listening sessions.

A CoR member recommended that VCR Wilson include the relevant ORED/SPO staff in the listening sessions. VCR Wilson reiterated her intention to do so, and to include RAs.

Action: Per VCR Wilson's request, SPO updates will be a recurring topic for her consultations with CoR for the remaining spring semester meetings.

V. Systemwide Review Items

A. Revisions to the Presidential Policy on the Use of Animals in Research, Teaching, and Testing

The proposed revisions were hyperlinked on today's agenda and were previously discussed by CoR at their December 18, 2024 meeting.

The lead reviewer briefly discussed his revised memo. CoR members had no objections or edits.

Action: The committee analyst will transmit CoR's memo to the Senate Chair before 5:00 pm today, January 27, 2025.

B. Presidential Policy on Dual Use Research of Concern and Pathogens with Enhanced Pandemic Potential

The proposed policy was hyperlinked on today's agenda, together with the lead reviewer's comments.

CoR members discussed the lead reviewer's comments and had no objections or edits.

Action: The committee analyst will transmit CoR's memo to the Senate Chair before 5:00 pm today, January 27, 2025.

VI. Other Business

Chair Ye informed CoR that he is attending the March 11 UC Congress on Research which will be held at UCLA. Vice Chair Saha also expressed interest in attending.

Action: The committee analyst will inform the Senate Executive Director of the CoR vice chair's attendance.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 pm.

Attest: Tao Ye, CoR Chair