

## Committee on Research (CoR)

### Minutes of Meeting May 13, 2020

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 1:00 pm on May 13, 2020 via Zoom. Chair Michael Scheibner presiding.

#### I. Consultation with AVC for Research Compliance & Integrity – *Debbie Motton*

In a previous meeting, CoR consulted with AVC Motton about the requirement for faculty to complete an indirect cost policy exception form. AVC Motton participated in today's meeting to update CoR members on the situation.

AVC Motton announced that UC Merced has received delegation approval from UCOP to approve Merced faculty indirect cost waivers, so the need for faculty to complete the form no longer exists in many cases. However, some sponsors may still require the use of the form so AVC Motton continues to work on an FAQ guideline for faculty. She will also add indirect cost waivers to the future training of departmental research administrators. VCORED Traina also pointed out that UCOP still has to approve indirect cost waivers for state agency grants. AVC Motton announced that a web designer has been working on SPO's website which will share similarities with UC Berkeley's SPO website.

AVC Motton informed CoR members that there will be complications if faculty are trying to hire international graduate students or research staff with extramural funds. Sponsors will have to approve the hiring. If faculty know they are hiring students or research staff this summer and fall, they are advised to speak with SPO and their sponsors as soon as possible. AVC Motton also pointed out that many sponsors like the NSF and NIH may consider such international hiring to be a foreign component/export control component of research and must be disclosed to the sponsors. She asked CoR members to share this information with their colleagues. VCORED Traina stated that this may affect about 60 UC Merced international students. Some embassies around the world have begun to reopen but the reopening has been sporadic and with no advanced notice. Students from certain countries, such as Iran, may not be allowed to come to the U.S. at all. Employees currently on existing visas may face significant delays in renewing their visas from the State Department. If faculty have personnel working in the U.S. on visas, faculty are strongly advised to tell their personnel to apply for their visa renewals as soon as possible.

#### II. Chair's Report – Michael Scheibner

##### A. Spring Meeting of the Division May 7

- i. The interim Chancellor and EVC/Provost updated faculty on summer and fall 2020 enrollment numbers which look positive. The number of Statements of Intent to Register are higher than this time last year.
- ii. The true extent of the state's budget deficits due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will not be known until July or August, given the postponement of the tax deadline. However, the UC should expect significant budget shortfalls.
- iii. The 2020 project is still on time and under budget.
- iv. Revisions to the Merced Division bylaws, including a proposal to establish the Admissions & Financial Aid subcommittee of UGC as a stand-alone committee, were passed by a quorum of Senate faculty participating in the meeting. A quorum of Senate faculty also voted to approve revisions to Professor Roger Bales' climate change resolution.
- v. The annual Senate awards were announced, as were next academic year's Senate Chair (Robin DeLugan, SSHA) and Vice Chair (LeRoy Westerling, SoE).

B. UCORP meeting May 11

UCOP members discussed the following:

- i. research updates related to the COVID-19 pandemic
- ii. UC's divestment from fossil fuels
- iii. Systemwide Senate leadership gave updates on the uncertain budget forecast
- iv. Standardized testing will be discussed at the May Regents meeting
- v. The responses from the UCEP survey to UC instructors will be released soon; preliminary results reflect that many instructors do not believe that remote instruction is conducive to student learning.
- vi. A climate task force will be established.
- vii. The name of UC Merced's next Chancellor will be announced after the May Regents meeting. The name of the next UC President is also forthcoming.
- viii. Associate Director of UCOP Research Policy Analysis and Coordination Lourdes DeMattos consulted with UCORP about restarting campus research activities. CoR Chair Scheibner suggested to UCORP that it may be useful to employ graduate students who have graduated or are ready to graduate in some capacity during the research ramp-up phase.

- ix. The UCOP research grants office announced that it has funded 85 COVID-19 pandemic-related grant proposals. Three of these are UC Merced faculty members. The MRPI call is progressing. The CARES act provided funding for graduate student fellowships. Some UC campuses are considering reopening on June 1. UC Davis has already begun to reopen while abiding by health and safety requirements (social distancing and low density).
- x. Consultation with the ANR task force.
- xi. Joint discussion with UCFW on the administrative burden on faculty members.
- xii. The reviews of two UC multi-research units (MRUs) - UC Observatories and the Bioengineering Institute of California - are completed and recommendations will be distributed.

C. Division Council meeting May 13

- i. The UC system is discussing temporary pay cuts versus furloughs as a “worst case scenario” only. The UC is hoping that other cost-saving measures it is taking will not require wage reductions. When the UC instituted furloughs in 2009, some faculty backfilled their salary from grants. That created inequities among faculty that did not have that option.
- ii. Academic Council at the systemwide level is asking the campuses for information on how their departments utilize diversity statements. This request arose from controversy at UC Davis when it was discovered that diversity statements were being used at that campus as a screening tool in faculty hiring rather than as a component of the overall applications. The Merced Senate office issued a survey to department chairs about the use of diversity statements. The Senate Committee for Diversity & Equity will review the results and consult with Division Council who will in turn provide information to Academic Council at the systemwide level.
- iii. UC President Napolitano’s recommendations on standardized testing contradicted the recommendations made by Academic Council. Many faculty view this as a serious circumvention of shared governance.
- iv. The Senate Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom (FWAF) issued a survey to Senate faculty regarding co-working space for faculty partners. The FWAF chair will draft a proposal based on the survey results for review by Division Council and the administration.
- v. Division Council held a lengthy discussion about the proposal to institute an RRR week. UGC will make a recommendation.

- vi. Division Council reviewed the draft charge for a proposed medical school advisory committee. Division Council will request additional information from Medical Director Thelma Hurd before providing its comments on the draft charge.
- vii. Due to time constraints, Division Council did not discuss CoR's comments on the proposed revisions to the Presidential Policy on the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Division Council will draft a memo based on CoR's comments and transmit to the systemwide Senate Chair.

### III. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda
- B. Draft April 29 meeting minutes

**Action:** The consent calendar was approved as presented.

### IV. Consultation with VCORED Traina

- A. Research activities update

VCORED Traina reiterated the above announcement that three UC Merced faculty members were awarded COVID-19-related grants from UCOP. UC Merced faculty also received CITRIS grants and seed grants from other sources for COVID-19 research. The research proposals span several disciplines including applied math modeling, biology, and behavioral health.

- B. Draft plan from Research Relaunch Work Group

The draft plan is appended to today's CoR agenda. VCORED Traina explained that UC Merced is adopting a similar framework to that of other UC campuses. The draft plan states that in this initial stage of high risk, the only research that will be allowed to be conducted on campus is research that can only be done on campus and not remotely. Research that can be done remotely will continue to be conducted remotely until sheltering restrictions are lifted. The draft plan recommends following the UCOP guidelines for acceptable density in research spaces which is one person per 250 square feet at any point in time. Research spaces on campus will be inventoried in order to establish an allowable occupancy rate for each space. Faculty PIs will be asked to work with their colleagues to formulate a work flow plan that states how combined research groups will work across a total number of hours in a "research day" in order to schedule research shifts of faculty, staff, students, and personnel. ("Research day" will be defined by faculty PIs.) The draft plans will be submitted to their department chairs and deans

for approval. Faculty PIs will then be responsible for managing and monitoring the plan. VCORED Traina stated that the Chancellor may ask ORED to have final approval of the plans. If this occurs, ORED's approval will be pro forma since lower levels of review will have already approved the plans.

VCORED Traina explained that the work group's draft plan allows faculty PIs to be flexible as long as they abide by density and other health and safety rules including face coverings and sanitization. Research groups will have to sanitize their own spaces. Campus custodians will still clean but not at the frequency required by many research groups. The campus will provide cleaning supplies and guidelines for their use. The other pending item to address is non-research common spaces in campus buildings. Foot traffic in these spaces may be restricted and contact tracing may be done in the case of outbreaks of the coronavirus.

The work group's draft plan was presented to various campus stakeholders including senior leadership and was generally accepted. Though the aspirational date of reopening campus research activities is June 1, the more realistic date is the second week of June, assuming no local outbreaks of the coronavirus. The reopening will proceed with the low density and safety procedures in place.

VCORED Traina stated that a formal recommendation on field research is forthcoming after he consults with other UCs. Also, he recognizes that human subject research cannot be done remotely. UCOP is currently working on this.

VCORED Traina mentioned that some of our campus core facilities have equipment that allows for remote work, but they require special software. He has requested an inventory and cost estimate of the core facilities. Once received, he will present to the campus Committee on Research Computing for discussion.

A CoR member asked if the campus has plans to help faculty adapt their research designs to new safety measures. For example, some study subjects have been supplied mobile devices to complete surveys. VCORED Traina agreed that the university should provide funds to faculty members for those costs. If faculty do have to pay for these items, the campus will apply to FEMA for reimbursement of those expenditures. Faculty PIs are therefore asked to carefully track these expenditures.

VCORED Traina also mentioned the faculty (e.g. humanities) who require the use of the Library or libraries in their campus offices in order to conduct their research. That work would be considered necessary on-campus research. Reopening the Library safely has not yet been worked out. Another example of necessary on-campus research is art studio space for humanities faculty.

VCORED Traina also informed CoR members that UC Merced is working with UCSF to conduct testing of COVID-19 on the Merced campus.

V. Software Needs to Facilitate Remote Return to Research/Teaching

This discussion on software needs during “stay-away-if-possible” phases of campus ramp up was initiated by a member of UCORP with regard to those graduate students doing experimental, on campus research. UCORP is compiling a list of software packages to be considered for UC-wide licensing.

**Action:** CoR Chair Scheibner asked CoR members to review the items on the list that is appended to the agenda and send him their input by tomorrow, Thursday, May 14. Chair Scheibner will provide the feedback to UCORP.

VI. Systemwide Review Item

Systemwide Review of Proposed Presidential Policy on Native American Cultural Affiliation and Repatriation (Policy version 3)

The policy pertains to the treatment and repatriation of Native American and Native Hawaiian human remains and cultural items under the University’s stewardship and the University’s compliance with the federal Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), its accompanying regulations, and the California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA).

This policy underwent a second revision in fall 2019. CoR provided comments on policy version 2 at that time.

CoR members had no comments on the latest set of proposed revisions to the policy.

**Action:** The committee analyst will inform the Senate Chair that CoR declines to opine.

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

Attest: Michael Scheibner, CoR chair