

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
March 11, 2020

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 1:00 pm on March 11, 2020 via Zoom. Chair Michael Scheibner presiding.

I. Chair's Report

Chair Scheibner updated CoR members on the following:

A. Division Council meeting March 4

- i. Per CAPRA's recommendation, the UC Merced administration will seek funding so that more Merced students can participate in the UCDC program.
- ii. Given the UC cap on the enrollment of international undergraduate students, UC Berkeley is proposing to admit these students to its extension program, and later allow them to transfer to UC Merced, thereby benefiting both campuses.
- iii. The UC Davis faculty are responding negatively to the questionable use of faculty diversity statements in the faculty hiring process. The UC Davis administration appears to be implementing and forcing the questionable practice.
- iv. LASC and CoR's draft, joint memo re: the OSTP request for open access is still being discussed by Division Council members.

B. UCORP meeting March 9

- i. UCOP has named a new Vice President for Research and Innovation.
- ii. OSTP request regarding open access and availability of research. There are concerns over a new practice instituted by the Department of Energy (DoE). VCORED Traina stated that he will update CoR members on this new practice later in the meeting.
- iii. Discussion of peer-reviewed research and how data repositories should be handled. Other questions include, what qualifies as data and who will share the cost?
- iv. Systemwide Senate Chair discussed the UCSC wildcat graduate student TA strike and the solidarity shown by some other UC campuses.
- v. The Regents are scheduled to announce the name of the new UC President in May.
- vi. No updates on the search for UC Merced's next Chancellor.
- vii. A call will be issued for the new round of MRPI programs.
- viii. Ongoing reviews of two MRUs: Bioengineering Institute of California and the UC Observatories.

II. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda
- B. Draft February 26 meeting minutes

Action: Consent calendar was approved with two additions to today's agenda: VCORED Traina's COVID-19 update and a discussion item requested by a CoR member regarding SPO's indirect cost return policy exception form.

III. **Campus Committee Updates**

A. February 26 LASC meeting

Member Carreira- Perpiñán, who represents CoR on LASC, provided the following LASC updates:

- i. UCOP issued a poll to all UC campuses regarding the impact of the termination of the UC contract with Elsevier. Most UC faculty have reported no hardships, as they have been able to access the publications they require.
- ii. LASC is drafting a memo to the Senate Chair regarding the importance of consulting with the Library when departments and Schools develop proposals for new programs so that the Library can ensure it has the proper resources to support the new programs.
- iii. The Library's periodic review is currently underway.

IV. **Consultation with VCORED Traina**

A. Update on foreign influence on research

As mentioned earlier in the meeting, the DoE has instituted a practice in which the agency must approve the participation of any foreign national on DoE-funded research activity. This applies not only at the grant proposal stage, but also the hiring stage when faculty seek to hire a post doc or graduate student to work on the research project. This new practice violates the UC policy for grant acceptance. If DoE persists in enforcing this practice, VCORED Traina stated that the UC may decide whether to prohibit UC faculty from receiving grants from the DoE. A similar practice is being discussed by the Department of Defense (DoD) which would affect grants with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

B. Impact of COVID-19 on research enterprise

VCORED Traina issued a campus wide announcement recently about COVID-19's impact on research continuity. While the situation is fluid, the virus spread should not have a significant impact on faculty's ability to submit extramural grant proposals. Federal sponsors have a policy whereby missed submission deadlines will may be allowed, on a case by case basis, due to natural disasters. This policy includes pandemics in the natural disasters category. It is unknown at this time what policy the state funding agencies will follow but Governor Newsom is aware of the gravity of the situation with regard to UC faculty researchers. VCORED Traina stated that his office may have to cancel on-campus deadlines for federal grant submission and allow faculty to submit proposals at the last minute. However, faculty are asked to consider that SPO staff review of faculty proposals may be limited and delayed. The campus will continue to operate core facilities but this is dependent on whether staff remain unaffected by the virus.

VCORED Traina asked faculty to exercise patience and recognize that some business processes including travel, procurement, HR, and EH&S, maybe be delayed. He also warned of potential delays in bringing visitors to campus, both domestic and international. The federal government has imposed a mandatory two-week quarantine on visitors from certain countries. IRB is discussing the negative effects on faculty who engage in human subject research.

Faculty can still access their laboratories as normal, but it is the responsibility of the PIs to ensure proper hygiene, sanitation, and to limit social interaction if possible. VCORED Traina also advised PIs to anticipate their supply needs over the next few months and submit purchase orders now, so that there is less chance of a delay in receiving those critical items. A CoR member asked if EH&S still has to approve each purchase order and VCORED Traina replied that he will check on this and later update CoR. VCORED Traina also mentioned that other campus faculty are being advised to not begin new research projects for the next few months.

V. **Systemwide Review Item**

A. Proposed Presidential Policy on Travel Regulations

The proposed policy revision includes the following key issues:

- Incorporate Internal Audit Recommendation to include requirement for documentation to support business or first class travel.
- Incorporate Internal Audit Recommendation to include the need to document the business purpose of each day of travel.
- Addition of a new section within policy that addresses sustainable travel recommendations.
- Gender-neutral language

CoR members had no comments on the proposed policy.

Action: The Senate Chair will be notified that CoR declines to opine.

VI. **Request from Committee on Rules & Elections (CRE)**

A. At the request of CRE, Senate standing committees are invited to review their current bylaws and submit any requested revisions.

CoR members discussed the possibility of adding a graduate student representative to the committee membership as a non-voting member.

Action: Committee analyst will draft proposed, revised bylaws to reflect the inclusion of a graduate student representative, and circulate among CoR members for review and approval. CoR's revised bylaws are due to CRE by Friday, March 20.

VII. CoR-SPO Working Group Proposal

- A. At a previous meeting, CoR members consulted with AVC Deborah Motton on potentially establishing a CoR-SPO staff working group that would serve to facilitate feedback between faculty and SPO on the grant submission process.

Prior to this meeting, CoR members reviewed a draft memo to VCORED Traina and AVC Motton that proposed the empaneling of this working group.

CoR members suggested the addition of departmental research administrators on the proposed working group.

Action: Committee analyst will revise the draft memo to include departmental research administrators and re-send to CoR members for review and approval. The final memo will be transmitted to VCORED Traina and AVC Motton.

VIII. Indirect Cost Policy Exception Request Form

A CoR member shared with the committee that she and other faculty have been told they must complete an Indirect Cost Policy Exception Request Form for proposals with indirect cost recovery rates that do not adhere to the University's federal or state negotiated rates. According to the policy, if faculty apply for any grant funding where allowable indirect costs are lower than UC Merced's federal negotiated rate, they are required to complete the Indirect Costs Policy Exception Request Form, which must be signed by the PI, the dean or director of the department handling the grant, and the VCORED.

CoR members were concerned about the additional workload this policy will cause for faculty, departmental research administrators, deans and directors, and the VCORED. The policy will especially impact junior faculty, as many fellowships and seed grants for junior faculty do not cover indirect cost. This extra step is also detrimental to the streamlining of the grant submission process, because it requires extra time for these additional administrative steps.

Action: Committee analyst will draft a memo of CoR's concerns and add to the next CoR meeting agenda for the committee's review and approval. The final memo will be transmitted to the VCORED.

IX. Revised Research Enhancement Proposal

Chair Scheibner shared with CoR members that he has met with all three School deans and VPDGE Zatz. All are supportive of the proposal. Chair Scheibner also summarized the recent revisions he made to the proposal, which include a provision for the duration of the research enhancement program. The proposal suggests an initial 10-year duration of the program. In the first half of years

4 and 7, CoR will provide a status report on the efficiency of the two components to the EVC/Provost and the VCORED. Minor adjustments to the program may be made following these status reports. In year 10, a full program review would take place to assess whether the program is to be continued in its current form, modified, or terminated.

Chair Scheibner suggested the formation of a working group with CoR, CAPRA, VPDGE Zatz, and possibly other stakeholders, to determine a plan for implementing and funding the proposed graduate student positions outlined in the research enhancement proposal. VPDGE Zatz has informed Chair Scheibner that an approved title for these graduate student positions currently exists but is not being used.

Action: Chair Scheibner will finalize the research enhancement proposal early next week and send to the School deans and GC to determine their interest in co-sponsoring the proposal. The proposal will also be sent to the Senate Chair. The proposal will then be submitted to Division Council for a discussion at the Council's April 15 meeting. If Division Council endorses, the proposal will be transmitted to the administration by the end of April.

X. **Other Business**

In the course of a discussion on other topics, a School dean suggested to Chair Scheibner that CoR institute a five-year plan (similar to the academic plans being formed by Schools) given the potential number of proposals for new ORUs that will be submitted to CoR. CoR should consider what other items should be included in a potential five-year plan, e.g. new centers and core facilities.

Action: This topic will be added to the next CoR meeting agenda.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.

Attest: Michael Scheibner, CoR chair