

Wayne State Academic Senate Research Committee
Summary of Activity 2009-2010

Active Members

Ivan Avrutsky
David Cinabro, Chair
Maria Ferreira
David Kessel
Rodger MacArthur
Tej Mattoo
Boris Mordukhovich
Frederic Pearson
David Thomas
Jianjun Wang
Jeffrey Withey

Robert Arking, Liaison from the AAUP-AFT
Joseph Dunbar, Administration Liaison
Adnan Hussain, Student Senate Liaison
Harley Tse, Policy Committee Liaison

The Committee met eight times during the course of the school year. All meetings were well attended with a quorum present.

The Committee is preparing a report on How the University Supports Research which is a follow up to last year's report on research ranking which concluded that the fall in the University's research rankings during the 2000's was mainly due to internal support for research not rising as rapidly as our peers, resulting in a relative decline. The report was assembled by committee members interviewing members of the administration from the President down to the level of Department Chairs. In total we spoke to the President, four Provosts and Vice Presidents, four Deans, four Associate Deans, two Center Directors, and six Department Chairs. The interviews were conducted during the Fall semester of 2009, and the committee discussed the results in the fall and winter. The report has reached a first draft stage and will be discussed by the 2010-2011 incarnation of the committee before being presented to the Senate President. A presentation to the Senate summarizing the conclusions of the report was given by the committee chair at the May 2010 meeting of the Academic Senate. The committee chair also gave this presentation to two advisory bodies to the Vice President for Research in June of 2010.

Bob Arking brought to the committees attention a recent case of possible research misconduct. We noted that the current policy on scientific misconduct was out of date and clearly inadequate in many respects. A new policy, reviewed by the Senate in 2008-2009 had been awaiting action in the General Counsel's office. The committee sent a letter to the Vice President for Research inquiring as to the progress of the new policy and reminding her about the deficiencies of the old. Soon after the letter was sent the proposed policy was approved by the General Counsel. The draft policy was sent by

email to all members of the Academic Senate in May of 2010. With minor revisions, that policy was approved by the Board of Governors in July of 2010.

The committee met with Jim Barbret who spoke to us about new electronic tools to manage research. E-Prop is a web-based system to prepare and approve proposals for submission for funding. It is available campus wide and should be used by all faculty to prepare proposals. While it is not perfect it does automate and regularize many things that used to have to be tracked down by hand such as current indirect cost rates, fringe rates, and approved inflation rates. It also automates the approval process. Jim also spoke about the research dashboard which shows spending on external research grants. This is much easier and intuitive to use than other ways of tracking down grant spending. On the other hand it only gives a limited description of the items. Another failing is that it only works for external accounts and does not cover internal, such as start-up funds, accounts. Jim noted that adding this feature would take some time. Jim also mentioned that work has started on an effort reporting system which he hopes will be rolled out in 2010-2011.

The committee met with Bryan Atkinson, Associate Director of Disbursements, on reimbursement policies. He clarified some rules and spoke about plans to electronize the process for travel reimbursement.

Sarah James from OVPR showed us a proposal development website that they hope will help new PI's go from initial idea to grant management by linking all the needed information and tools, which are currently either non-existent or widely scattered, in one place. The committee provided feedback on the proposed site which was released near the end of the 2009-2010 school year as the "Grant Life Cycle" web site.

Twice during the course of the year we got a preliminary report from Joe Dunbar on the conclusions of the President's Committee on Research Incentives, which Joe chairs. We offered comments, expressed our desire to review the final report, but as of summer 2010 the committee is still working.

Dr. Dunbar also described the University's relationship with TechTown. The University does not spend any money on TechTown, but rather guarantees loans. It is designed to be non-profit, that is all proceeds are re-invested. The goal is to support small business innovation hopefully, but not necessarily, with University member participation.

We spoke with Robert Kohrman, Associate Vice President for Budget, Planning, and Analysis and Hilary Ratner, Vice President for Research, describing the division of Research and comparing what Wayne State spends in support of and administrating research. While the Division of Research is large, there are not so many in the OVPR itself. Most of the staff is in Sponsored Program Administration and at independent centers and institutes that organizationally are in the Division, but that the VPR has little to do with. Mr. Kohrman did a comparative analysis with our "research peers", those public universities with similar research ranking as ours, and found that we are very productive per faculty and had below average in terms of research related administrative

expenses. One obvious conclusion is that increasing the number of full time research faculty is one of the most effective ways to improve our NSF research ranking. This is also very similar to a main conclusion of the committee report discussed above.

The committee chair noted, in response to a Senate member's query, how the NSF computes our research ranking, based on dollars spent on research, and how that compares with numbers the VPR reports about research activity to the Board of Governors, based on grants and contracts awarded. The NSF number is larger due to internal spending on research and "unrecovered indirect costs" which is an NSF estimate of research-related costs that are not reimbursed by grant-awarded indirect costs. Once these two are accounted for there is good agreement between the NSF number and the grants and contract number. The NSF number is more useful for comparison with other universities as it is calculated by the NSF in a standard way across all institutions and attempts to capture all research activities at an institution.

In response to a query from a faculty member, that led to a request for investigation by the committee from the Senate President, the committee met with Gayle Kusch, Director for the Responsible Conduct of Research on a post-approval monitoring system for research with animals. Our program is new, but similar programs are in place at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University. It is likely that the NIH will be mandating such a program in the near future. The program is run by Joseph Monsur who ran an animal research lab at U of M for ten years. He is just starting this program, and has only done a handful of inspections as of May 2010. She described how the program works. There are 450 grants that use animals, only a fraction can be reviewed (40-50 each year), and these are chosen randomly. Principal investigators are informed and an initial meeting is held before a lab visit/inspection is made. Any problems result in help to the PI to file amendments to procedures that were in the original grant proposal, or to train staff in proper procedures. Results of the review are confidential and only shared with the PI. The committee commented that this is first that most of them had heard of the program, and that it needed to be more widely publicized to be effective. We saw no problems with the program, and the committee reported such to the Senate President.