

Annual Report

Academic Senate Research Committee 2019-2020

David Kessel, Chair

This research effort at WSU has occurred under two distinct eras: **BC** and **AD** (*Before Corona* and *After the Deluge*). The recent shut-down has a significant effect on the overall effort. Those vulnerable to a halt in their careers will be most affected by this development. There is limited information on how to proceed. No protocols are in place for recovery; we are making it up as we go along. I have sought information from other research universities: not much helpful news.

AD: Some elements of ‘research’ can proceed, e.g., mathematics, physics, economics. But biology, chemistry, biophysics, physiology and other laboratory sciences are at risk. This will certainly affect graduate students, post docs, faculty who have yet to be tenured. The wearing of protective clothing is not new for those involved in projects involving infectious material, but will be for others. Aside from a few labs, facilities are not set up for protecting workers. Ventilation systems, e.g., in Scott Hall, are far from ideal.

BC: Unfunded mandates. There was concern about many items being left to investigators without sufficient administrative support, e.g., Travel Wayne (an opaque method for dealing with travel reimbursement), understood only by those who deal with it routinely rather than on an infrequent basis. Methods to report for merit review are new and cumbersome. It is now necessary to enter data into a software format designed for maximum confusion.

Merit salary increases. In some colleges, this is reserved for a ranking of ‘1’ (research, teaching or service). The lumps ‘2’ (meets expectations) in with ‘4’ (no visible signs of life). While dollar amounts are small, they are added to base salary so become significant with time.

Maintenance of facilities is often minimal. The Scott Hall cafeteria is closed for maintenance issues. Elevators are often non-functional. There are estimates that we have over \$1 billion in ‘deferred maintenance’: items that should have been dealt with and return to haunt us until fixed.

Research Integrity is an important issue. Assorted regulatory agencies and Congress take an increased interest in conflicts of interest, foreign influence and falsification of data. Severe penalties can result including fines and jail for those who abuse the system. There are penalties for institutions that fail to investigate or act on integrity violations. WSU appears to be doing well in this regard. There are, however, concerns about the treatment of those who may be falsely accused of misconduct. This appears to be rare, which is good news. Getting involved in an investigation of misconduct involves a major effort as those who have done this can testify.

External research funding is another concern. The lack of interest in the DMC management in clinical research doubtless plays a role here. We have maintained, but not improved our overall funding level and continue to fall in the rankings. There are concerns about delays in hiring, insufficient rewards for productivity and delays in getting protocols approved.

Summary: Before the corona pandemic, WSU was retaining its classification as a *Research One* university. A decreasing level of State and federal interest was already complicating research support levels. Now, even highly-ranked and well-supported institutions are preparing for a significant impact on their operations. Mitigating factors: as the new Dean for Medicine [Mark Schweitzer] has pointed out, it is temporarily to our advantage that we do not own a hospital

since most are operating with substantial losses. There will also be no major loss of income from athletic programs since there was not much to lose. WSU often depends on outside consultants, hired at considerable expense, and neglects input from well-qualified members. While a view from the outside is often useful, local talent can also be useful.

The future: The Research Committee discussed current issues on April 29 with Stephen Lanier, the VP for Research, via Zoom. There are plans for periodic conferences as things progress. At this point, we are in uncharted territory. The Research Committee will continue to seek avenues for faculty input into decisions. Meanwhile, an image of what lab workers may soon be wearing:

