

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
February 28, 2022

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 10:30 am – 12:00 pm on February 28, 2022 via Zoom. Chair Jason Sexton presiding.

I. Chair's Report – *Chair Sexton and Vice Chair Ye*

A. February 10 and 24 Divisional Council meetings

Chair Sexton attended the February 10 Divisional Council meeting and Vice Chair Ye attended the February 24 Divisional Council meeting.

Updates:

- Oracle Advisory Committee (Vice Chair Ye is representing CoR).
- The following individuals are leaving their systemwide roles: Provost Brown, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel and Programs Susan Carlson, and Senate Executive Director Hilary Baxter.
- Discussion about a possible revision to the Merced Division bylaws to extend the terms of service of certain Senate committee chairs.
- UGC is revising procedures for approving online courses.
- EVC/Provost Camfield thanked the Senate for its thoughtful message to faculty about flexibility in online instruction.
- Many quarantine beds on campus have gone unfilled thanks to the high vaccination rate on campus and the excellent level of compliance with masking rules.
- EVC/Provost Camfield informed Divisional Council that student enrollment is flat and the campus needs to work on targeted marketing.
- A recent court order is forcing UC Berkeley to reduce undergraduate enrollment in response to a lawsuit regarding the environmental impact of Berkeley's expansion plan. UC Berkeley is required to freeze enrollment at the same level as AY 20-21. The UC is asking the California Supreme Court to stay the order. Senate Chair Westerling informed Divisional Council that this will create confusion about enrollment at other UC campuses, especially Merced, as we cannot now determine how many students we will have to admit to reach our enrollment target.
- The UGC chair shared the draft campus honors program proposal and Divisional Council members will submit comments.

- Divisional Council supported moving the Community and Labor Center ORU proposal forward in the approval process.
- Continued discussion on Oracle issues. The Senate Chair is in contact with faculty from other campuses regarding their issues.
- Discussion of LASC's memo to CAPRA and Senate Chair on insufficient Library staffing and LASC's memo to GC and the Senate Chair about requested revisions to the CCGA handbook. The Library continues to express the need for lead authors of new programs, majors, and minors to consult with them so the Library can ensure it has the appropriate resources.

B. February 14 UCORP meeting

- UCORP may draft a letter about the impact of the unionization of GSRs on faculty research.
- Systemwide Senate Chair Horwitz updated UCORP on: funding for climate change issues, the state legislature's push for increased UC online courses (this is a contentious issue among faculty), and mitigating the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty. A working group will be issuing a report on the Achievement Relative to Opportunity (ARO) principle.

C. MacKenzie Scott gift plan

- Divisional Council's proposed plan for spending the \$1 million allocated to the Academic Senate by the Chancellor from the MacKenzie Scott campus gift was well-received by the Chancellor and EVC/Provost. The Chancellor asked Divisional Council to connect their funding priorities with aspects of the campus strategic plan. A subcommittee of Divisional Council is currently working on this request.

II. Consent Calendar

A. Today's agenda

B. Draft February 7 meeting minutes

Action: the Consent Calendar was approved with one modification: per the request of ex-officio member VCORED Zatz, the memo written by the directors of SNRI and HSRI will be moved from its current location under Informational Items to Other Business for a discussion by the committee.

III. Centers Policy

In fall 2021, a CoR policy subcommittee revised the campus Centers policy.

Timeline:

- CoR submitted the revised policy to the administration on October 28, 2021 and invited their review.
- The administration submitted comments to CoR on December 3, 2021.
- The CoR policy subcommittee took the administration’s comments into account and submitted an updated version of the policy to the administration on January 10, 2022.
- The administration’s comments (specifically from EVC/Provost Camfield and Interim CFO Schnier) on the second round of review were submitted to CoR on January 19, 2022.

CoR discussed the administration’s (specifically from EVC/Provost Camfield and Interim CFO Schnier) January 19, 2022 comments on the revised Centers policy. Regarding the second bullet of section C, EVC/Provost Camfield and Interim CFO Schnier suggested “The campus develop guidance and templates for the five-year sunset reviews, rather than having directors develop a plan. This will reduce the administrative burden on leadership, ensure reviews are designed to provide the information necessary to make a sunset decision, and promote consistency across reviews. Relatedly, it may also be useful to specify who is responsible for the costs of the review.” CoR members wondered which individual or individuals should be tasked with developing this guidance and templates. VCORED Zatz suggested that CoR could use the ORU review templates currently utilized by PROC and adapt them for Centers.

Action: CoR Chair Sexton, VCORED Zatz, and the committee analyst will incorporate the administration’s January 19, 2022 suggested revisions into the draft Centers policy. The updated draft policy will then be sent to the original CoR policy subcommittee who initially worked on the policy (members: Chair Sexton, members Baykara, LeVeck, and Zatz, and Assistant EVC/Provost Martin). After the full CoR membership has reviewed and endorsed the revised policy, the policy will be transmitted to Divisional Council for a full Senate review.

IV. Consultation with Interim VCORED Zatz

A. Update from the Research and Creative Activities Planning Team (campus strategic plan implementation)

The Research and Creative Activities planning team was created in fall 2021 to advise the administration on implementing campus strategic plan Objective 1.2: “Grow UC-quality research and creative activities by strengthening the

infrastructure for, and levels of, extramural funding.” CoR Chair Sexton represents CoR on this planning team and VCORED Zatz also serves.

Interim VCORED Zatz updated CoR members on the following items of discussion from the Research and Creative Activities planning team:

- The planning team discussed how to facilitate the increase of research and grant activity. Specifically, what does the campus need to put into place for faculty to increase their grant activity? Research and enrollment are the two main campus priorities in the upcoming budget call.
- Discussion about impediments to faculty research and the various staffing needs, such as a community engagement staff person, a greenhouse staff person, and more administrative staff who can support a variety of faculty needs as they arise including grant support.

CoR members provided VCORED Zatz with the following input to share with the planning team:

- consideration of graduate student preparation/quality. Bench research requires competent students to produce results/papers to continue getting grant funding. Faculty have limited bandwidth but spend a lot of time helping their graduate students.
- The campus needs research administrators on the pre and post-award side who are trained, competent, and consistent.
- CoR members agreed with the planning team’s prioritization of hiring certain staff such as general administrative staff and community engagement support. Some faculty frequently have the opportunity to apply for grants with high odds of receiving them that would support 1/4-1/2 time for a staff person who could handle the administrative work. Such support is only needed for 1-5 years maximum which is not a compelling job offer for prospective staff. If such staff were already employed by the campus, faculty could tap into their expertise.
- Being able to add more students to the summer jump program (summer program for new PhDs) might be helpful to start training graduate students a bit early (i.e. teaching them some of the bench skills in the summer so they can be prepared for the fall).
- The campus should create FTE lines for programmers to create a research infrastructure that facilitates faculty research.
- Faculty need more instrumentation and post docs.
- The program in ORED that helps junior faculty develop grant proposals needs to be expanded.

B. Climate Resilience Update

Interim VCORED Zatz stated that the \$185 climate resilience initiative is moving along in the state legislature and she is hopeful it will be signed. UC Merced will submit a proposal to create a regional climate resiliency and innovation hub. Interim VCORED Zatz is working with county officials on this proposal. The proposal envisions the campus as a model of carbon neutrality and energy efficiency and considers how the campus can be a test bed for green construction, solar energy, and fuel economy. The proposal will also tie in work that is being done by campus researchers on wildfire and drought. \$100 million will be allocated for seed grants from non-state sources. Those grant proposals can be sole PI or involve faculty from multiple campuses. Funding will also be available for workforce development.

V. CoR Awards Subcommittees

The Call for Nominations for the annual Senate awards was issued to faculty. CoR is responsible for reviewing the nominations for the Distinction in Research Award and Early Career Research award and selecting one winner for each award. Nominations are due to the Senate Chair by March 14. CoR must select one winner for each award by early April (date TBD). The winners of all Senate awards will be announced at the Spring Meeting of the Division (date TBD).

CoR was asked to form two award subcommittees, one for the Distinction in Research award and one for the Early Career Research award. Each subcommittee should consist of three CoR members, preferably one member from each School.

Action: the committee analyst will contact CoR members after the March 14 nomination submission deadline and identify volunteers for the two award subcommittees.

VI. Campus Review Items

A. Academic Activity Proposal

The proposal was introduced the September 17 Admissions and Financial Aid Committee (AFAC) meeting and at the January 27 DivCo meeting. DivCo members unanimously agreed that the proposal be sent to Senate and School Executive Committees for review and comments. The proposal and guiding questions were linked on today's agenda.

Action: the Senate Chair will be informed that CoR declines to opine.

B. Proposed Revisions to the English Major and Minor

All supporting materials were linked on today's agenda.

Action: the Senate Chair will be informed that CoR declines to opine.

VII. Systemwide Review Item

A. Presidential Policy on UC Research Data

This is the second systemwide review for this policy. The following documents were all linked on today's agenda: the revised policy in both redline and clean formats, an FAQ, CoR's AY 20-21 comments, and all previous comments on the first version of the policy from the UC campuses.

CoR selected a lead reviewer.

Action: CoR will discuss the lead reviewer's comments over email and finalize the memo at the March 28 CoR meeting. CoR's comments are due to the Senate Chair by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, March 30.

VIII. Other Business

A. Senate faculty grant proposals

CoR Chair Sexton reminded committee members that due to the Chancellor awarding the Academic Senate some funding from the MacKenzie Scott campus gift, the Senate will be able to award all grant proposals that were submitted this semester in response to the Call for Proposals. Chair Sexton added that he needs to work with FACS to determine how they wish to award proposals that requested the sustainability funds.

Action: The CoR chair and analyst will address this issue with FACS.

B. Memo from Directors of SNRI and HSRI (ORUs)

The memo, which was linked on today's agenda, was addressed to the Chancellor and EVC/Provost and entitled "Campus research infrastructure and morale issues". The memo was partly informed by the memo submitted to the Chancellor and EVC/Provost in October 2021 by CoR, FWAF, and GC. CoR members found the ORU directors' memo to be thoughtful and very well-

written. CoR also appreciated the memo's emphasis on grant management, given that grant management is the other area besides procurement that is in critical and urgent need of improvement.

CoR members briefly discussed the ongoing problems related to procurement and grant management, including older grants whose expenses still have not been invoiced and problems with chartstrings when entering orders. Interim VCORED Zatz pointed out that when the financial system was launched, it only converted the last three years' worth of grants. For older grants, RA staff have to explore the ledger and generate reports which is a cumbersome process. Interim CFO Schnier has brought back Deloitte to help implement the Oracle system's enhancements. A CoR member reiterated the need for the campus to utilize faculty expertise around organizational efficiency and work on automating certain processes to eliminate the self-service model. Interim VCORED Zatz replied that the campus is currently focused on fixing emergency problems around procurement and faculty grant balances.

CoR Chair Sexton stated that Divisional Council has been discussing these issues and supports the creation of long-standing structures to facilitate faculty research. CoR's draft memo in response to the Chancellor and EVC/Provost November 1, 2021 comments on CoR, FWAF, and GC's October 2021 research obstacles memo has been sent to Divisional Council. However, CoR will have the opportunity to further edit after the memo is discussed by Divisional Council.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 pm.

Attest: Jason Sexton, CoR Chair