

**Committee on Research (CoR)**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**October 19, 2022**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 9:30 am on October 19 via Zoom. Chair Jason Sexton presiding.

- I. Consultation with Interim VC/CFO Schnier and Campus Controller Nelson
  - A. Oracle updates
  - B. Oracle Advisory Committee

Interim VC/CFO Schnier informed CoR that beginning in July, the campus will begin issuing monthly grant reports to faculty PIs and RAs. He emphasized the need for faculty PIs and RAs to meet regularly. He also stated that the feedback from campus to the Oracle Advisory Committee (OAC) is broader than just Oracle and involve issues that the Division of Finance and Administration (DFA) cannot solve alone. The OAC was established last year as triage and it is possible that the committee has served its purpose. Interim VC/CFO Schnier asked if he should disband the OAC and establish a new, broader committee in its place. The make up of the new committee would depend on its function; for example, if the campus wants to make service improvements to Oracle that require new resources rather than existing ones, then several additional stakeholders need to join the new committee including Academic Affairs, ORED, IT, and DFA.

A CoR member asked how long it will take for Oracle to fully integrate with the campus. Controller Nelson replied that getting all of the system components up and running is a two-year process. However, one of the biggest challenges is training users to use the systems which takes time. The campus has held various trainings and “reboot camps”. Controller Nelson clarified that the system is working, but many users do not know how to use it. The campus could not stay on the old, legacy system because that system would not have supported the campus’s progress to achieving R1 status.

A CoR member pointed out that a 3-4 year timeline to get Oracle fully running and integrated is greater than an NSF grant duration and well into the mid-career assessment and tenure clock for new faculty. It is also two-thirds of a graduate student's career and more than a year into a typical postdoc's career.

Another CoR member asked about the minimum programming that is required to address Oracle user needs. Controller Nelson explained that programmatically, UC

Merced is on track. Though ideally she would like to have a data warehouse, the campus is catching up on backlogs now that the data is consistent across both systems. The focus now is on training users to use the system. Interim VC/CFO Schnier added that Controller Nelson has hired two accountants focus solely on invoicing and they have been clearing those queues.

A CoR member stated that it would be helpful for the administration to conceptualize for the campus where we are in terms of progress with Oracle. Controller Nelson and Interim VC/CFO Schnier agreed and stated that they can share a road map with the campus.

Another CoR member asked if the administration plans another round of consultation with Deloitte and pointed out the need for IT infrastructure. Interim VC/CFO Schnier replied that the campus is no longer retaining Deloitte's services and most programming is being done internally. The campus may invite consultants to advise on the budget side but that process will not affect faculty.

CoR Chair Sexton informed Interim VC/CFO Schnier that the administration did not respond to CoR's April 2022 memo on research infrastructure. The Senate Executive Director has followed up with the administration to ask for the status of a response.

**Action:** The committee analyst will re-send CoR's April 2022 memo to Interim VC/CFO Schnier.

- II. Consultation with HSRI Director Wiebe
  - A. NIH Salary Caps and Cost Sharing.

Prior to this meeting, Professor Wiebe shared a memo with CoR that she addressed to former Interim VCR Zatz. The memo was linked on today's agenda. The goal of the memo was to raise awareness of the need to develop a campus policy regarding payment of salary above the NIH salary cap for NIH-funded investigators. Per Professor Wiebe's memo, every year since 1990, Congress has legislatively mandated a provision limiting the direct salary that an individual may receive under NIH grants and contracts. The cap is not on the number of dollars that can be charged, but rather on the monthly pay rate that can be charged to an NIH grant. Salary above the cap is considered mandatory cost sharing that can be covered using non-federal or non-sponsored funds. The current salary cap is \$199,300 for a 12-month appointment (\$16,608 per month). Thus, any faculty member with a 9-month salary above \$149,472 ( $\$16,608 * 9$  months) will need to have a cost-share commitment to cover the excess salary associated with their effort.

Professor Wiebe and former Interim VCR Zatz have met with ORED, Interim VC/CFO Schnier, and school deans to try to formulate a solution. Unfortunately, nobody on campus has the resources. Professor Wiebe added that she does not have an understanding of how other institutions handle this issue. She has contacted colleagues at other institutions, and they informed her they are unclear how the process works. Former Interim VCR Zatz stated that other campuses have endowments and other resources they can draw upon, but UC Merced has not built up those pools of money yet. VCR Wilson added that she is concerned about faculty retention. A CoR member shared that concern and suggested that the campus target more private donors and develop regional partnerships with tech companies. Another CoR member inquired whether the fraction of indirect cost return from NIH grants could go towards building an account for this cost share. Professor Wiebe replied that this idea was discussed but that plan is not sustainable.

**Action:** CoR Chair Sexton will raise this issue at UCORP.

- III. Consent Calendar
  - A. Today's agenda
  - B. Draft October 5 meeting minutes

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

- IV. Annual Senate Faculty Grants Program – *Chair Sexton*
  - A. The updated, draft Call for Proposals for AY 22-23 was linked on today's agenda. Per past practice, the timeline is: CoR issues the Call to all Senate faculty by early November and the submission deadline is the end of January.
  - B. Request from the administration (see minutes of October 5 CoR meeting) that CoR consider awarding funds for COVID-19 impacts mitigation. The EVC/Provost may allocate additional funds to the Senate for this purpose. CoR members were asked to record their thoughts on a Google doc that was linked on today's agenda.

Chair Sexton reminded CoR members to provide their input on items A and B above.

**Action:** CoR members to provide their input on the Google docs and the committee will continue this discussion at the next CoR meeting.

- V. Instrumentation Grants – *Jay Sexton*

The draft Call for Proposals for instrumentation grants was linked on today's agenda. CoR Chair Sexton reminded CoR members to provide their edits on the Google doc.

**Action:** CoR members to provide their input on the Google doc and the committee will continue this discussion at the next CoR meeting.

- VI. Consultation with VCR Wilson and Former Interim VCORED Zatz  
A. Areas of Strength document (linked on today's agenda)

Former VCR Zatz reminded CoR that the areas of strength are areas the campus is collectively known for, and is intended to be useful to the Chancellor and External Relations when they speak to external audiences. She added that she drafted the list in consultation with past Senate Chairs, deans, and by reviewing the former SAFI areas and the various academic plans.

CoR members suggested a few revisions to the document, including "Climate (or Environmental) Science & Sustainable Systems and Solutions". A note will be added to the end of the document stating that UC Merced is known for its interdisciplinarity and community-engaged approaches to research.

**Action:** CoR members are asked to provide additional edits to former VCR Zatz. After CoR members have provided their edits, former VCR Zatz will submit the Areas of Strength document to Divisional Council for review. After the Council's review, former VCR Zatz will share the list with department chairs and School Executive Committee chairs.

- B. Climate research funds  
(Note: VCR Wilson is scheduled to consult with CAPRA on October 25 about climate research funding opportunities.)

VCR Wilson presented slides summarizing the climate research funding opportunities for faculty:

\$185 million state climate funds

ROI expectations:

- Demonstrate outcomes aligned with State Climate Goals and/or Central Valley needs
- State funds matched/leveraged with extramural funding (federal, state), philanthropy, industry, corporate

UCOP \$100 million

- \$85 million one-time competition
- \$15 million climate related I&E

UC Merced \$18 million (three annual competitions)

- ORED developing plan for institutes/centers and seed funding opportunities in partnership with key groups
- ORED town hall October 20. VCR Wilson encouraged the faculty to attend.

**Action:** VCR Wilson will continue this discussion at the next CoR meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Attest: Jason Sexton, CoR Chair