

## Minutes of the December Meeting of the Research Committee

11 December 2009

Present: David Cinabro, Maria Ferreira, David Kessel, Rodger MacArthur, Boris Mordukhovich, Frederic Pearson, David Thomas, Harley Tse, Jianjun Wang, Joseph Dunbar

Guest: Bryan Atkinson

The minutes from the November meetings were approved with minor changes.

In response to investigations by David Kessel and David Cinabro, we found that a draft policy on research misconduct has been put forward and was reviewed by the Academic Senate before this year's Research Committee was formed. The draft has been under review at the University Council's office for some time. Cinabro inquired to Dorothy Nelson, Assistant VP for Research in charge of Compliance, about how best to proceed. She suggested that a query to the OVPR about the status of the new policy could be passed on to the University Council to make things happen faster. This was done by email on 19 November and passed on to the University Council by the VPR. AVP Nelson informed Cinabro on 9 December that the draft policy, which had been developed and reviewed by a number of committees and individual faculty members who had served on misconduct cases, has been submitted to the Board of Governors for consideration after completion of the review by the University Council. She did not know when the BOG would take this up. She provided copies of the draft policy to Cinabro, who brought some to the meeting for interested committee members to review. The document is lengthy and Cinabro noted that he had only a chance to skim it before this meeting. Ask him if you would like copies. It will become public when the BOG considers it, likely in February, and is likely to be approved without further change.

We had a discussion with Bryan Atkinson who is the Associate Director of Disbursements in Fiscal Operations. We began with a query from Boris about procedures involving travel that he, and colleagues in the Math Department, considered inefficient. The policy is not new, but is being enforced more stringently. Basically a strict interpretation of the policy would mean that before any travel is booked it would have to be encumbered, but in reality PI's of external research grants often book the travel paying with their own credit card, and then encumber the travel by filling out a TAER form taking the small risk that they may deny their own travel request. It is of course more risky if one is traveling on funds that they do not directly control but the TAER can be initially filled it well in advance of the travel with estimated costs and the travel can be booked after approval. No one found the common practice to be burdensome or overly inefficient. Bryan is working on electronizing the process, but the initial attempt to do this within Banner did not cover expenses and thus was not deemed worth implementing. He hopes that within the year a fully functional electronic TAER will be implemented. A few special cases were discussed, pre-payment of conference fees, external visitors, reimbursed travel for conference visitors, and reimbursements for non-University employees. All of these can be handled although they usually require extra paper work and should be done well in advance of the planned travel. Bryan did encourage folks with problems to contact him as solutions that do not violate the rules can almost always be found. A short discussion took place about the difficulty of tracking down purchases that go awry. Until an irate vendor contacts them complaining about lack of payment, PIs are often unaware that something has gone wrong. The PI then has difficulty figuring out what has gone wrong. Bryan suggested that access to Banner could solve this problem, but the committee demurred indicating that a simpler tool like the Research Dashboard would be a better solution. Bryan left the meeting after an hour of discussion.

We reviewed the 4th Quarter report by the VPR to the BOG. Harley passed on a request from the Policy

Committee that this committee should be more quantitative in regards to research spending at the University. This is difficult as the committee has no staff and the members are generally busy researchers, but David and Joe promised to make more of an effort. Asking questions in advance of the meeting are very helpful and specifically Joe promised to break down the research activity into more sub-categories than were available in the VPR's report and David promised to understand the difference between the VPR's Grants and Contracts Report and the numbers used for NSF rankings based on Research Expenditures. It is clear that research activity is up in the latest fiscal year as compared to last year. Joe noted that much of the increase was federal stimulus related more than making up for substantial drops in state and corporate supported research.

We continued to discuss how the University supports research. Boris spoke with Bob Thomas, Dean of CLAS. Dean Thomas listed the most important things he does to support research as retain the most active research faculty, hire new faculty in the areas in which we are strong, and avoiding dissipating our effort over too many areas. He agrees that our facilities in support of research are unsatisfactory, but he has no resources to do anything about it. He thought that the OVPR paid too much attention to research at the Medical School and multi-disciplinary efforts. When asked about teaching loads, he thought the incentives for research have to be re-thought. A short discussion pointed out the contradiction between "areas in which we are strong" and "too much attention to research at the Medical School" and that if OVPR did not seek to support multi-disciplinary research it is unlikely that anyone else would.

Harley Tse spoke with Dan Walz, Associate Dean of Research in the School of Medicine. His most important point is that our research effort should align with the most important funding agency, NIH, which wants to support big science, team research that seeks to apply knowledge from the human genome project to health. Thus he wants to recruit in theme based research in genomics and proteomics, develop research cores that support such research, recruit young faculty, and develop a data base to help in the preparation of research team grants.

Harley also spoke with Valerie Parisi, the Interim Dean of the School of Medicine. She thinks that research is vitally important and has her highest priority. There must be balance between the teaching and research missing of the school, but that research is starved of money. The private endowment must be enhanced, the practice plan has to generate more, and hospital partners have to be brought on board to provide the resources that research needs. Money for start-ups and faculty retention are the highest priority. We have strong faculty in cancer, infectious disease and cardiovascular, we have excellent graduate students, and we have fruitful collaborations with the cancer centers, Henry Ford, the Engineering School and in foreign counties. Our weaknesses are in skewed research incentives, the infrastructure at SPA, and the graying of our faculty. She wants to change the culture, i.e. re-think our research incentives, improve communication, focus on the 4R's (Research, Recruit, Reward, Retention), and keep the people happy. On the subject of how the School of Medicine, which does something like 75% of the research at the University can help to influence the research policy of the University she thought that all avenues had to be pursued including at the Academic Senate, the Dean of SOM had to be on good terms with the President and coordinate frequently with the BOG, VPR, and Provost.

Boris and Harley provided summaries of their discussions.

The themes we had previously are only being reinforced by the above. They were:

- 1) We have woefully inadequate technical support for research.
- 2) Incentives for high performing researchers have to be rethought.
- 3) Programs to support research need to be more flexible. Existing programs are often far too restrictive to have broad impact.

4) Research priorities do not seem to get the attention they deserve by the service orientated parts of the University such as the Facilities and Purchasing.

5) We need to rethink how we are promoting collaborative and cross-disciplinary efforts. At the minimum internal communication about research activities has to be improved. We should have a thorough review of how the University deals with Centers and Institutes that promote research.

6) Research should be more integrated with the more traditional academic activities of the University.

I would add a new one that was emphasized by the three deans:

7) Recruitment and Retention are the most important research activities done by the administration. Support for these should be integrated into the University's budgeting and planning process.

Our next meeting is in the Winter Semester and we will find a different time, not Friday afternoon to meet. A message asking for meeting times will appear in the New Year.