

Wayne State University
Academic Senate
Research Committee Minutes
March 20, 2012

Present: Cinabro, Avrutsky, Benkert, Ferreira, Huttemann, Mordukhovich, Mueller, Oupicky, Tisdale, Tse, Wildman, Kessel, Dunbar, Brock, Fazal

Absent with Notice: Golebiowska, Stemmler, Thomas

Guests: Jennifer Hubert and Grace Cashman, The Huron Group

We approved the minutes from our February meeting.

Jennifer and Grace gave us a short presentation on the scope and charge of the Huron Group's review of OVPR. Their presentation is attached.

They noted the Huron Group's history with Wayne State. They are management consultants and have been reviewing various parts of the University for over a year. They have just been charged with looking at OVPR with the goal of streamlining research administration.

They start with people, being sure the proper people are in place, look at the organizational structure, the business processes, whether technology is being used efficiently, and check if performance measures are in place and being looked at. They have begun with a review of previous work, the NCURA review and the EPIC committee, and will then be conducting interviews. They will be looking at SPA and the research cores. They will also review the current and planned strategies and make recommendations. This should all take 5-8 weeks.

The discussion opened with committee members asking if individual faculty were going to be interviewed. No. Only groups such as our committee and other bodies that have something to do with research and administrators. Some suggestions were made to talk with more folks from the School of Medicine, Deans, Dean-lits, and Departmental Chairs.

They focused on SPA and asked if we thought the roles of SPA versus local research administrators were clear. Yes. Has the re-organization of SPA made things better. Yes. What is the role of local research administration? In general they provide a buffer function between PI's and SPA. Usually this is helpful, relieving PI's of administrative duties, but sometimes not as an extra layer of semi-arbitrary rules gets introduced. Basically it is inconsistent across the university with some departments and schools having it good, and some not. One persistent complaint has been dealing with non-governmental research which always seems to take longer than it should. Training of local administrators seems to be fine with departments able to provide feed back.

Customer service has improved and whatever was done should also be shared with local administrators. Sub-contracts are not handled well.

The Research Dashboard was generally praised as a way to check grant activity. The persistent complaints that the Dashboard should be able to cover internal accounts and be able to do projections which are features that have been asked for some time.

We also noted that with the loss of local staff PI's are doing more administrative tasks to the detriment of their science productivity.

A litany of complaints ended the meeting. The approval of human research protocols has become very slow. It is very painful that we have a one size fits all approach and do not have separate protocols for social and medical science. Often there is a lack of common sense, leading to strange, arcane behavior to be able to do things like buying pencils. There is no support for grant writing; generating bios, lab descriptions, etc. There is not an institutionalized pre-review process, but individual departments do this and SPA does have a little used program. In general there is a feeling that there is a lack of focus on being sure that scientists concentrate on science rather than distracting them with administrative tasks.