Academic Senate Research Committee Minutes   Sept. 23, 2021
Via Zoom
Time: 3 pm – 4 pm

Members present: Noreen Rossi (chair), Alan Dombkowski, Andrew Fribley, Krishnarao Maddipati, Ramzi Mohammad, Shane Perrine, Joseph Roche, Shirley Papuga, Robert Harr, Tamara Bray, Arun Iyer, Paul Beavers (interim liaison)

Members absent with notice: Lance Heilbrun, Karen MacDonell, Wanda Gibson Scipio, Robert Reynolds, Le Yi Wang

The chair opened the meeting at 3 pm and asked members to introduce themselves to the group.

The chair then proceeded to comment that in the past this committee functioned to receive information and provide input to various research related entities at WSU such as the IRB, SPA, VP office, Cores, and the like. This year the Committee has received three major charges from administration via the Policy Committee. Documents with those communications were provided prior to the meeting. The first two charges are of the highest priority in terms of time.

1.   Future of Higher Education
First issue is the "post pandemic university" or future of higher education. Members from the previous year recall that we had begun to have groups but did not have the document available then. The membership of the committee as a whole has changed considerably and thus the groups would need to be realigned. The timeline for our draft to Policy is very short, namely, end of October, 2021. It is notable that each of the subcommittees of the Academic Senate have been given the same charge to evaluate from their perspective (e.g., curriculum, student, faculty, budget, etc.) so that our committee should focus on the research mission as it relates to the future of higher education envisioned at WSU. The input from each of the subcommittees will then be coalesced into one document by Policy Committee.

Dr. Dombkowski asked if there was anything done in the spring to date. Dr. Rossi responded that we received the charge the month before the close of semester and summer break and all that was accomplished was sorting groups. We are starting from scratch and with the written document we have a clearer idea of what is being requested.

Dr. Maddipati asked if the document details what is expected. Dr. Rossi mentioned that it is more helpful that what was given before but is still very broad. For example, as regards students, it says, is our undergraduate body changing in ways that require us to change the services offered. It is our decision to consider what this means for undergraduate physics, chemistry, anthropology, biology? Is there is it going to change because of what's happened the last couple of years with this pandemic? And even without the pandemic, how is education going to change in the sciences over the next, next 5-10 years of this strategic plan.

Professor Roche inquired as to the procedure regarding the responsibilities that this committee is charged with, to whom the report is submitted, and beyond that where does it go. The chair explained that the respective drafts from our subgroups (to be determined) would be submitted to this committee and discussed/amended and put into one document from Research. Our document will then be submitted to Policy and then distributed to the whole Academic Senate. From there, Dr. Rossi mentioned it was her understanding, that the total document from all Senate subcommittees would then be sent to the Provost and then the President.

Professor Bray made key observation that the post pandemic document are truly enormous. She inquired whether this was originated by Policy or from the President and how much we can realistically be expected to accomplish. She pointed out the researching some of the questions would be a full time job for several months.

Dr. Rossi agreed and pointed out why there was some pushback by Policy regarding the timeline. She also commented that our charge may be more to ask the right questions, decide on the vision for WSU research rather than finding the solution. Basically, our committee would point out the direction, needs, structure, infrastructure anticipated that the University administration will then need to study and answer and develop. For example, how are you going to recruit students, undergraduate students to STEM? If so, we can outline what support will be needed for the recruitment, education, and infrastructure should be.

Dr. Rossi emphasized that since administration asked us what we thing will be needed, then this is the opportunity to tell them what we really think it will need in research to educate our students both undergraduates and graduates, and to support our faculty in their teaching and in their research endeavors, so that they can be successful in the future. The administration may not agree, they may not be able to accomplish what we set out, but they asked for our input to the strategic plan. This is our chance to tell them. If we do not ask, if we do not plan, then it will not happen for the students, the faculty, or the institution.   For example, in computer science say there may be an advanced in computer connectivity that the University should plan ahead for for the benefit of its students and its faculty to keep computer connectivity at the leading edge. Otherwise we will not be able to communicate with international collaborators. These insights should be incorporated into the document.

2. Process for Evaluating Faculty re: Possible Research Misconduct
Dr. Rossi then pointed out the second charge that did come down to Research from Policy, namely, to examine the Research Misconduct Policy. Specifically, to evaluate the research misconduct policy as regards protections for adequate process for faculty being evaluated. There is concern that there is not a consistent process being followed at WSU. Policy would like our committee to weigh in on this. Dr. Rossi suggested we bring Dr. Cunningham to one of our meetings to discuss the process. Not what constitutes misconduct which he presented last year or so, but the *process* for evaluating someone charged with misconduct and how the current policy is implemented. Dr. Maddipati agreed that we need a kind of a roadmap from the Research Compliance Officer, (Cunningham). It was agreed that the chair should invite Dr. Cunningham to attend our meeting in November or December at the latest to provide the information on process.

3. Budgetary Support for Research
The third priority charged to us by Policy is to evaluate budgetary support for research and whether funds are being effectively marshaled as regards research endeavors. Several sub-issues are listed in the document with the charge but each one is a major issue in and of itself.

Dr. Maddipati asked for clarification on the procedure that occurs for funding support through grants to support research and how it is allocated. He asked for better clarity on the process and whether the process is working as it should or needs improvements. Dr. Rossi pointed out that 48% of indirect cost return goes to OVPR. Dr. Maddipati asked how much of that goes back to research programs? Dr. Dombkowski noted that 7 -8 years ago the amount of indirect cost return that came back to the PI was reduced and that returning more to the PI would again be the best

investment as seed money for the investigator to compete for additional grant funding, such as funding a summer student to obtain preliminary data.

Dr. Rossi noted that similar issues to those mentioned need to be brought up and addressed such as the situation in SPA (which has had a exodus of staff lately) just before NIH deadline. The loss due to retirements was known to administration much earlier but not posted for replacement so that it is now in a crisis mode.

Dr. Fribley made a follow up comment to Dr. Dombkowski by noting that ~ 2013-2014 the then President and Vice President for Research put together a committee to study the indirect returns and their distribution at Wayne State. It was very clear that they wanted these funds more in alignment with other universities, but that the real agenda was to cut the return to the departments and the investigators. It will be very difficult to get it back under the current administration.

Mr. Beavers, the liaison to the budget committee for this meeting stated he hoped this would be an area where joint work between the research committee and the budget committee would occur, because budget committee has wanted to take a close look at the OVPR for quite a while. He proposed a joint meeting with budget committee, Dr. Lanier, and other relevant individuals to start asking some pointed questions about exactly what's going on. there. Because that might not have an immediate effect could have long range effects. He mentioned that presentations from the OVPR to the Budget Planning Council have been very sketchy and that working together we may be able to motivate them to be more detailed and how they discuss things with the faculty and participate in joint governance. For example, is there money being put in into places where there actually is no work being done.

Dr. Bray underscored what Mr. Beavers was saying. She pointed out that the organizations chart of OVPR has 5 vice presidents whose responsibilities are not altogether clear. Presentations from that quarter or very superficial. Perhaps working together we could get more detailed insights on the business about five VPs and more.

Dr. Rossi also mentioned that some of these budgetary and organizational issues may also come up as we discuss the future of higher education and research and facilities, indirect costs being put more effectively deployed for the betterment of research and faculty doing research.

Dr. Dombkowski raised the topic of exploring funds available for summer undergraduate research. Prior to the pandemic programs were in place to support summer undergraduates who would apply to the University for a small stipend to work in the lab - great for the students, investigator, and the university. With COVID, that all kind of went by the wayside. Reinvigoration of that type of program would be very useful. Dr. Rossi pointed out that the Build Program which was renewed by NIH has also gotten a bit sidelined during the pandemic So, but these are the three major priorities and then we have these other issues.

4. <u>Working Subgroups for Item #1</u>
Dr. Rossi shared the original membership for the "post pandemic university" working groups. Several members are no long on our committee and several new members have joined. Given that we now have the written document on what is requested we can realign the working groups. Dr. Bray asked if we should focus on #6 on the document, namely, research. Dr. Rossi agreed and emphasized that our working groups should be very focused on the research aspects (as there are similar charges to Curriculum, Faculty Affairs, Budget, Facilites etc. Committees), but that there are research aspects to student education and faculty that may not be on the radar of the other committees. For example, how to address laboratory education and field studies, such

as in anthropology; or individuals who collaborate abroad. Also, we need to address things like human research, animal research, field research, and these may be expected to change.

Dr. Fribley suggested that we decide which items come under our purview. Maintaining R1 university status and the facilities essential for STEM courses and laboratory instruction are key. What do we need to recruit students to these fields and then educate them for the future. Some of the education cannot be done online.

Additional discussion occurred that highlighted the intersection with the curriculum committee charge for higher education. Regardless, the needs of the students in STEM to be prepared for the future regardless of major is important as well. Drs. Harr and Fribley urged integration with the Curriculum Committee so we don't overreach into their mandate but have input. Dr. Fribley stated that he is on that committee which will meet Oct. 6 so he could report back as to what they are thinking and prioritizing. Dr. Rossi noted that the Curriculum Committee is likely to be looking at broader issues and that we should think in terms of science/research education for undergrads, graduate students, (master's, and doctoral) and the new issue of possible certificate programs.

In part, this is designed to keep Wayne State competitive but also to gain revenue for individuals gaining certification training in a few months or one year. What fields or programs could that occur in? We do not need to develop the curriculum but to point out where the needs are/will be and where there needs to be development of programs.

Dr. Harr raised the question of the STEM teaching infrastructure. He reported that he is teaching in the newly opened STEM building, but that it is odd to be asking about it when they just finished or invested in that building; he doubted that there would be more STEM teaching facilities built for undergraduates. He then raised the question of diversity in STEM, with even this committee leaning more towards men than women faculty and that we need to encourage more diversity in faculty recruitment and retention. These are real challenges nationwide and that there should be an initiative at the university level for recruiting more women in STEM.

Dr. Rossi noted that these issues are exactly the kind of
 formulation that is needed for this kind of document – to say what is needed, necessarily to provide the answers but the outline, map, or strategy for the future – to try to get a more diverse faculty, both in terms of more women, more people who have diverse sexual preferences, as well as ethnicities and race. A big challenge is that the pipeline is limited, competition for highly qualified diverse individuals is strong, but if we don't make an effort now we will not make any progress.

Concern about maintaining our R1 research status was voiced by several members, because we have fallen in the status, 20 points in the last 10 years on Blue Ridge. The faculty that are being lost are the funded faculty. Additional concern was raised about the PRB (Perinatal Research Branch) funding that is up for renewal very soon. Dr. Rossi stated that very little has been said about the PRB by the Dean of the School of Medicine other than he thinks it will continue but "in a different form." This will be very difficult with an interim chair of OB-GYN and pediatricians having defected en masse to CMU. There are no specifics being provided as to what this new "form" will be or the plans for renewal. Perhaps that is something to ask the VP for Research and the VP for Health Affairs as well and one of our meetings.

Dr. Fribley asked what will happed if we lose our R1. Dr. Rossi stated she had no answer to that but that we have our work cut out for us and that one good thing the new Provost is aware of these challenges and is addressing them. For example, he is looking into the Centers that are on the books but don't exist in real function. Is there a budget going there? He is asking for solid review and reports but early days yet. Dr. Fribley voiced concern because a similar review was dong when Dr. Lanier came on board (10 years ago). Mr. Beavers confirmed that the Centers were supposed to go through a regular reaccreditation process. That cycle was interrupted. It has not happened and will need to be reviewed and reassessed for continued existence. We also found that some units call themselves "centers" but are not actually official "Centers" of the university. It is planned to look at them and be sure that they are viable to make sure that there will be a university contribution. Not all of them are bringing in funds and self sustaining as a worthwhile center. And that process is just completely disrupted.

It was decided to reorganize the working subgroups into three groups only: student, faculty, and R1+facilities. Dr. Rossi will send out a request to ask for volunteers/preferences to each of the three groups and then the groups can meet to address their respective topics at their convenience (in person, by Zoom, etc.)

Meantime, Dr. Rossi will contact Dr. Cunningham to come and provide information in November (if possible) regarding the process currently in place to evaluate research misconduct.