

Minutes of February 2010 Academic Senate Research Committee Meeting  
25 February 2010

Present: David Cinabro, Ivan Avrutsky, Maria Ferreira, David Kessel, Rodger MacArthur, Tej Mattoo, David Thomas, Harley Tse, Jeff Withey, Joe Dunbar

The minutes from the January meeting were approved with minor changes.

Joe began with some information on TechTown. The University guarantees TechTown loans, but spends no money on TechTown. It is designed to break even.

Ivan, Maria, and David K. all mentioned that the sort of partnerships between small businesses and professors is what the NSF and NIH like to support in their programs that support innovation at small business such as SBIR and CREST. They want to see activities that are not an attempt to support increased PI lab activities, but rather things that have the possibility of growing into self- sustaining enterprises.

David C. reported that Rob Kohrman and Hilary Ratner are planning to join us at our next meeting to discuss support for research. Specific questions for them are likely to result in more quantitative answers. Those we have so far will be repeated below and any new ones should get sent to David C. in advance of our next meeting. He will remind us just about a week before.

The list of questions David C. already sent to Rob and Hilary:

- 1) How does what we spend on our OVPR operation compare with our peers? Our peers means those in the range of 40-60 in the NSF research rankings in which we are 50.
- 2) Joe has already answered the specific questions we had about TechTown.

Joe is chair of the President's committee on Research Incentives. Their report is in draft, but he mentioned its important points. Note that the charge to the committee is to develop a University wide policy on research incentives, not separate policies for each unit:

- 1) There are diverse views on incentives.
- 2) Incentives have to be funded from ICR and Salary Savings. The suggestion on the table is that ICR slice that goes to the University be used to fund incentives rather than the ICR that goes to the Colleges, Departments, and PI's.
- 3) Should there be a base line of activity above which incentives kick in or should the incentives start from zero? The current draft is that those above the average level of activity within their college would get incentives. This is difficult there is great diversity among the units.
- 4) 20% of salary support will be returned to the PI once that support exceeds 25% of the base salary. On the main campus, where most are 9 month employees, that would mean the incentive would apply if more that two months of summer salary are given from external support.
- 5) The form of the incentive is not dictated. It would be decided in consultation with the PI and could include money to support research activities, student/post-doc support, salary increase, and/or teaching relief.

Joe hoped to share with us the more complete draft of the report for our comment when it has progressed further. We discussed a report on research support. Starting from David C.'s ordered themes some points were made leading to the new list below:

- 1) Recruitment and Retention are the most important research support activities done by the administration. Support for these should be integrated into the University's budgeting and planning process at the level of Colleges.
- 2) Incentives for high performing researchers have to be rethought. Retention is made easier by an effective incentive program.
- 3) We have woefully inadequate technical support for research and the maintenance of facilities. In the medical school this means research cores that do not produce high quality results, while on the main campus this means lack of technical support in many areas.
- 4) Are we spending our support for research dollars wisely? See point 8 below for some specific questions.
- 5) We should take a broad view, beyond simply external monetary support for research, at what good scholarship is. Scholarship activities including research should be more integrated with the more traditional academic activities of the University.
- 6) Programs to support research need to be more flexible. Existing programs are often far too restrictive to have broad impact. Not enough attention is paid to supporting possibly transformational research activities rather than clinical/regular research.
- 7) Research priorities do not seem to get the attention they deserve by the service orientated parts of the University such as the Accounting, Facilities and Purchasing.
- 8) 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.

A few points were raised during the discussion. We should talk to Mike Diamond an Assistant Dean in the Medical School as he is working on support for Translational Research.

We had a brief discussion about perceptions of Wayne State, especially in regards to our research activities. This is a large topic and we agreed that we could easily spend an entire year on it.

The plan for our report is for David C. to turn the above ordered list of themes into an outline, collect comments on the outline, produce a draft, collect comments on the draft, and produce a final report. A presentation of the findings at the senate should be made probably at the Senates May meeting. This committee has two more meetings, 25 March and 29 April, with the March meeting being slated for discussion of an outline and April for a draft, with the final report being produced over the summer.