

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
April 15, 2020

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 1:00 pm on April 15, 2020 via Zoom. Chair Michael Scheibner presiding.

I. Chair's Report

Chair Scheibner updated CoR members on the following:

A. UCORP meeting April 13

- i. Campus CFOs have been asked to conduct stress testing to determine their campuses' financial situations.
- ii. UCPB is drafting a letter to the systemwide Provost stating its support for graduate students and their research during the coronavirus crisis. UCORP discussed drafting its own communication on the importance of graduate students to the UC research mission.
- iii. Phase 4 of the federal economic stimulus package may provide funds for research, however, VCORED Traina mentioned that the Phase 4 will likely be small and focus mainly on small businesses. Legislators are working on Phase 5 of the economic stimulus package.
- iv. UCOP issued the request for proposals for the MRPI 2021 award year.
- v. The UC Vice President for Research and Innovation consulted with UCORP and has been regularly consulting with campus VCORED.
- vi. UC researchers across the system have attended BSL-3 training at The UC Irvine Center of Excellence. VCORED Traina state that he will ask VPDGE Zatz if the Irvine researchers could, in the future, travel to UC Merced to train our campus researchers. Irvine's personnel would also be able to assess our new research buildings and determine if changes need to be made.
- vii. Each UC campus will receive an extra \$50,000 from the UC Lab Fees Program. UCOP is discussing a possible coordination of COVID-19 research funds and regular research funds for faculty who normally do not conduct that type of research.
- viii. Another phase of review of the proposed, revised Presidential Policy on Native American Cultural Affiliation and Repatriation may be submitted to the campus, but on a targeted basis for faculty who have expertise in that area. (The Merced Division opined on this item in fall 2019.)
- ix. Non-resident tuition waivers for international graduate students will have to be reexamined. The students' research has been interrupted and delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic and they may have to work on their projects beyond the original timeline of their waivers.
- x. UCOP is brainstorming how to reopen and ramp up campus research operations. Chair Scheibner will discuss this later in today's agenda.

B. Research enhancement proposal

The proposal was endorsed (with comments) by the deans of SNS, SOE, and SSHA; the Graduate Council, and the VPDGE. The proposal was transmitted to Division Council and will be discussed at Council's April 20 meeting. At that meeting, Chair Scheibner will describe to Division Council how he plans to address the various comments.

II. Consent Calendar

A. Today's agenda

B. Draft April 1st meeting minutes

Action: The consent calendar was approved as presented with two additions to today's agenda: 1) discussion about ramping up campus research operations and 2) discussion on comments received on the revised ORU policy.

III. Debrief of Research Continuity Webinar April 10

Webinar was hosted by Chair Scheibner, VCORED Traina, and VPDGE Zatz. VCORED Traina stated that the webinar recording will be posted online shortly.

The EVC/Provost clarified that he is not restricting faculty members' ability to hire whom they need; this clarification was made in response to an earlier message to the campus from the administration that caused confusion about hiring restrictions. UC Irvine is currently drafting basic principles for the future ramp up of their campus research activities. The UC vice chancellors are working on the same type of document with regard to ramping up all campus operations, including instruction and on-campus living. VCORED Traina asked if UC Merced should begin drafting similar principles. Ramping up campus operations would occur in phases and would have to abide by rules and procedures established by public health and safety officials, county health regulations, and the governor's orders.

There is currently no broad scale testing of COVID-19 across the UC system, as personnel have to be CLIA-certified (The Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments regulate laboratory testing and require clinical laboratories to be certificated by their state as well as the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services before they can accept human samples for diagnostic testing). A UC Merced faculty member in molecular cell biology is working with UCSF to get certified for antibody testing and COVID-19 testing. A test is not considered valid without the CLIA certificate.

The members of the campus Committee on Research Computing are still working on their proposal to establish a COVID-19 Emergency Research Software and Cyberinfrastructure Support Fund. Systemwide is discussing various needs from graduate students (e.g. software licenses) in order for them to carry out their work.

IV. Systemwide Review Item

Proposed Revisions to Presidential Policy on Protection of Human Subjects in Research

This policy revises the current Protection of Human Subjects in Research policy, last updated in 1981, and describes the responsibilities of the University, its campuses and researchers, in protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects.

CoR members discussed the lead reviewers' comments. The committee generally supported the policy but pointed out several areas that could benefit from clarification.

Action: Committee analyst will distribute a draft memo to the committee for review and approval. CoR's final memo is due to the Senate Chair by 5:00 pm on Friday, April 24.

V. CoR Five-Year Plan

In a previous CoR meeting, Chair Scheibner asked committee members to consider whether CoR should draft a five-year plan in anticipation of receiving new proposals to establish ORUs, centers, and core facilities? What other items should be included in a five-year plan?

In addition to proposal for the establishment of ORUs, centers, and core facilities, Chair Scheibner suggested that the potential five-year plan also include a schedule of regular consultations with the chairs of CAPRA and GC, as well as the Chancellor and EVC/Provost. CoR has recently suggested the formation of a working group next academic year with CoR, SPO, and departmental research administrators to facilitate feedback between SPO and faculty on the grant submission process. Other campus stakeholders with which CoR could consult are EH&S, the University Librarian and/or the chair of LASC, and IT.

Action: This item will be further discussed at the next CoR meeting with the goal of drafting a plan before the end of spring semester to be used by next year's CoR members.

VI. Comments on Revised ORU policy

Prior to this meeting, CoR members reviewed the set of comments the committee received on the revised ORU policy from Senate committees, School Executive Committees, and ORU directors.

CoR Chair Scheibner briefly summarized the major comments. CAPRA again requested a cost structure for the establishment of ORUs and recommended that annual reporting be done every other year rather than annually. CAPRA also pointed out that the revised ORU policy does not take into account graduate programs.

Action: CoR members to send their input to the CoR chair on the comments received on the revised policy. The CoR chair will present the revised policy to Division Council on April 27.

VII. Ramping up UC research mission/operations

Chair Scheibner reiterated to CoR members that UCORP is holding discussions on the restarting of the campuses' research operations. A CoR member expressed concern about graduate student support. If faculty labs are not operational by fall 2020, faculty members will not be able to support the students on their extramural grants. The CoR member also asked how to help students who are graduating this term but are unable to take research positions as those positions are on hold due to the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic. VCORED Traina shared that Chancellors in the UC are working on a plan whereby UC graduate and undergraduate students are hired to conduct "exposure tracking" related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan is still developing.

The CoR chair inquired about hazard compensation for employees who will eventually return to campus. VCORED Traina emphasized that it is imperative for these employees to carry documentation that attests that their on-campus work is essential so they are compliant with rules established by local health officials.

VCORED Traina also stated that he is willing to hold another research webinar if faculty think it would be helpful.

Action: CoR members to send additional input on ramping up campus research operations to Chair Scheibner.

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

Attest: Michael Scheibner, CoR chair