

**Committee on Research (CoR)**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**November 6, 2024**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 1:30 pm on November 6, 2024, in room 344 of the Ruiz-Administration Building. Chair Tao Ye presiding.

I. Chair's Report – *Chair Ye*

A. October 21 and November 4 Divisional Council meetings

- Discussion of the proposed MAPP revisions and the comments from various Senate committees.
- Consultation with Campus Police Chief Chou Her.  
The discussion included a clarification about the purchase of military grade equipment. Chief Her also explained the protocol for special events such as Regents meetings: if campus police need assistance beyond current personnel, the campus has an agreement whereby the university requests assistance from other UC campuses and CSU campuses. If assistance is not received from these sources, the next level is for the campus to contact city police and the California Highway Patrol.

B. October 30 Shared Governance Retreat

Four main topics were discussed:

- Enrollment. Improved coordination and collaboration with faculty is needed. The individual academic programs are in a good position to help with the coordination.
- Financial reporting. There are some improvements in this area with both summer pay and accurate financial reporting. However, much work still needs to be done. CoR Chair Ye serves on the Faculty Advisory Board (which was established from last year's Financial Management and Reporting Task Force).
- Graduate training.
- Research mission. In his presentation at the retreat, CoR Chair Ye highlighted campus accomplishments such as increased research expenditures. He also shared with retreat attendees information on the top grants received by Merced faculty and Riverside faculty and Merced compares favorably. Additionally, Chair Ye discussed R1; specifically, how the institution can better support faculty in obtaining larger grants and how the institution get acquire philanthropic support for research. He also emphasized the importance of continuing excellence after the campus reaches R1 status.

**Action:** After the notes from the Shared Governance Retreat are finalized, they will be shared with the committee.

II. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda
- B. Draft October 16, 2024 meeting minutes

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

III. Consultation with VCR Wilson

VCR Wilson provided the following updates:

- Principal Manager, Shared Core Research Facilities  
Reference checks for the finalists are underway.
- ORED Strategic Planning Exercise  
On Monday, ORED leadership held a kickoff meeting to identify priorities for their future strategic plan. November through January, ORED anticipates engaging stakeholders including CoR. ORED's strategic planning will continue through the academic year and the goal is to have a formal plan with metrics. VCR Wilson clarified that this is not a strategic plan for the campus as that already exists; rather, this is a strategic plan for ORED.
- Field Education and Research Center (FERC)  
The bids on the building of the center have come in and leadership is in discussions. The goal is for the center to be finished in the spring.
- Upcoming ORED Proof of Concept fund competition  
VCR Wilson submitted a successful proposal to UCOP and received funds for proof of concept around innovation and entrepreneurship. These funds are intended for all disciplines. The amount of money is between \$150,000 and \$200,000 with the maximum of \$25,000 for individual awards. The solicitation will be issued by VCR Wilson as soon as it is finalized. VCR Wilson clarified that this solicitation is for tech transfer, for faculty to propose something that can be licensed or patented or for a start-up, something an outside entity would like to invest in, either a company or the federal government. A CoR member asked VCR Wilson to connect with the capstone design project manager in SoE as this could benefit students in that course. VCR Wilson clarified that the funding from UCOP is intended for faculty and researchers rather than undergraduate students, as the Regents want UCOP to fund intellectual property that will return dividends to the institution. There are different funding sources for undergraduate students, and they are encouraged to pursue those.

- NSF GRANTED proposal (post-award research administration)  
In partnership with Baylor and Emory universities, UC Merced submitted a proposal to study best practices around post award research administration. The proposal was not funded, however, the proposal was modified and the campus hopes to resubmit by the end of November.

**Action:** At a future meeting, per the CoR chair's request, VCR Wilson will provide an update on staffing in the Office of Technology, Innovation, and Industry Relations.

#### IV. Consultation with EVC/Provost Dumont

Prior to this meeting, the following question was submitted to EVC/Provost Dumont:

- What does the EVC/Provost see as her role in advancing the campus research mission? There are various things that impact research, such as enrollment and faculty hiring (especially replacement hires).

EVC/Provost Dumont explained to CoR members that she collaborates with VCR Wilson on locating funding for the campus and where to invest. She also plans to engage CAPRA on faculty hiring. The campus has been provided with funding to hire department staff and train them to support faculty. CoR Chair Ye raised the issue of pre-award spending and the need for a back up COA. EVC/Provost Dumont agreed and will look into a funding source that can serve as a backstop. The departments are unlikely to have this funding, and departments and deans receive only a small percentage of indirect cost return.

EVC/Provost Dumont explained that she aims to move toward autonomy for Schools and Deans by allocating funding and allowing them the authority to spend the funds on areas they choose. EVC/Provost Dumont and VCR Wilson both encouraged CoR to continue communicating research needs such as pre-award spending so these needs can be prioritized.

EVC/Provost Dumont informed CoR members that she has been meeting with departments and faculty hiring is a topic that was raised in each meeting. She is working on determining the target number of faculty the campus should have while in a state of non-growth. She plans to work with Senate leadership and CAPRA. She will also gather data from other UCs on their number of Senate faculty, non-Senate faculty (lecturers), and graduate students to inform UC Merced's future faculty hiring plans. EVC/Provost Dumont's office is also gathering internal data from the

past five years to study UC Merced’s recent history of faculty hiring and attrition. EVC/Provost Dumont emphasized that while she is very much in favor of hiring more faculty, she wants to do so in a way that is sustainable for the campus.

A CoR member pointed out the need for a robust research portfolio in order to reach R1 status. EVC/Provost Dumont replied that she needs to determine what is feasible in terms of spending money to hire faculty. When money is available, the planning can then turn to the allocation of those FTE lines to ensure research excellence. VCR Wilson encouraged CoR members to keep in mind core facilities in conversations about faculty hiring. Cluster hires may be more efficient if the new hires are users of significant research equipment.

V. Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC) Updates – *Member Joyce*

October 21 PROC meeting updates

PROC is engaged in various reviews and CoR Member Joyce will keep the committee updated on future CoR-related developments.

VI. AY 24-25 Senate Faculty Grants Annual Call for Proposals

The draft call and last year’s rubric for evaluating proposals was linked on today’s agenda.

CoR members continued their previous discussion on revising the annual call for proposals.

Last year, CoR members suggested the following revisions for the AY 24-25 call:

- Should CoR add language to the call that summarizes its evaluation rubric?
- Should CoR add a table of last year’s winners with the number of years since they were last awarded so potential applicants can see the likelihood of being funded?
- Should CoR revise the evaluation rubric to rank the “reasonableness” of the proposals’ budgets? Last year’s CoR suggested there is a difference between “need” and the “reasonable” nature of budget requests.
- Should the application form on the last page of the call for proposals include checkboxes for seed funding and bridge funding and should PIs be required to check one?

The amount of funds for this year’s program is not yet confirmed, but CoR Chair Ye asked members to assume for now that the total is \$175,000. He asked CoR members for their input on the upper limit of individual awards. In previous years, the amount varied from \$5,000, \$7,500, and \$10,000. Some CoR members were in favor of \$5,000 in order to fund more proposals. A CoR member suggested placing language in the call for proposals that if PIs have a need for more funding beyond \$5,000 for items such as a significant piece of equipment or a collaborative project that requires more money, they should contact CoR and CoR may decide to award additional funds. If CoR were to do this, it would have to be

only under exceptional circumstances and the PIs' special project must be fully explained. The additional rationale would be due to CoR before the grant submission deadline. CoR members agreed to continue this discussion at the next CoR meeting.

Given that the EVC/Provost's office has stated that it can no longer provide funding for extensions, CoR members agreed that the call for proposals will clearly state that there will be no extensions, and no exceptions. The award letters will also include this language as well as the Senate analyst's award notification emails. The Senate analyst will also send periodic email reminders to PIs and School financial staff of the funding deadline and reiterate that no extensions will be allowed.

**Action:** CoR will continue this discussion at the next meeting. The call will be issued to Senate faculty in November or December.

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

Attest: Tao Ye, CoR Chair