

**Committee on Research (CoR)**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**October 19, 2020**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 10:00 – 11:30 am on October 19, 2020 via Zoom. Chair Kara McCloskey presiding.

- I. Chair's Report – *Kara McCloskey*
  - A. Updates from October 1 meeting with the EVC/Provost, Senate Chair, and Interim VCORED
    - i. The main topic of discussion was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty research.
  - B. Updates from October 9 Divisional Council meeting
    - i. Chancellor's strategic planning initiative
    - ii. Medical education task force
    - iii. Due to a reduction in COVID-19 cases, Merced County has been placed on a lower tier. This means the campus can reopen additional buildings. The EVC/Provost will examine the results of the faculty space survey and use that data in his decision to reopen additional parts of the campus. Interim VCORED Zatz stated that the administration is also considering how to allow graduate students and post docs access to their spaces on campus.
    - iv. Spring instruction will be mostly remote. Faculty who wish to offer an in-person course must also offer a remote component for students who wish to continue with online learning. Faculty must receive approval for these "Hyflex" courses.
  - C. Updates from October 12 UCORP meeting
    - i. Research informational management systems. Companies who develop these systems claim to own the data the systems contain, including the personal information of employees. This is a significant privacy issue.
    - ii. Some faculty on UCORP reported difficulty in obtaining library books on their campuses. CoR members reported no difficulties in receiving needed books at the UCM library, but pointed out that the library's delayed reopening over the summer was problematic for humanities researchers.
    - iii. Knowledge Transfer Advisory Committee. This committee supports research that has potential for commercial uses. Faculty have reported that when their campuses submit invention disclosures, they receive no follow up or updates. UCORP is considering using UC funding to address this issue.

**Action:** Committee analyst will contact the university librarian with CoR members' concerns about needed resources.

- II. Consent Calendar
  - A. Today's agenda
  - B. Draft minutes from September 28 meeting

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

- III. Consultation with Interim VCORED – *Marjorie Zatz*
  - A. Chancellor Muñoz and EVC/Provost Camfield have allocated \$1,000,000 in one-time institutional funding for UCM's BSL-3 laboratory to support the purchase of equipment for conducting critical infectious disease research. Interim VCORED Zatz is contacting faculty who will use that lab to get a list of instrumentation they would need. She also asked whether one-third of the funding should be apportioned for later in the year in order to ensure there will be funding for items that were not initially considered. The funding is exciting news, as it makes UCM competitive for grants pertaining to virus research: COVID-19, Valley Fever, etc.
  - B. Updates on systemwide cyber security meeting. This effort stems from the UCSF incident where that campus's data was stolen and ransomed. The Department of Defense is instituting stringent requirements on cybersecurity for their grants. All the UCs are analyzing how to improve cyber security. All VCRs will be asked to empanel cyber security committees at each campus.
  - C. Updates on research relaunch

Campus leadership is hoping to get the permanent occupancy approved for the BSP building this week. Unfortunately, leadership was given very little notice before the building was recently shut down. Interim VCORED Zatz acknowledged the difficulty faced by faculty in this building and she is working with Facilities to ensure such an incident does not reoccur. She has spoken with other UC VCRs who informed her their campus buildings are at 25-30% occupancy. UCM is trying to increase density in the labs and faculty offices. Interim VCORED Zatz is also working on giving office access to graduate students safely and within physical distancing rules as currently they are grouped too close together. She also informed CoR members that the campus is only allowing paid undergraduate students to be in the labs. Positive COVID-19 cases among researchers are very low while the cases among undergraduates are higher. The campus is trying to keep the researcher and undergraduate populations as separate as possible. She is encouraging faculty members to apply for undergraduate supplements for their grants so they can obtain funds for their undergraduate students to travel to conferences when it is safe.

## IV. Campus Review Items

- A. Proposal for change of name of academic department: from “Chemistry and Chemical Biology” to “Chemistry and Biochemistry”.

CoR members discussed the lead reviewer’s comments. CoR members agreed with the lead reviewer that the proposal was well-reasoned and they endorsed the proposed name change.

**Action:** CoR’s endorsement memo will be transmitted to the Senate Chair.

- B. Pre-proposal to establish the Ernest & Julio Gallo School of Management

Chair McCloskey asked for a volunteer to serve as lead reviewer. The lead reviewer’s comments will be discussed at the November 2 and 16 CoR meetings. CoR’s final comments are due to the Senate Chair by Tuesday, December 1.

**Action:** the committee analyst will follow up via email as no lead reviewer was identified during the meeting.

V. Consultation with Director of Sponsored Projects Office – *Jue Sun*

SPO director Sun attended today’s CoR meeting to update the committee on improvements made in SPO.

Director Sun discussed the roles of the pre-award research administrators (RA), contracts and grants officers, and the post-award RAs. The centralization process was completed in mid-August. All former departmental RAs are now centralized under SPO, with the exception of the RAs in the two ORUs, SNRI and HSRI. SPO has implemented an extensive RA training plan that can last for weeks for months depending on the RAs’ experience and knowledge. A key advantage to the centralization model is that the RAs now have a supportive team environment and a focus on customer service/faculty support. The team atmosphere improves the RAs’ own professional development while providing good support to faculty. Director Sun also stated that RAs and contracts and grants officers engage in cross-training so they all learn their colleagues’ roles. One of the goals of this extensive training is to develop expertise among the RAs on particular sponsors/funding agencies.

A CoR member made a suggestion for improved communication from SPO: when an RA emails a faculty member, they should tell the faculty member that they will handle all aspects of their grant proposal and they will inform the faculty member what they (the RA) need from them. This would be more helpful than the RA asking the faculty

member what is needed, as faculty members are often unaware of the various requirements. Director Sun agreed with that suggestion and will inform the RAs. Director Sun also mentioned that she would like to send a survey to faculty on further ways SPO can improve. She acknowledged that remote work during the pandemic has been challenging but she is confident the SPO staff will be successful. She added that experienced RAs are assigned to help inexperienced RAs on all grants in order to ensure that faculty members are receiving the support they need.

VI. Review of Proposal to Establish ORU - UC Merced Community and Labor Center

Prior to this meeting, the comments from the two lead reviewers on the proposal to establish the UC Merced Community and Labor Center as an ORU were distributed to CoR members.

CoR members discussed the lead reviewers' comments. Committee members agreed that while the proposal is well-articulated, it could benefit from an explanation on how they can expand their research group to include other fields. The research being conducted in the current center is compelling, but a broader set of researchers representing areas such as social movements and critical race theory would have more of an impact on policy.

**Action:** the committee analyst will distribute a summary of CoR members' comments on the proposed ORU via email for review. Once the comments are approved, the committee analyst will forward them to the lead author of the ORU proposal on the CoR chair's behalf. The lead author will be asked to make revisions to the proposal and re-submit to CoR.

VII. Survey Questions on Core Facilities

In a previous CoR meeting, members began to formulate questions for a survey to Senate faculty on core facilities. The survey will include questions such as which core facilities are serving the faculty's needs, which are not, and what future core facilities faculty would wish to see established on campus.

CoR members made minor revisions to the survey questions.

**Action:** the committee analyst will share the survey questions with the Senate Chair and Vice Chair as a courtesy notice before sending the questions to the office of the interim VCORED. The interim VCORED's office will launch and manage the survey, and will share the results with CoR.

VIII. Draft AY 20-21 Senate Faculty Grants Call for Proposals

CoR members were asked to review last year's Call for Proposals and suggest any revisions. The AY 2020-21 Call will be issued to Senate faculty on Friday, November 13.

**Action:** Due to time constraints, CoR members will review and approve the AY 2020-21 Call via email.

IX. Draft Charge for the CoR/SPO Working Group

CoR members approved the draft charge for the CoR/SPO working group. Two members of CoR were asked to serve on the working group. One member volunteered.

**Action:** the committee analyst will follow up via email to seek a second CoR member to serve on the working group. The committee analyst will send the approved charge to SPO so that office can identify their members for the working group.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

Attest: Kara McCloskey, CoR chair