COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
Minutes of Meeting
Friday, June 26, 2020
3:00 – 4:00 pm - Zoom

I.   Update from Interim VCORED Zatz
       Interim VCORED Zatz presented a set of slides to update CoR members on the reorganization of the
       Sponsored Projects Office and the future of the pre-award process.

       VPDGE Zatz suggested several goals:
       - Create a structure that facilitates three times the research expenditures in 10-15 years.
       - Make it easier for faculty to submit, receive, and manage extramural funding of their
         research
       - Connect faculty to enable them to pursue new projects, including larger grants
       - Position UC Merced to receive large center grants from major funders, such as NSF
         Engineering and Science & Tech Research Centers

       VPDGE Zatz stated that she has been holding discussions with faculty in all three Schools on how to
       execute the above goals. Some suggested steps are: holding individualized searches for grant
       opportunities, establishing a tracking system from pre-proposal through post-award issues,
       centralizing the pre-award process across the Schools, and holding more faculty workshops.

       A CoR member asked for clarification on the proposed faculty liaison positions for the pre-award and
       post-award processes. Interim VCORED Zatz explained that these liaisons will be tasked with
       assisting faculty members with internal processes and will not be specialized according to funding
       agency. She added that while it is desirable for these new staff positions to be physically located
       near faculty members, the staff members will work remotely during the pandemic and possibly even
       after the campus fully reopens. She stated that she will fund these new staff FTE lines out of her
       share of the campus indirect cost return. Her top priority is recruiting staff for pre-award support
       roles as this is the most critical faculty need.

II.   COVID-19 Impacts on Research – *Chair Scheibner*

       Prior to this meeting, Chair Scheibner distributed to CoR members a draft document that outlines
       the need for the university to provide additional research funds and other measures that would help
       the campus research enterprise re-emerge from the pandemic crisis.

       Faculty are facing the following challenges:
       - Depletion of research funds to ensure continued employment for students, postdoc and/or
         staff during shut-down

- Reduction and redirection of research funding
- Access restrictions to research facilities, labs and offices (on-campus and off)
- Research training (mainly for graduate students)
- Inequity of measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19

The document drafted by Chair Scheibner includes recommendations for mitigating the aforementioned challenges. The main recommendation for the campus is to establish additional funding streams. One way to accomplish this is through lobbying for federal and state programs that provide research funds to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the research productivity and careers of researchers. One such initiative is the Research Investment to Secure the Economy (RISE) Act, which was introduced on June 26th by a bipartisan group of US Representatives. Another funding stream is the Senate faculty grants program for which Chair Scheibner is requesting an increase to at least $1,000 per Senate faculty member. Finally, the document recommends that the campus provide special hardship funds to those who have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, as well as bridge funding.

Chair Scheibner pointed out that many faculty are not set up to conduct remotely research, such as experimentalists and some computational faculty who rely on specialized, on-campus equipment. He stated that the campus Committee on Research Computing submitted a proposal to the administration in March. Chair Scheibner also shared that graduate students across the UC are discussing software packages and other research tools that faculty require to work remotely.

A CoR member stated that faculty who work on the UC Merced Cluster would benefit from additional IT support. She added that more guidance is needed for faculty on remote teaching, and more training for student researchers who have had to shift to a remote work setting.

A CoR member asked if the campus would reimburse faculty if they have to purchase equipment to enable them to teach courses remotely, for example, a tablet on which they can conduct a white board or white board equivalent presentation. Another CoR member recommended he speak to the curriculum staff in his school, as such purchases should be made with the existing course fund. A CoR member inquired whether faculty would request a one-time increase to their incidental funds to make necessary purchases. Interim VCORED Zatz suggested that faculty contact SNS Dean Dumont who is chairing an instructional implementation committee.

Chair Scheibner stated that he intends to use his draft document as the basis for a future memo to the administration, via Division Council. He suggested that next year's CoR membership should follow up.

III.   Update on CoR Chair's meeting with APAPB Schnier – *Chair Scheibner*
       Chair Scheibner held a discussion with APAPB Kurt Schnier on the request for an increase of the
       funds to the Senate faculty grants program/research enhancement proposal. Chair Scheibner
       emailed the Senate Chair and Senate Vice Chair about this and is awaiting their response. The
       immediate goal is to increase the funding to the Senate faculty grants program to at least $1,000 per

Senate faculty member. Chair Scheibner stated that he hopes that if approved, this funding increase would be implemented in time for the AY 20-21 grant cycle.

Action: CoR members to send any input to Chair Scheibner by next week. Chair Scheibner will draft a memo for CoR's approval that will be submitted to Division Council. Ultimately, the memo will be transmitted to the administration.

IV.   Research Relaunch
Interim VCORED Zatz announced that due to the departure of the campus fire chief, the reopening of the campus research buildings was slightly delayed. The county fire marshal is currently overseeing the reopening process. SE 1 will open next week, followed by SE 2, and then the remaining research buildings. It is imperative for the campus to abide by health and safety protocols to avoid an outbreak of the coronavirus. If such an outbreak occurs, the local health facilities would be overwhelmed. She stated that occupancy maps are already available so faculty should be submitting their research plans. Interim VCORED Zatz and all three School deans are currently reviewing their faculty's plans. All plans should have already undergone a thorough review by department chairs.

V.   Chair's Report
A. UCORP meeting June 8
Chair Scheibner updated CoR members on the main topics of discussion from the recent UCORP meeting: 1) graduate students are preparing a communication regarding software, 2) discussion about how inventions will be recognized in faculty advancement and promotion, and 3) all campuses have issued guidance to their faculty about additional clock stoppages due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and UCORP will follow suit.
B. Division Council meetings
The main topics of discussion at the recent Division Council meetings were the anti-black discrimination petition and UC policing practices.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.
Attest: Michael Scheibner, CoR Chair