

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
October 2, 2024

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 1:30 pm on October 2, 2024, in room 344 of the Ruiz-Administration Building. Chair Tao Ye presiding.

I. Consultation with VCR Wilson

Prior to this meeting, CoR sent questions to VCR Wilson. The discussion is summarized as follows.

- A. A talented staff is the backbone of research support. How can faculty help with recruitment of key ORED staff?

VCR Wilson explained that when ORED recruits for staff positions, they first want to engage faculty by asking faculty to reach out to their networks and help source candidates. Secondly, ORED wishes for faculty to be included in search committees. And lastly, when ORED invites finalists to campus for interviews, ORED wants faculty to engage in this process. As mentioned in the last CoR meeting, ORED is in the process of hiring for the position of Principal Manager of Core Facilities. That search committee – which has faculty representation – is currently deciding on a list of finalists.

A CoR member asked how faculty would know to be involved in ORED staff searches. VCR Wilson responded by inviting faculty feedback on the best way to notify faculty of these opportunities. A CoR member suggested that VCR Wilson notify department chairs who would then communicate with faculty. VCR Wilson agreed with this method. She also pointed out that each core facility has a users group and suggested she reach out to those groups. CoR members agreed with this approach.

VCR Wilson informed CoR members that ORED has hired a new director of the Environmental Analytical Laboratory (EAL) core facility. ORED has also hired an interim attending veterinarian who has UC experience.

- B. What are the ongoing major initiatives to raise funds for research from private foundations, industry, and individual donors? Where can faculty play a role?

VCR Wilson explained that fundraising issues are centralized under the division headed by VC Ed Klotzbier. Each division/school has an identified fundraiser,

but these individuals are embedded within External Relations. VCR Wilson intends to draft a fundraising plan for ORED and will work with the relevant fundraiser in External Relations. VCR Wilson also oversees the Office of Technology, Innovation, and Industry Relations (OTIIR). She announced to CoR that she has received funds from UCOP that can be used to increase OTIIR staffing. The future OTIIR director will help the campus engage with industry partners.

C. Other VCR Updates

VCR Wilson announced the positive news that research expenditures have increased since last year. She hopes that faculty are seeing some improvements in financial reporting after the work of last year's Financial Management and Reporting Task Force.

VCR Wilson is working on strategic planning for ORED and will identify priorities to improve the experience of stakeholders who engage with ORED. She will be asking faculty to provide feedback to her on what is working well and what still needs improvement. A CoR member asked about faculty hiring and medical education. VCR Wilson stated that there are research opportunities around medical education, but questions about faculty hiring should be addressed to the EVC/Provost.

Action: The question about faculty hiring will be added to the list of discussion topics for the EVC/Provost's attendance at the November 6 CoR meeting.

II. CoR Goals and Priorities AY 24-25

In the last CoR meeting, the committee discussed:

- How can the university facilitate collaboration so faculty can pursue major federal initiatives like AI?
- How can faculty be notified of funding opportunities in a more timely manner?
- Financial management will likely be one of the topics discussed at the October 30 shared governance retreat. Other topics will likely be enrollment and reaching R1.

VCR Wilson asked CoR Chair Ye to keep her informed about topics at the shared governance retreat so that she can be prepared. She asked the CoR chair to convey the updates she shared earlier in this meeting (ORED filling key staff positions, fundraising planning, and strategic planning). CoR Chair Ye replied that the shared governance retreat agenda is still being formulated. VCR Wilson suggested that "reaching R1 status" be more specific for the shared governance retreat as that is a broad umbrella.

VCR Wilson informed CoR members that the metrics for R1 have changed. Now, the metrics are: research expenditures and the number of graduate students graduating annually. But the question that should also be taken into consideration as UC Merced seeks R1 status is: how can we continue to improve services around research and the research workforce?

A CoR member mentioned that reaching R1 status is a goal that the campus has advocated for frequently. In addition to a set of metrics, R1 status is representative of research activity and achievements and ongoing policies the campus puts into place that reflect research excellence. He asked what benefits the campus gets with R1 classification. VCR Wilson replied that the campus would receive an array of things, such as national prestige in the joining of other UCs in achieving R1 status, faculty would be able to lead certain projects at the federal level rather than just being partners, and fundraisers and industry partners are more willing to work with campuses that have R1 status because they, too, benefit from R1 prestige. R1 status conveys that the campus is bringing in a particular amount of funds for research. The CoR member thanked VCR Wilson for this explanation and suggested that the faculty would benefit from hearing her articulation of the issues. VCR Wilson agreed that the messaging to the campus on R1 status should be modified and agreed to speak directly with faculty. She will craft talking points on R1 benefits and asked for CoR's input.

A CoR member expressed concern about the aforementioned graduate student metric for R1 given the fact that the campus has admitted fewer graduate students than usual. VCR Wilson suggested that CoR speak with the VPDGE and the EVC/Provost.

Action: The committee staff member will invite the VPDGE to a future CoR meeting. (The EVC/Provost is already scheduled to attend the November 6 meeting.)

III. Chair's Report – *Chair Ye*

A. September 23 Divisional Council meeting

- The EVC/Provost attended part of the Divisional Council meeting. One of the discussion topics was graduate student pay issues. These issues are being worked on.
- The new dean of SSHA attended the meeting to articulate his top priorities for the school.
- The shared governance retreat is scheduled for October 30. CoR Chair Ye will be asking for CoR's input after the retreat agenda is formulated.

B. September 24 meeting with SPO leadership and the chair of the Senate Committee on Faculty Welfare & Academic Freedom

The discussion centered on miscommunication and disagreement around some pre-award issues, such as proposal formatting. Some faculty feel that they are no longer in control of their proposals. It was acknowledged that SPO plays an important advisory role to the faculty as their job is to ensure that faculty proposals do not

pose a risk to the institution. However, it is also important to understand where the parties can agree to disagree on certain elements such as formatting as long as the proposal is compliant. CoR Chair Ye is confident that many issues are being caused by miscommunication which are relatively simple to fix.

IV. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda
- B. Draft September 18, 2024 meeting minutes

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved as presented.

V. Campus Review Item – *Member Hagger*

- A. Anthropology & Heritage Studies Graduate Program Proposal

The proposal and the lead reviewer's comments were linked on today's agenda and were previously distributed to CoR via email and on the last meeting agenda.

The lead reviewer summarized his comments. CoR members agreed with his comments and had no edits.

Action: The committee analyst will transmit CoR's memo to the Senate Chair before 5:00 pm today/October 2.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Attest: Tao Ye, CoR Chair