

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
September 13, 2021

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 2:30 – 4:00 pm on September 13, 2021 via Zoom. Chair Jason Sexton presiding.

- I. Chair's Report – *Chair Sexton*
 - A. Chair Sexton welcomed all members and asked members to introduce themselves.
 - B. Guides to Committee Membership and Executive Session. Chair Sexton encouraged CoR members to review this guide.
 - C. CoR AY 21-22 goals
 - i. Developing a policy on establishment of Centers.
 - ii. Continuing advocacy for research infrastructure, i.e. research buildings and chemical storage.
 - iii. Advocating for increased lab safety and increased efficiency and effectiveness in safety compliance. Reviewing University safety procedures and execution of policy in light of a recent accident and subsequent shutdown.

CoR Chair Sexton shared with CoR members that he met with Senate Chair Westerling and Interim VCORED Zatz on September 2, 2021. It was agreed that Chair Sexton and VCORED Zatz will draft a charge for an advisory committee on lab safety. CoR will review and approve the charge. The draft charge will then be transmitted to Divisional Council for endorsement.
 - iv. Advocating for improved procurement procedures.
 - v. Advocating for improved grant administration.
 - vi. Continue to work with and provide feedback to SPO.

Action: invite a representative from SPO to a future CoR meeting.
 - vii. Continued advocacy for additional funding for instrumentation and the annual Senate faculty grants program. If funds allow, then CoR will also advocate for more funding for conceptualization grants but CoR does suggest waiting one year to see if funds allocated by the Interim VCORED in AY 20-21 were well spent. Should CoR draft a memo to the administration to report on the use of increased funds and interest in more of these funds going forward?
 - v. Continued advocacy for ORUs, specifically a) letting ORUs assist faculty with grant submissions so that faculty have another option besides SPO and b) ORUs receiving more indirect costs.

CoR held a brief discussion about goal V. This goal is not meant to presuppose that ORUs are the superior choice for grant submissions over

SPO. Indeed, a few CoR members agreed that SPO has improved lately. CoR members agreed to revise the wording of this goal to: “Continued review of ORU and SPO’s functions with regard to grant submission”.

D. Campus and systemwide review items. Reviewers will be assigned alphabetically by last name. Adjustments will be made for any conflicts of interest as well as members’ expertise and interest in particular review items.

E. Senate/Administration Governance Retreat.

The major topics included COVID-19 updates, student housing issues, lab safety, enrollment growth (the campus is short of the target, but there is cause for optimism), and UCM’s new MOU with UCOP which will allocate more funding for UCM.

F. Divisional Council meeting September 2

A major item of discussion was procurement challenges and the negative impact on faculty research. The EVC/Provost indicated that memos from the Senate will help him effect change in this area.

II. Consent Calendar

A. Today’s agenda

Action: The Consent Calendar was approved with one revision: the re-wording of committee goal V to read: “Continued review of ORU and SPO’s functions with regard to grant submission”.

III. Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC)

A representative from CoR is requested to serve on PROC in AY 21-22.

Action: Committee member Ramirez volunteered to serve on PROC. The Senate Office will inform PROC staff.

IV. Policy on the Establishment, Disestablishment, and Review of Centers – *Chair Sexton*

Background: in AY 2014-2015, the then EVC/Provost drafted a policy on the establishment of Centers. The draft policy was reviewed by the Senate and comments were transmitted to the EVC/Provost. No action was taken.

On August 24, 2021, the CoR Chair met with Interim VCORED Zatz and Assistant EVC/Provost Martin where it was agreed that CoR would form a subcommittee of members to revise the draft 2014 policy. This subcommittee would include Interim VCORED Zatz and Assistant EVC/Provost Martin. Once drafted, the policy will be

transmitted to the administration for review. CoR will take into account their feedback and a revised policy will be transmitted to Division Council for review. The policy will ultimately be issued for campus wide review and comments. This process should be concluded by the end of the fall 2021 semester.

CoR was requested to select three members to serve on the Centers Policy Subcommittee.

Action: CoR Chair Sexton and members LeVeck and Baykara will serve on the Centers Policy Subcommittee with Interim VCORED Zatz and Assistant EVC/Provost Martin. Member LeVeck disclosed a possible conflict of interest. The committee agreed to revisit this possible conflict at a later time. If it is agreed that a conflict of interest exists, member LeVeck will be replaced on the subcommittee.

V. Conflict of Interest Policy – *Chair Sexton*

CoR's conflict of interest policy is located here. Each Senate committee is asked to review their policy and determine if revisions are necessary.

Action: CoR to review the conflict of interest policy and make any suggested edits.

VI. Campus Research Issues – *Chair Sexton*

On August 26, 2021, CoR Chair Sexton met with Senate leadership to discuss CoR's potential role in addressing current campus research impact issues such as difficulties with procurement, research grant administration, and research resource access.

Senate leadership suggested that CoR draft a memo (with input from the Senate Chair if requested) to the administration that articulates the major issues with the campus research enterprise, namely, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, and lack of responsiveness. The Senate Chair also suggested that the memo could be co-signed by the chairs of the Senate Committee on Faculty Welfare & Academic Freedom (FWAF) and Graduate Council (GC). The memo should be transmitted to Divisional Council for its endorsement before ultimately being transmitted to the EVC/Provost. If it would help, the EVC/Provost's office could, as a first step, conduct a faculty survey on the impacts of the campus research enterprise difficulties on faculty research.

CoR members held a lengthy discussion on this topic. CoR Chair Sexton suggested that a faculty survey, if necessary, could be done in a later phase, but the first step should be the drafting of a memo to the administration which could be co-signed by the chairs of Graduate Council (GC) and the Committee on Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom (FWAF).

CoR members agreed that the memo should emphasize the main problems which are challenges with Oracle and an insufficient level of procurement staffing. A CoR member pointed out that the state's investment in the UC system has waned over the years and wondered how the staffing level could be addressed when the campus is heavily impacted by such external constraints. He also suggested that CoR could ask the administration to establish a critical research infrastructure core facility whose main function would be to address the decaying campus research infrastructure and to transition instruments, thereby helping more faculty with fewer resources. CoR members agreed with this idea but mentioned that the memo should also highlight the more immediate problems of procurement, reimbursements, and faculty access to research buildings.

A CoR member suggested that the procurement system should include an automatic disclosure of response time for a request, similar to the current IT system which lends an element of accountability. He added that CoR's memo should include a question of whether sufficient faculty feedback was sought before the campus implemented the current purchasing system.

Another CoR member requested that the memo highlight the confusion around post-award management such as a lack of transparency of grant balances. A CoR member suggested that the campus program a faculty/staff/student-facing interface to Oracle that is easier to work with. Another CoR member raised the issue of inexperienced staff and a lack of understanding of how to support faculty research.

The committee analyst informed members that Interim CFO Schnier will attend the next CoR meeting to consult on procurement issues. CoR members agreed that a draft memo should be completed prior to this consultation. CoR Chair Sexton suggested that two members of the committee take the lead in drafting the memo.

Action: CoR Chair Sexton and Vice Chair Ye will take the lead in drafting the memo. The draft memo will be added to the September 27 CoR agenda for the committee's review.

VII. Informational Items – no discussion

A. Systemwide Senate guidelines for Fall re-opening

The guidelines were sent to the UC Chancellors in May. They were drafted by Academic Council and endorsed by President Drake.

B. UC Merced's Audit Report No. M21A001- Laboratory Safety Compliance Internal Audit and EVC/Provost's memo.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:55 pm.

Attest: Jason Sexton, CoR Chair