

Academic Senate Research Committee Minutes

December 16, 2021

Via Zoom

Time: 3 pm – 4:23 pm

Members present: Noreen Rossi (chair), Alan Dombkowski, Andrew Fribley, Krishnarao Maddipati, Joseph Roche, Shirley Papuga, Robert Harr, Tamara Bray, Karen MacDonell, Wanda Gibson Scipio, Carol Miller, Robert Reynolds, Ramzi Mohammad, Le Yi Wang, Timothy Stemmler (liaison), Edward Cackett (liaison)

Members absent with notice: Lance Heilbrun, Shane Perrine, Christian Bozeman (liaison), Arun Iyer, Jennifer Lewis

Guest: Gail Ryan, Assoc. VP for Research (SPA)

The meeting was opened at 3 pm on Dec. 16, 2021, and the minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

The Chair introduced Gail Ryan, Assoc. VP for Research.

Ms Ryan addressed the following issues requested by the Research Committee:

- Changes in SPA

She also invited an informal Q&A.

1. Changes in SPA: Initial challenge was to prepare SPA personnel to work remotely, including borrowing computers from the IRB.

They lost a staff member who died suddenly; delay in getting the posting approved, posted, and hired. Ben Philips was hired. GCO retired; one person left due to vaccine mandate, overall SPA was down 5-6 positions.

Assigning the proposals and grant administration duties requires appraisal of the portfolios to balance the work and expertise. GCO is up to full staff including Tina Poole from SoM moving to SPA Patrick Fiscar returned to SPA as well. Labor Day everyone transitioned back with in office 50% and 50% remote. She has not heard of someone providing a lesser service because of remote working.

Throughput is very deadline driven by grant deadlines. Account set up usually 5 days but some challenges during the staffing issues. Proposals take priorities.

A metric she uses is the “noise level” when something raises to contact her or to her attention.

Close outs are also sponsor deadlines especially for federal grants as they audit the effort and we want to keep a clean audit.

This forced reevaluation of processes. They did some stopgap measures (e.g., check depositing) because SPA could not physically get to them and cashier office was closed but this is improving. There is now back in the office, the teams are aligning schedules

such as change in labor process and streamline, SPA is being sure those individuals are in the office to discuss it and arrive at a solution.

End of year with close outs is a busy time and she anticipates January and February will see new efficiencies and synergies.

Challenges due to the last minute nature of some of the things that come in at the last minute. Looking at percentage of proposals coming in on the deadline date. This is a huge challenge and handicaps what SPA can do to be sure the proposal is best to put forward. So SPA is going to the units to get their help.

Question re: the deadline especially such as NSF has a "soft deadline" change. Ms. Ryan asked for clarification of what NSF means. Described not exactly as a rolling deadline but a negotiated deadline with the program officer at the funding agency within parameters. When the proposal is put into Cayeus there is deadline placed by the administrator and there should be communication between the grants administrator and the GCO.

Fribley: Are there agencies in different disciplines that have more "random" deadlines? SPA would like to know the deadlines if there are some of these less well published granting agencies/foundations that SPA may not be aware of.

Are there ways to mobilize experts from various units to help? The one challenge would be (e.g., NIH) that there are some designations such as AOR access that apply to a given person. Another issue is that what the departments look for is often different from what SPA looks at.

No deadlines were missed, but the stress level was serious now that back.

Ramzi: How many proposals come through SPA to process per month? There are intermittent peak times as with NIH deadlines so varies over time. On average, there are 1,500-1,800 per year overall.

Rossi: Can we recommend to the investigator to communicate re: RFA or irregular or new type of agency or proposal that is unique so that SPA is aware. Make a website for investigator to put in intention to submit, agency, deadline, etc. Ramzi: mentioned that Oncology does this within the department every 3 months. In SoM this may be funneled to RAS. This does not compel them to submit but that they are considering. Ms. Ryan said she would contact RAS regarding this issue.

Robert: Asked re: insights to make her job easier. Ryan: Administrative pages, budget, justification, etc. even a partial would be helpful. SPA does not need the science portion but SPA can be concurrently working on the administrative aspects. Cackett: However, some concerns that at times at the departmental level they will not review a packet without the full package. There is concern this may lead to reviewing things twice and that some of the administrative/budget issues have changed. Consider that once reviewed it cannot be changed.

2. Vendorship for clinical research subjects

Subjects are having difficulty becoming vendors. The days to get cash at Scott Hall are gone.

One option is getting set up as a vendor in the purchasing system and getting a check cut. This is not usually practical or feasible for some research subjects.

Another option is to purchase gift cards. The risk with this is that the cards may be sitting in a drawer and if stolen, it becomes an issue. Kept under lock and key, this is an option. Some studies have used Target gift cards.

Petty cash fund is another option. This requires someone to be the custodian of the funds. This gives the subjects ability to get cash.

Fribley: Raised issue of limitations that petty cash limits amount of cash on hand. Is there a limit in cash /cards that can be on hand? This may be limiting for larger payments or for scenarios with a greater number of subjects within a short. Ms. Ryan said this would be something to check with Dennis Orr in disbursements.

Another option is the Greenfire ClinCard that does not come with a preloaded amount. There is a nominal cost for the card up front. This is a prepaid debit card that is loadable to whatever amount you want to put on it. There is a system to load cards with value. If someone comes for several visits they can bring the card back each time and get it reloaded each time. There is a system and administrator roles with this. Some studies really like this. The cards have no risk since they do not have any value on them. This is the least risky option. This has been used for 6-7 years. There is a website for using this. Rossi asked for Ms Ryan to send us the link for this: disbursements.wayne.edu/clincard.

Robert: What database records these transactions and security? Disbursements office may provide this information. SPA does not have access to this system other than getting the charges placed by the administrator at the department level.

3. IDC flow especially with regard to Henry Ford

Henry Ford HTN group transferred grants from HF to WSU and are located in iBio and have appointments in physiology. They submit grants through WSU via the broad initiative at iBio. IDC are going to SoM to physiology (Departmental piece), unit piece goes to SoM. The administrator for those faculty is housed in iBio and works on their grants. She is not a physiology employee.

Other researchers at Henry Ford or transferred to Henry Ford will submit through MSU and IDC will go through MSU.

Additional queries:

Mathamurthy: Is it a correct understanding that RAS does not do post-award administration? There appear to be people in RAS with post-award titles. RAS has told departments that the department has to deal directly with SPA. E.g., Pathology pre-award is through RAS but post-award is “on your own.” One difficulty is the variation in skill sets in handling grants.

SPA staff have voiced some frustration that at times they do not know to whom they need to reach out at SoM regarding some questions. Ms. Ryan has reached out to Lisa Wisdom who will share the contact so that a plan can be worked out to facilitate the interaction and workflow. Who is responsible for pre-award for which department? Who is responsible for post-award for a given department?

Fribley: Faith Magula is incredible and pediatrics appreciates her expertise and help.

Dr. Rossi thanked Ms Ryan and noted that these conversations help to improve the process.

Post Pandemic documents are in process. Dr. Rossi noted that Policy would like all drafts by next week. The format was different in each of the sections. She stated that she will compile the three into one final complete document. She asked for any further edits, changes, corrections.

Dr. Rossi asked if there were any thoughts about the Research Misconduct document and whether there were any suggestions for updates. That document was drafted in 2010, but obviously recommendations from ORI would be updated for documenting and reporting by Dr. Cunningham’s office. One concern was voiced regarding the appointment of the investigative team which seemed only to be the office of the VP for Research without faculty input. However, there needs to be some determination of experts in the field. The inquiry only resides in the OVPR. There was sentiment/suggestion other than from the Research Committee that there should be some oversight by faculty governance as to whether the expert panel is appropriate. It was noted that this would put in jeopardy concerns regarding confidentiality. It is really under the office of compliance and to protect both the accusers and the accused. It was noted that confidentiality is imperative, it is very time consuming.

Dr. Rossi noted that the Research Committee was to consider whether the process needed to be changed, updated, or recognized as functioning well with its current structure. She asked that members consider these issues, read over the document again in light of Dr. Cunningham’s presentation, and we will vote at the next meeting. Dr. Rossi asked that the members look closely at the safeguards for the whistleblower especially as regards students.

January, 2022, Dr. Lanier will come to the Committee. Dr. Rossi asked for items for him to address.

Harr: A number of government agencies have been asked to set aside 10% of their funds for artificial intelligence, machine learning, quantum computing (NSF, DOE, NIH).

Does WSU have any effort in this regard to help PIs incorporate this so we can take advantage of these funds.

Dr. Rossi asked if there are other questions to ask Dr. Lanier, other members to invite for future meetings.

R1 subcommittee made some recommendations such as internal funding and how it has helped/not helped faculty funding. Should such funding be centralized as it is now or should some part of the funds return to the units to decide where to put the seed money. Change in calculation in counting the research funding. How much of IDC is used to support further R&D at the University. There is another jump in funding in the last year as well as the change in 2016. Is the recent jump in funding from the HFH group joining? On the other hand, what is the activity of the faculty that was here before as it speaks to how we are functioning and able to continue to be an R1 institution. Although we are doing well, we cannot sit complacently. The total number of dollars increase in recent years seems good but what are the chances that some of the big grants slipping away and making us fall off the R1?

Alan: The data methods are incompletely described to determine R1 but we are below the median and so we may not be as comfortable as we seem. Bringing in the HFH group shows there are strategies that can help us maintain our strength.

Harr: What are the grave changes of dropping out of R1 status? What are the large grants that are worrisome? One is the PRB, Perinatal Research Branch. Dr. Rossi noted we have heard very little about its renewal. CURES is a concern but it is looking better as well. In physics it is an NSF center collaborative grant as does engineering in civil engineering.

The R1 status brings in better graduate students and post doctoral fellows so that it feeds research progress and the enterprise forward.