

Minutes for Senate Research Committee Meeting
25 September 2009

Present: David Cinabro (chair), Maria Ferreira, Adnan Hussain (Student Council Liaison) Frederic Pearson, David Thomas, Harley Tse, Jianjun Wang, Jeffrey Withey.

Absent: Robert Arking (AAUP-AFT Liaison) Ramona Benkert, David Kessel, Rodger MacArthur, Tej Mattoo, Boris Mordukhovich, Joseph Dunbar (Administrative Liaison).

A) Meetings for the Fall Semester, Friday 3:00 in FAB 1270, on the week following the full Senate meeting. Thus 16 October, 13 November, and 11 December. For winter semester, we will choose a new meeting time, as some cannot attend Friday afternoon.

B) We discussed what to do this year.

1) Harley has sent around the report that last year's committee wrote on the University's research ranking. One of the main conclusions of that report was that the University is not doing enough to support research. Thus the obvious follow on activity is to try to understand how the University supports research and try to evaluate what is working and what is not working. There was general agreement that the views of the PI's on University support are probably different than the views of administrators. Thus we need to talk with administrators, from the President down to Department Chairs, and hear what they are doing to support research. Then we can compare with our own faculty perspective and see if we have to dig further. Thus each of us will talk to some administrators before the next meeting and share with all of us what is learned. A partial list:

Cinabro - University President, Engineering Dean, Business Dean, Chairs of Physics, Chemistry, Biology
Pearson - Dean Greenberg in CLAS, Thompson - Head of the Center for Urban Studies
Ferreira - Dean Wood in School of Ed, VP for Research Ratner
Tse - Dean of Med School and Associate Deans
Wang - Med School Budget Dean, Center person (whose name I missed)
Thomas - Pharmacy Dean and others
Withey - Chairs of Science Departments in Med School

Others are welcome to talk to others. We all think it may be eye opening. My suggestions for questions for administrators are "What are you doing to support research? ", "How much does that cost? ", "Does it work?", "If so, how can you tell, and if not, why not?", and "Is there something else you would like to be doing to support research?". Working to write a report on this could be the bulk of our activity this year.

2) Review results of external reviews of SPA/OVPR. What actions are planned and is there hope for fixing the problems identified? Cinabro will talk to the VP for Research about the status of these reports. Perhaps she can come to talk with us about them.

3) Are the new tools to support proposal preparation and grant management working?

We will try to get Jim Barbret from the OVPR/SPA to come to the October committee meeting to tell us the status. It seems that more work is needed to train/publicize the new tools.

4) School of medicine "tax" of Departmental ICR. What the heck is really going on here? Harley explained that to fill a deficit in the School of Meds budget, the Dean asked for contributions from the Departments. This contribution happens to be equal to the Departmental share of the ICR, although it is not described as a "take back" of the ICR. While we all agreed that this has consequences for research, this is mostly a budget issue. The Senate's Policy and Budget committees are looking into this, and we decided to table any further discussion of this until more news arrives, or we are asked for an investigation or a comment by these two

other Senate committees.

5) How do we deal with wildly varying fringe rates? A professor in the Math department won a grant with a 7% fringe rate on his summer salary. In subsequent years the fringe rate rose dramatically resulting in a large deficit. This is also a problem for graduate tuition, which usually rises more than the standard 4%/year that we are allowed to inflate costs.

These are great questions for Jim Barbret and we can discuss them with him, hopefully in October.

6) Research Misconduct. Bob Arking noted a specific problem with our current definition of "Academic Misconduct" related to misrepresentation in a paper in preparation. Since the paper was not published, the problem was caught before the paper was submitted, the case did not lead to a formal charge of Academic Misconduct. We should probably look into making a minor change in the definition to cover cases such as this. We will take this up when Bob can join us, probably in October.

7) Purchasing and Disbursements take too long. One professor in Computer Science lost a substantial payment as the company went bankrupt months after it should have been invoiced. For some reasons, the University imposes very severe restrictions (in fact, bans) on buying scientific books from grant money. This sounds rather strange, particularly for mathematicians who do not need much equipment besides books and computers (for the latter only indirect costs are available by the university policy).

We will try to get someone from Purchasing in to discuss these matters with us, hopefully in November.