

**Minutes of 2010 March Research Committee Meeting  
25 March 2010**

Present: David Cinabro, Maria Ferreira, David Kessel, Rodger MacArthur, Boris Mordukhovich, Frederic Pearson, David Thomas, Harley Tse, Jeffrey Withey, Joseph Dunbar (Administrative Liaison)

Guests: Robert Kohrman, Hilary Ratner, Mark Byrd

We opened with a presentation/discussion with the VP for Research Hilary Ratner. She showed us the organization chart for the Division of Research. While there are many FTE's in the organization, most of these are in Research Institutes and SPA. The VPR's office is 10 FTE's (the VP, 2 AVP's, 2 Clerical, 2 Business Operations, 3 Communications). All have the appropriate backgrounds for their jobs. She then gave her "spaghetti and meatballs" chart that shows all the things that contribute to research activities at the university and all the infrastructure that supports it. The take away message is that a diverse bunch of things are done to support research, and not all of them sit in the Division of Research. In response to questions she noted that NSF rankings are by expenditures on research. A firm called Academic Analytics (<http://www.academicanalytics.com/>) tries to account for other measures of research (publication, talks, reputation, etc.) but their analysis seems to be perpetually six months away. The NSF rankings take into account not only Federal Grant Awards, but also State/Local, Industry, Internal Direct Spending, Unrecovered Indirect Costs, and "Other" which includes many things some of them external and some internal.

The Committee chair takes this moment to insert an email he shared with a Senate member about the NSF rankings. The information came via Jim Barbret:

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Date: Wed, 17 Mar 2010 13:03:21 -0400 (EDT)  
From: David Cinabro <cinabro@physics.wayne.edu>  
To: c.j.parrish@wayne.edu  
Subject: Wayne State Research Spending

Hi Charley

I finally got to the bottom of your long standing question about the difference between our stated research activity that the OVPR presents to the BOG, the so called Grants and Contracts number, and the NSF number for R&D Expenditures. Jim Barbret shared with me the detailed break down of the NSF calculation. For FY2008, the latest NSF numbers available the R&D Expenditure for Wayne State is \$M249.

The breaks into:

NSF R&D Expenditure	Amount (\$M)
Federal	116
State and Local	10
Industry	13
Institutional	33
Unreimbursed Indirect	42
Other	35
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Total	249

Most of these are self-explanatory. Institutional is Wayne State internal spending on R&D. Unreimbursed Indirect are the indirect costs that the NSF calculates that are not reimbursed by external grants. Most of this comes from grants that do not allow the full indirect cost rates to be charged. For

example I have an NSF Research Experience for Undergraduates grant which caps indirect costs at 10% rather than the 52% Wayne State rate. The other 42% appears in the Unreimbursed Indirect line. Other includes a bunch of things most of which are external support, but some of which are internal. The total of Federal, State and Local, Industry, and Other is \$M174 which agrees well with the \$M164 that appears in OVPR report to the BOG. It should be a bit larger as some things in Other would not count in the Grants and Contracts number. The NSF does not break down "Other" so it is impossible to do better than this.

Thus the major difference between the NSF and OVPR number is internal spending plus the unreimbursed indirect costs.

I do not think there is any problem here. The NSF simply tries to do a more complete calculation of the research activity at each institution than is measured by the total of external grants. It is not perfect but it is calculated in a consistent way across all institutions and is a good measure of relative research activities among institutions and a rough measure of total research spending at an institution.

David

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Thus one of the difficulties of accounting for the University's support for research is that there are many sources of support, and the question usually needs to be narrowed to be made more meaningful. The Division of Research operations are funded with 10% of the indirect costs. The majority goes to the general fund, then colleges, departments, and finally PI's.

Rob Kohrman, the Associate Vice President for Budget, Planning & Analysis introduced Mark Byrd, Assistant VP, who recently joined Wayne State and is looking into the questions of research spending and productivity. Rob briefly showed us a comparison of our research expenditures divided by the number of tenured faculty. By this measure Wayne State is more productive than Michigan State. He also compared our administrative expenses with our research peers (those ranked 40-60 in the NSF Publics) and our official peer group. He noted that we are below average in both of these groups.

There seems no evidence that we are administratively bloated. Also we all noted that one of the most effective ways to increase our NSF ranking would be to expand the number of tenured faculty in areas that are active in research.

Our guests and some members had to leave at this point.

We approved the February meeting minutes without change.

We reviewed the two draft outlines that the committee chair presented. One is for the brief summary of our activities in 2009-10. Changes were suggested for some of the items in the outline of the brief that mis-represented the conclusions of last year's committee report. The language will be softened to indicate that the decline in our NSF rankings in the early 2000's was mainly due to relatively slower growth in our internal support for research as compared to our peers. Also we should make it clear that the efforts to improve SPA are paying off, but more still needs to be done to improve grant management and the correction of errors.