

**Committee on Research (CoR)**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**September 28, 2020**

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 10:00 – 11:30 am on September 28, 2020 via Zoom. Chair Kara McCloskey presiding.

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

AVC Motton attended today's CoR meeting to provide updates on contracts and grants and the centralization of School personnel into the Office of Research & Economic Development (ORED).

AVC Motton stated that the restructuring of the Sponsored Projects Office began in 2018 under former VCORED Sam Traina. Faculty's needs related to contracts and grants were not being met and the campus was not complying with federal grant requirements. Assigned tasks as well as training of staff was all done on an ad hoc basis, and there was no back up system if staff were on leave or away from the office. Recognizing these challenges, the former Chancellor provided funding to former VCORED Traina to hire consultants to begin the process of reorganizing the pre-and-post award functions.

The office has now been reorganized into a more directed, group-based model with additional staff. AVC Motton stated that ORED was able to make a compelling argument to the administration for additional staff positions given that a robust SPO is critical for the campus to reach R1 status. The centralization of research administration staff under ORED facilitates consistent training of all the staff, to develop expertise, and to create a back up work system if any staff are away from the office. In addition, due to the campus's impending implementation of a new financial system (Alpha Financials) early in 2021, the contracts and grants accounting function has been moved out of ORED and into the Division of Finance Administration (DFA).

AVC Motton pointed out that staffing will continue to be an issue. ORED currently has just two staff dedicated to managing the campus's entire human subjects research portfolio and there are hundreds of these protocols to manage. Last year's CoR proposed the empaneling of a working group of CoR members, SPO staff, and research administrators in order to facilitate faculty feedback on the pre-and-post award process. AVC Motton confirmed that SPO is in support of establishing the working group.

CoR members shared with AVC Motton that they have received emails from the campus regarding unpaid bills on old grants that have expired. Interim VCORED Zatz explained that when she and AVC Motton began the restructuring of the contracts and grants process, they discovered several open accounts and vendors that were still unpaid. It is taking time to clean up these old accounts. In some cases, they have had to ask the

faculty PIs for assistance. Interim VCORED Zatz requested that faculty contact ORED, specifically AVC Motton, if they receive emails they do not understand. AVC Motton will forward to the appropriate staff member in ORED who will resolve the issues.

A CoR member inquired about current grant expenses. Interim VCORED reiterated that those expenses are managed by the DFA. However, faculty are encouraged to contact ORED if they have any concerns.

AVC Motton pointed out that SPO publishes their process times on their website. Faculty and graduate students are encouraged to take note of those times and start as early as they can with grant submissions.

**Action:** the committee analyst will follow up with AVC Motton and Interim VCORED Zatz on the formation of the CoR/SPO/research administrators working group.

## II. Chair's Report – *Kara McCloskey*

### A. Updates from September 25 Divisional Council meeting

The main items of discussion were: potential extension to the emergency educational continuity policy with regard to spring instruction, proposed revisions to the GE program concerning Spark seminars and badges, the Valuing Black Lives task force, and the Chancellor and EVC/Provost's recent email announcement to the campus about medical education and a new degree program (the Senate was not consulted on the new degree program; per the Standing Order of the Regents, faculty have authority over curriculum).

### B. In the last CoR meeting, CoR members and Interim VCORED Zatz briefly discussed the idea of a survey to ascertain faculty needs with regards to core facilities.

It was proposed that CoR members would draft the survey questions and ORED staff would then create, launch, and distribute the survey to faculty. Survey results would be shared with CoR and Divisional Council. Interim VCORED Zatz agreed. Prior to this meeting, CoR Chair McCloskey drafted a set of survey questions which were distributed to committee members.

CoR members recommended having separate questions regarding instrumentation and instrumentation staff and adding a question about whether faculty's needs can be obtained through instrumentation grants or other grants.

**Action:** the committee analyst will distribute the updated survey questions to CoR members for additional review. The updated set of questions will be included on the next CoR meeting agenda. Once approved, the questions will be transmitted to Interim VCORED Zatz for ORED staff to create, launch, and distribute the survey to faculty.

### III. Consultation with Interim VCORED Zatz

- A. Interim VCORED Zatz requested that a few members from CoR participate in reviewing limited submissions for instrumentation. These submissions come in four times each year—twice for NSF and twice for DoD. Rather than having faculty from the campus serve as ad hoc reviewers as is now the case, Interim VCORED Zatz proposes to form a committee comprised of some CoR members and some members of faculty advisory groups to the core facilities. She anticipates approximately 20 proposals per year with the proposals being about 1-2 page each. Interim VCORED Zatz stated that having this broad representation on the limited submission proposals committee would help her better understand which proposals will be of greatest use to a number of faculty.

**Action:** the committee analyst and chair will follow up with Interim VCORED Zatz on this request.

- B. Fully reporting research expenditures. Interim VCORED Zatz explained that she is examining how the research expenditures get coded in the general ledger and reported to UCOP, NSF, and Carnegie in an effort to ensure that the campus is fully reporting. This is important for reaching R1 status, since one of the factors is research expenditures per faculty.
- C. UC-Cyber Risk Working Group. This systemwide committee, that was established in response to the previous data breaches at another UC campus, will make recommendations to UC President Drake in November. Interim VCORED Zatz serves on the committee as does UCM Professor Lisa Yeo. If CoR members have interest in serving on any of this committee's workstreams, they are encouraged to contact Interim VCORED Zatz. Zatz will also update CoR members on the committee's business.

A CoR member asked Interim VCORED Zatz the best way to convey to colleagues the importance of the campus reaching R1 status. Interim VCORED Zatz explained that reaching R1 status opens up opportunities for faculty and students. For example, there are foundations who give sizeable fellowships to graduate students if their campuses are R1 institutions and if their programs are on certain rankings lists. UC Merced is not yet eligible for these opportunities. Also, UC Merced should start becoming the lead on more subawards.

### IV. Consent Calendar

- A. Today's agenda

B. September 14 draft meeting minutes

**Action:** due to time constraints, the committee analyst will ask CoR members to approve the Consent Calendar via email.

V. Campus Review Item

Proposal for change of name of academic department: from “Chemistry and Chemical Biology” to “Chemistry and Biochemistry”.

**Action:** due to time constraints, the committee analyst will solicit a lead reviewer via email. The lead reviewer’s comments will be discussed at the October 19 meeting. CoR’s final comments are due to the Senate Chair by 5:00 pm on Thursday, October 29.

VI. Consultation with Lead Author of ORU Proposal – *Professor Ed Flores*  
UC Merced Community and Labor Center

A proposal was submitted in April 2020 by a group of faculty in SSHA to establish the UC Merced Community and Labor Center as an ORU. Prior to this meeting, CoR identified two lead reviewers who are reviewing this proposal.

Professor Flores conducted a slide presentation that summarized the main points of the ORU proposal and the types of activities and research he and his group are engaged in.

CoR members then asked Professor Flores general questions about the research the future ORU will conduct. Professor Flores shared that he is in discussions with SNRI about being a part of a large coalition to apply for \$2 million in climate project grants. If received, these funds would benefit faculty in all three Schools and a variety of disciplines. When asked by a CoR member what is needed for the future ORU to be successful, Professor Flores replied that he hopes the campus approves his ORU proposal, as that would enable the faculty in the ORU to receive state funds. The faculty work with several partner organizations such as organized labor who would all stand to benefit.

Professor Flores also stated that he wishes to establish an internal structure that would involve staff and non-Senate faculty dedicating time to doing research and carrying out the ORU’s functions. They plan to support research and policy efforts in the Valley through a variety of activities including holding regular colloquia with external advocates, training students in civic engagement, and providing student internship opportunities with community organizations.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.

Attest: Kara McCloskey, CoR chair