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COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
ANNUAL REPORT
AY 2016-2017

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<u>To the Merced Division of the Academic Senate:</u>

The Committee on Research (COR) held a total of 16 regularly scheduled in-person meetings in order to conduct business with respect to its duties as outlined in UC Merced's Academic Senate Bylaw II.III.7. Some additional business was completed via electronic mail discussions.

Areas of Focus

Administering the Academic Senate Annual Faculty Research Grants Program

One of the main responsibilities of COR is administering the faculty research grants program, and it is a task that requires a great deal of attention and effort. The Committee devoted a portion of several meetings this year to discussing ways to improve the program and the processes leading to the competitive assignment of awards. As in the previous year, $175,000 was made available for the program.

In keeping with previous years' practice, COR members agreed to employ a two-step process whereby, school executive committees conduct a quality assessment review of the proposals and then submit their top-ranked proposals to COR for final review and selection of awardees. COR members debated throughout the year whether the school executive committees should be provided with a reviewing guidance template or other means of instruction for their review. However, the COR membership ultimately decided not to include any further guidance beyond what is explicitly stated in the call for proposals.

Thirty-three proposals were received and COR elected to fund twenty-six. All funds allocated to this program were distributed as awards.

Survey of Faculty Concerning Staff Support for Extramural Funding Efforts

During AY 2015-2017, COR identified a gap between the grant functions supported centrally from Research Development Services (RDS) and what support was provided by the schools. In AY 2016-2017, there were substantial changes in staff support from

RDS, and school staff were given more substantial roles in supporting faculty in the pursuit and use of extramural research funding. Also, a major workforce planning effort was underway, focused on how staff resources, including those dealing with extramural research funding, were to be allocated in the immediate future. In hopes of providing faculty input into these staff reorganization processes, the COR membership agreed to construct and issue a survey to all Academic Senate faculty concerning the support that they have received on topics related to research grant preparation and award administration. The results of this survey were specifically intended to help inform the Research Excellence and Academic Distinction workgroup, one of three work groups created by the Chancellor to address campus workforce planning. This work group was tasked, among other duties, with considering support staff for faculty academic and research activities.

One COR member was tasked, on behalf of the Committee, with analyzing the survey results and presenting them in a summary form for review and approval by the Committee. The report was shared with ex-officio member Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development (VC-ORED) Sam Traina, who was also a member of the Research Excellence and Academic Distinction workgroup. The survey summary and data report were transmitted to Division Council with a request to endorse the subsequent transmission of the survey results to the Academic Senate faculty, Chancellor, Provost/EVC, and the workforce planning workgroups. The survey provided a wealth of quantitative and qualitative data on the experience of the faculty with extramural funding staff, and this information was distributed, as requested.

Formal Review of the Sierra Nevada Research Institute (SNRI)

Since the Academic Senate approved the policies drafted by the AY 2013-2014 COR membership on the establishment and review of research units, COR focused on beginning the implementation of review policies during AY 2014-2015. The SNRI, the campus's first organized research unit (ORU), was scheduled for a five-year review at that time, so COR began to collaborate with VC-ORED Traina to launch this review, with the goal of evaluating SNRI's research contribution to the campus. While the review process was clarified by early planning, the actual review of SNRI was postponed until AY 2015-2016 and the process was not completed until AY 2016-2017.

COR worked closely with VC-ORED Traina on launching the review of SNRI. COR's responsibility in this process was to review the SNRI's self-study, as provided by VC-ORED Traina. The Academic Senate Committee on Committees was tasked with populating part of the review team by identifying the UCM representatives; VC-ORED Traina was responsible for identifying one non-UCM member.

In May 2017, at the conclusion of the SNRI site visit, VC-ORED Traina emailed the review team's report to the COR Chair, indicating that COR could review it at the beginning of AY 2017-2018. SNRI would be allowed some time to formally respond to the report.

ORU Proposal Process

COR received a proposal from a current Center on campus to re-stablish themselves as an ORU. There were an array of issues surrounding this proposal, including complexities surrounding the initiation of the review process by the Dean of the relevant school. The Center requested that the Senate provide advice concerning how to move forward. COR discovered that there was no systemwide guidance on this matter. Moreover, there is just a single paragraph in the current policy document regarding what a proposal document must contain, though systemwide policy provides more detailed requirements for ORU proposals. The proposal for the Center was found to be out of compliance with this systemwide policy. COR opted to postpone review of the proposal until the missing items are provided. In Spring 2017, the COR Chair submitted a memo to the ORU lead author in order to communicate systemwide policy requirements, which were not referenced in campus procedure documents, as well as to make observations concerning areas where the proposal could be improved. The Committee noted that the currently published UCM policy document will need to be revised to clearly communicate systemwide requirements for proposals to establish a new ORU.

At the time of this writing (July 2017), the Periodic Review Oversight Committee recommended to the Center that it undergo external review. The Center and the school Dean agreed with this recommendation. In AY 2017-2018, both COR and the VC-ORED will be engaged in this review process.

Senate Awards for Distinguished and Early Career Research

COR is responsible for the review of nominations for the annual Academic Senate awards for Distinguished Research (tenured) and Distinguished Early Career Research (untenured). In order to execute this duty, COR formed two subcommittees, and these subcommittees each selected one nominated individual for receipt of one of the two awards. The awardees were recognized at the April 2017 Meeting of the Division.

2020 Project

As the Academic Senate committee charged with attending to matters pertaining to the research mission of the university, COR kept abreast of the campus's 2020 Project, particularly with regard to the construction of buildings intended to support research. This activity involved participating in and/or tracking the array of meetings intended to update the faculty on the progress of the new buildings.

In Fall 2016, a COR member attended a three-day review of "Building 2A" to review modifications that were being made to the building design to minimize negative effects on research facilities. The COR member related to the Committee that faculty expressed concern in these meetings about access control to laboratories and equipment, as well as emergency power and related topics. These issues were identified as requiring careful attention when renderings of the new spaces were to be made available at future meetings.

COR members were also kept informed about classroom space layout in the new buildings. It was noted that the aspect ratio of some currently available classrooms introduces significant challenges, and these sometimes translate into negative student evaluations. In addition, COR was particularly interested in the Technology Enabled Active Learning (TEAL) rooms; two additional such rooms are planned for the 2020 Project, with one being divided to produce a 45 student capacity, more closely matching current class sizes.

Purchasing Issues and Effects on Research

During the academic year, COR members discussed the systematic problems in the workflow governing purchasing, grant accounting, and central budgeting. These issues were concurrently discussed in the meetings of one of the campus workforce planning

workgroups, convened by the Chancellor. COR members suggested that the workforce planning workgroups may benefit from input by COR on identifying faculty pain points surrounding purchasing and grant accounting, as well as from general Academic Senate consultation on how a future workflow system would interface with systems currently in place by schools and other offices.

At the end of the Spring semester, COR members agreed to invite the newly-hired Chief Procurement Officer to a future COR meeting, hoping that he would be able to inform the ongoing Committee discussion about challenges faculty face with regard to purchasing. COR looks forward to consulting with him at the beginning of AY 2017-2018.

Composite Benefit Rates

In Spring 2017, Controller & AVC Michael Riley, Business & Financial Services Cost Standards and Policy Analyst Mark Perez, and Business & Financial Services Vice Chancellor for Business & Administrative Services Michael Reese attended a COR meeting and made a presentation to COR (who was identified by AVC Riley as a key stakeholder) on composite benefit rates (CBR). Each UC campus will ultimately adopt the CBR model as the UC system transitions to UC Path. For UCM, that change is expected to occur December 1, 2017. CBR should prove beneficial for faculty members in that they will be able to accurately predict the cost of benefits for research staff when creating grant proposal budgets. In this way, CBR will simplify the grant budgeting process pre-award, and it also bring some financial stability post-award.

In response to the CBR presentation, COR members raised a variety of issues, including: the hiring of postdocs above the prescribed rate (assurances were given that there will be a process whereby the rate can be adjusted over time), potential changes to faculty benefits as a result of CBR (assurances were given that all faculty benefits will remain intact), and the recent rise in minimal postdoctoral scholar salary and benefits (the CBR mitigation program was described as offering means to defray such additional costs in the short term).

Postdoctoral Scholar Salaries & Current Grants

In the course of the academic year, COR was contacted by several faculty members to express concerns with regard to changes in the costs needed to support postdoctoral scholars using extramural funds. A recent contract negotiation resulted in increased pay rates for postdoctoral scholars, and this resulted in increased costs to grants that contained support for such scholars but did not budget for the unexpected increased pay rates. As a result, some faculty members have found it quite challenging to carry out their funded research projects.

At the end of the academic year, COR issued a memo to the Academic Senate Chair, requesting that the Senate work with the Office of Research and Economic Development, as well as the Graduate Division, to pursue options for ameliorating the negative impact on research of these recent cost changes.

Consultation and Monitoring

Consultation with VC-ORED

Throughout the academic year, COR members benefited from updates on various research-related issues from ex-officio committee member, VC-ORED Traina.

One such research-related issue was export control regulations. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) established a policy of contacting faculty and requesting interviews regarding "deemed exports". This is when a piece of technology that has export control placed on it (it is restricted from export to specific countries identified by the federal government) is "deemed exported" by exposure to a citizen from one of those countries, including individuals working for the UC. Violations of export control regulations involving "deemed exports" had recently generated heavy fines for another UC campus. The Committee was informed that the DHS interviews, thus far, were voluntary. Also, if a faculty member agrees to be interviewed, he/she has the right to schedule such an interview at his/her convenience and to request that other parties be present, such as Campus Counsel.

Another major issue that VC-ORED brought to COR's attention was an initiative between UCOP and NASA Ames involving the leasing of approximately 16 acres at Moffett Field, with the intent to develop new opportunities for UC researchers, including creating new space for both research and industrial collaboration. The systemwide working group that was convened to assess this initiative include both the VC-ORED and the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education, Marjorie Zatz. VC-ORED Traina related to COR that, despite requests for representation by the Academic Senate, no contact with the Academic Senate had been made.

In March 2017, COR transmitted a memo to Division Council, requesting the delivery of a formal statement to Christine Gulbranson, UC Senior Vice President of Innovation & Entrepreneurship at UCOP, the leader of this initiative, requesting that consultation with the Academic Senate be sought. The Academic Senate Chair opted, instead, to issue an electronic communication to systemwide Senate Chair Jim Chalfant and to the Chair of the University Committee on Research Policy, Isaac Martin.

Meeting with Arthur Ellis, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies, UCOP

At the invitation of the UCM Graduate Division, Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies Arthur Ellis visited UCM, and he met with COR members to learn about the campus's aspiration to quickly become a modern research campus, focusing on the challenges faced in pursuit of this goal. COR members shared with VP Ellis how resource constraints had motivated central control of funds supporting research, distributing very little into discretionary budgets that might support faculty research while extramural grants were pursued, including bridge funding between awards. It was noted that the campus is growing faster than any other UC campus in history, causing tension with the distribution of physical space, with research space allocations to faculty often failing to meet what was promised or planned for. Compounding these issues is the geographic isolation of UCM and the lack of appropriate social gathering space on campus, both of which having introduced lasting negative impacts on faculty and graduate students.

Upon hearing COR members' ideas for increasing collaborations between campuses and national labs, VP Ellis indicated that he would pursue this approach by speaking

with the leadership of the national labs. With regard to furthering collaboration, including joint programs and degrees with international partners, he stated that this would require Academic Senate consultation, but there should be no challenge in identifying interested partner universities.

University Committee on Research Policy Updates

The COR Chair represented UCM at UCORP meetings, and he kept the COR membership informed of UCORP activities through the academic year:

- systemwide effort to establish and grow innovation centers across all ten campuses with $2.2 million being allocated to each campus.
- the role of faculty in contributing patents and other intellectual property to the UC portfolio focusing on making the patent process easier for faculty
- the funding cycle for Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives (MRPI) concluded, with 97 proposals received and 14 selected for funding. $17 million was awarded. UCM had the highest representation of any campus across the set of funded proposals
- UCOP has contacted those Multicampus Research Units (MRU) that lack systemwide funding to inquire if they wish to be reviewed so as to be considered for renewed MRU status. Just four of the fifteen units elected to maintain their status in the face of the absence of UCOP funding. The remainder of the units opted to dissolve or convert into ORUs.
- modifications to policy on "openness in research": some faculty would like to do research with agencies on confidential or sensitive subjects. Such research projects would provide additional sources of income to the campuses and opportunities for the training of graduate students for government and industry positions. There was great concern, however, that these efforts may collide with established University policy regarding open access to the results of UC research.
- UCORP requested that members submit their respective campus' policies on the establishment and review of research units to be aggregated into a central repository. Extensive variance was found in the policies used by different campuses. Indeed, it was found that different campuses had different goals for the establishment of ORUs.

- UC Vice President for National Laboratories debriefed UCORP on issues surrounding the renewal of contracts for the labs
- concerns about UC campus' extramural funding portfolios if federal funding to the UCs is cut under the current presidential administration
- A call for a white paper was issued regarding UC's relationship with the national labs. Before bidding to renew its management contract for the labs, UCOP would be required to outline general policies on what they would or would not do in their relationship with a lab, as well as provide a description of the expected benefits of such a relationship.

Campus Review Items

- Draft UCM policy on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Model Aircrafts. COR generally found the policy to provide a reasonable balance between the interests of the research community, public safety, and civil liberties. Only a few issues of concern were raised: 1) policy could be improved by some general description of the criteria for approval and 2) purchasing restriction needs to be clarified.
- Research Data Storage interim procedures, distributed for comment by Chief Information Officer Ann Kovalchick. COR strongly recommended that these procedures be either abandoned or substantially revised prior to implementation. As written, the current procedures impose strong constraints that could undermine the research productivity of the faculty.
- Faculty start-up and incidental funds. The Senate Faculty Welfare and Academic Freedom (FWAF) committee issued its "Principles for the Allocation and Management of Faculty Start-Up and Incidental Funds" to Division Council. COR recommended adding the assertion that the use of start-up funds might best be managed at the School level or lower. Similarly, variation across fields in the importance of incidental funds for academic success should guide allocations and policies. FWAF agreed with this addition and submitted a revised Principles document to the Division Council for eventual transmittal to the Provost/EVC, Vice Provost for the Faculty, and the Interim Vice Chancellor for Planning and Budget.
- Revised Report from the Task Force on University Honors. While COR members found the proposal beneficial, they raised concerns about the resources needed to

implement such a program. The Committee requested that a realistic assessment of how a University Honors program would affect resource availability, particularly in the form of faculty research time.

- General Education Program proposal. COR asserted that the proposal did not adequately address the resource implications for the additional educational demands that would be placed on faculty through the offering of Spark seminars and the integrative culminating experience. If adequate additional resources for this program are not forthcoming, COR recommended that the undergraduate research element of the proposal be made optional.

- Incentive Plan for Revenue Generating Master's Degree Programs. COR endorsed the plan, contingent on the following recommendations: 1) the structure of a seed funding program for the development of such Master's programs should be described in the plan, 2) to support long term planning by graduate groups, disbursed revenue should roll over from one year to the next, and 3) the standards for the length of Master's programs vary from field to field, so uniform duration requirements should not be adopted by the incentive plan.

- Open Access 2020 Expression of Interest (EoI). COR supported UCM signing the EoI, but raised the following concerns for subsequent discussion: 1) free access and unrestricted use and re-use of scholarly work places the financial responsibility of publishing on authors and 2) under the open access model, publishers establish prices directly with the authors. Authors with the financial means to do so may be willing to pay higher prices for their work to appear in prestigious journals, while authors who lack sufficient funds are disadvantaged. This may dramatically compromise the integrity of the literature.

- Policy for Access to Student Data. COR offered the following modifications and observations: 1) the policy should explicitly address requests for data from graduate groups and/or the Academic Senate, 2) the document is not completely clear concerning requests for data for research purposes, and 3) in an effort to avoid individual identification from aggregated data, the document sometimes places minimum restrictions on the number of students contributing to an aggregated statistic, but it is not clear that this is done in a reasonable way.

- COR also reviewed and endorsed the following: the School of Engineering's proposal to create five new departments and the proposed presidential policy on export controls.

Systemwide Review Items

- Draft Presidential Policy on International Activities. COR members expressed concern about the way in which "risk" is defined in this document. The policy could interfere with academic freedom by allowing vague concerns over potential future political or financial effects of an international activity to raise unreasonable approval barriers to standard research activities that involve an international component. COR strongly suggested that these more nebulous forms of risk be more clearly described and operationalized.

- Proposed Revisions to APM 285, 210, 133, 740 pertaining to re-designating the L(P)SOE series to "Teaching Professor." COR members found the policy revisions unclear with regard to whether the renaming of this series implies shifts in teaching expectations such that Academic Senate faculty with these titles would be able/expected to teach at the graduate level.

- Systemwide Unmanned Aircraft System Policy. The COR membership supported the effort to establish minimum standards for the safe use and operation of UAS, but was unclear whether individuals can initiate applications with the systemwide authority and the local authority simultaneously. The Committee also indicated that it was not clear if UAS users would be allowed to pursue an application with one authority after receiving a denial from the other.

- COR reviewed and endorsed the proposed revisions to the G-28 travel regulations, which were made more family-friendly, and the proposed revisions to Senate Bylaw 182 pertaining to expanding the duties of the University Committee on International Education.

Respectfully submitted:

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Ex officio, non-voting members:
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