

Committee on Research (CoR)
Minutes of Meeting
September 7, 2022

Pursuant to call, the Committee on Research met at 9:30 am on September 7 via Zoom. Chair Jason Sexton presiding.

I. Chair's Report – *Chair Sexton*

A. Welcome and introductions

Chair Sexton welcomed the members and asked them to introduce themselves.

A few members stated that their research capacity is the same or worse than last year. One member in particular recently had an issue with ID management. CoR members also discussed the need for civility between staff, faculty, and administrators.

i. CoR AY 22-23 roster

ii. CoR bylaws

B. Guides to Committee Membership and Executive Session

C. CoR AY 22-23 priorities

i. Continuing work to adapt research processes to Oracle financial system

ii. Continuing advocacy for research infrastructure -responding to concerns of facility access and function

iii. Continue to work with and provide feedback to SPO

iv. Continued advocacy for additional funding for instrumentation and the annual Senate faculty grants program

v. Following through with senate research and professional development allocations from MacKenzie Scott Gift

vi. Continuing review and assistance with campus safety policy

vii. General identification of campus research barriers and opportunities and promotion of solutions

D. Campus and systemwide review items. Reviewers will be assigned alphabetically by last name.

E. Divisional Council meeting September 6

DivCo members discussed the annual shared governance retreat that was held in August. Some members expressed concern that too much time was spent on the administration's priorities. DivCo members agreed that for next year's shared governance retreat, Senate committee chairs should be given equal time to discuss their priorities.

II. Consultation with School of Natural Sciences Faculty

Guests: Professors Stefanie Woo, Stefan Materna, Michele Nishiguchi, and Chris Amemiya

A. Zebrafish facility operations issues at UCM

Informational: <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/statement-uc-davis-grieves-loss-fish>

B. Campus research infrastructure concerns

Professor Woo discussed the problems she and her colleagues experienced with their animals that were caused by the water quality. She also summarized the UC Davis incident (see above link) in which thousands of animals were lost due to chlorine levels. Professor Woo emphasized the need for better communication between researchers and animal staff and the importance of creating a partnership. Water quality must be monitored constantly, and the situation would be mitigated by the hiring of either dedicated aquatic staff or staff with aquatic experience. Currently, the existing staff are stretched too thin and have to help with all types of animals. The staff member assigned to the zebrafish facilities is only in that role temporarily.

Interim VCORED Zatz pointed out that she included several new positions in her budget request but was only given one new staff FTE line. She added that if Professor Woo is requesting a reshaping of an existing staff FTE line, that could be arranged in a timely manner. However, if a new staff FTE line is needed, it would benefit Professor Woo to collaborate with others across campus to make this request. Interim VCORED Zatz also recommended that Professor Woo hold a meeting with the campus veterinarian and the incoming vivarium director.

Chair Sexton welcomed Professor Woo to keep CoR updated on new developments.

III. Consent Calendar

A. Today's agenda

B. CoR's Conflict of Interest Policy

Action: Today's agenda was approved as presented. The conflict of interest policy will be added to the next CoR agenda. Committee members will be asked to review the policy in advance of the meeting and either suggest any edits or be prepared to endorse the policy as currently written.

IV. Consultation with Interim VCORED Marjorie Zatz

A. Transition to new VCR

Interim VCORED Zatz announced that the new VCORED will begin in October. She plans to help them transition before becoming Special Assistant to the Chancellor.

B. UCOP climate funds

Interim VCORED Zatz informed CoR members that a webinar will be scheduled (date TBD) for all faculty about the RFP to apply for these funds. The webinar will be recorded for those who cannot attend. The funds will be awarded in the spring. It is anticipated that proposals will be medium to large and will focus on seed grants and matching grants. Proposals can be from one campus or involve multiple campuses. The areas of interest will be climate justice, social justice and the effects of climate change on populations. The Chancellor is working on a plan for the funds that are coming to UC Merced. Faculty will be invited to provide input.

C. UC ARCHES hydrogen hubs

The UC is submitting a proposal and two UC Regents are already working on it. The initiative is being led by UCOP. UC Merced's lead is Professor Abel Chuang. An information session will be held this Friday, September 9 for faculty members who conduct this particular type of research. On September 19, an open meeting for all faculty will be held on campus.

D. First Annual Lab Safety Day Sept. 29

E. BSP update – remaining chemists and most biologists moving in soon

Interim VCORED Zatz stated that these chemists and biologists are being invited to BSP meetings. A CoR member pointed out that bioengineers also moved in to BSP, but they have not been invited to these meetings. Interim VCORED Zatz responded that she will ensure they get placed on the invitation list.

F. UC Alianza - research, teaching, and student exchange opportunities with Mexican universities

UC Alianza is very proactive about increasing research collaborations and team-taught courses. Interim VCORED Zatz and a few UC Merced faculty members met with them about research in climate and migration and doing hybrid team-taught courses.

G. New Tableau tool to view proposals and awards by PI coming soon

The tool is almost finished. Once completed, users will be able to search proposals by PI, department, School, and other categories. However, sorting by co-PIs will not be possible. Co-PIs and PIs are all contained in one field.

H. Joint Senate-Administration Research Safety Advisory Committee

Action: due to time constraints, Interim VCORED Zatz will discuss the Research Safety Advisory Committee at the next CoR meeting.

A CoR member raised an issue with the RSS website. When faculty post updated SOPs, the software does not update the chemicals accordingly. Interim VCORED Zatz replied that she will pass that issue on to EH&S.

V. Consultation with ORED

Guests: Jue Sun, Executive Director of Research Administration; and Fernando Alvarez, Assistant Director of Research Administration

Prior to this meeting, the SPO representatives provided background documents for CoR which were also hyperlinked on today's agenda.

A. Grant management and Oracle issues

CoR members thanked Executive Director Sun for the background documents. However, legacy data is still a significant problem. There are many inaccuracies, and a lot of information was lost. Faculty still do not have reliable reports. Executive Director Sun replied that SPO does monthly reporting to PIs and the RAs spend a lot of time verifying data.

A CoR member inquired about a long-term IT strategy to improve research infrastructure, specifically, whether the campus has programmers who can address to data needs. Executive Director Sun replied that those are issues for Project Portfolio Financial Management. The RAs were not involved in the implementation of Oracle and are suffering the consequences with other campus constituents.

The SPO representatives and CoR members pointed out that Oracle Advisory Committee meetings mostly consist of reports from the administration rather than problem-solving. The biggest concerns are data, and the lack of coordination across campus stakeholders. Various departments are proceeding in different ways to maximize their own efficiency but there is no communication between them. A CoR member added that the advisory committee lacks a faculty co-chair and committee members are not asked for input on the agendas.

Action: The committee analyst will invite Interim VC Schnier to a CoR meeting to discuss the issues with the Oracle Advisory Committee.

VI. Periodic Review Oversight Committee (PROC)

A representative from CoR is requested to serve on PROC in AY 22-23

A representative was not identified in the meeting.

Action: The committee analyst will follow up via email to identify a volunteer to serve on PROC.

VII. Campus Review Item

A. Interim Procedure on Assurance of Laboratory Safety Compliance

A lead reviewer was identified.

Action: The lead reviewer's comments will be discussed at the September 21 meeting. CoR's comments are due to the Senate Chair by Monday, October 3.

VIII. Systemwide Review Item

A. Second Systemwide Review of Draft Presidential Policy -- Abusive Conduct in the Workplace

A lead reviewer was identified.

Action: The lead reviewer's comments will be discussed at the September 21 meeting. CoR's comments are due to the Senate Chair by Friday, September 30.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Attest: Jason Sexton, CoR Chair