

**Minutes of Academic Senate UROP Subcommittee Meeting
December 4, 2019**

(Drafted by Krysta Ryzewski)

Present: Brad Roth, Patricia McCormick, Meghan Courtney, Jennifer Wareham, Christine Chow, Krysta Ryzewski

Guests: Darryl Gardner (Dir. Operational Excellence, Student Success) and Matthew Orr (Student Success Program Coordinator)

Committee Discussion with Gardner and Orr

Plans for Spring / Summer Undergraduate Research Experience Funding:

- There were no awards granted in Spring/Summer 2019
- All awards for 19-20 AY were made this Fall b/c there was a request to accelerate this year's deadline (these do not include awards not given in S/S 2019)
- Requesting Carry Forward funds for Spring/Summer 2020 awards; will request other funds if those are not forthcoming
- In future, will return to splitting award to two award periods per year.
- Recognition that this year's award process was "too rushed"
- Giving all awards in Fall this AY allows time for admin to plan for awarding process in future
- Committee members stressed importance of S/S funding for students whose research opportunities involve travel

Committee Operations & Old vs. New UROP Plans

- Provost's Office committee is suspended until AS committee produces report
- McNair combination with UROP funding is "off the table"
- Current long-term aim is to develop a more robust funding program
- See Handout: Administrative Structure Benchmarking (from August 2019) – UROP at WSU compared to peer institutions

Role of Academic Senate UROP Committee

- Roth: Still trying to figure out role of AS committee, and asked for information about resources available and what more administrative people have in mind
- Gardner: Never formally achieved the design of a "charge" for Brockmeyer's UROP committee. Did establish stakeholders and involve student reps, but did not get as far as assembling a refurbished UROP package. Ideas floated about redeveloping website, a common app, highlighting student stories – but no real program redevelopment established.

- The initial UROP changes and Brockmeyer's UROP committee was intended to address concerns that there was not enough participation among minority students and therefore should be aligned with McNair Scholars program. Brockmeyer's group was intended to be a UROP redesign team that included more diversity and campus voices.
 - o Committee pointed out difficulty of categorizing diversity according to federal guidelines, which do not take into account different socio-economic and ethnic populations, including: Middle Eastern, Asian, immigrant, or first-generation students. This is an opportunity to highlight how our institution serves a highly diverse demographic population.
 - o AS Committee discussed the need to include a wide range of disciplines in the UROP redesign committee
 - o Suggestions by AS Committee to include stronger review process, evaluation of outputs, and post-award follow-up

Future of UROP

- Gardner: The whole UROP process needs to be rethought
- AS Committee suggestion to incorporate UROP into orientation
- Discussion about need to mentor students to identify research projects, host workshops, etc.; also help to target audiences of students who are less likely to apply to UROP – including those taking online courses
- Suggestion to look at what people / units in the University are already doing. CLAS hosts workshops for undergraduates about how to apply for funding
- Proposal to create a ladder for introducing process of research to students

Evaluation of Applications

- Request from AS Committee to clarify evaluation process and timeline (see handout from Orr of evaluation process)
- 3 faculty in 'general area' of applicant review each proposal. 5 different divisions. There is no committee of reviewers to discuss ranking of proposals. Weighted scores are used to determine awardees.
- Applications are divided by divisions "to some extent" before the awards are allocated. There is a subjective process for selecting 'balance' of awardees across disciplines. There is no formal review procedure or review committee. AS Suggestion to form a UROP review committee
- Suggestion to take student name off of proposal – increase blind review to help with anonymity, fairness, less bias
- In applications, the range of what students are proposing to do is huge. And how students are proposing to do it (students write some proposals from scratch – others seem to copy/paste faculty grant text). How do reviewers evaluate disparity in quality of proposal texts? Very difficult to compare students who are doing

independent work vs those working as part of a team. Perhaps it could be part of a review criteria to assess independent writing of applicant.

- Students can request feedback on their proposals if they are denied. They then receive the faculty reviewer comments (with the faculty names removed).
- Evaluation form based off of rubric in application
- Reviewers are volunteer-basis every award cycle; Reviews are blind

Evaluation / Review of Research conducted during UROP

- Faculty mentor signs off on UROP report that students write. This is the current end of the UROP Process for students and faculty mentors.
- Reports are not evaluated by a larger UROP committee, office, etc.
- AS Committee recommends a Final Report Review committee, and that faculty mentor fills out an evaluation tied to program-wide rubric.

Other Issues

- Absence of Interest / Investment by Development Office. Gardner's / Provost's office has not reached out to them yet. There is no option to donate to student research on the WSU alumni/donation cards.
- Lacking opportunities for Development / Alumni to connect with UROP to highlight student experiences (WSU ranked a top-10 "hidden gem")
- Our financial aid model limits some students from accepting UROP funding; some have had to turn it down
- UROP Overall Expenditures amount to ~\$250K per year (\$143K in 2018-19). This includes UROP research awards, conference participation and travel for undergraduates (not just UROP awardees). Each UROP research award is \$3,000 – for ~60 awardees.
- There are many Departments that fund undergraduate research experiences through their own programs and fellowships. Provost's office looking to take stock of these.
- Is there a way to compensate students with non-financial incentives that would not impact their financial aid? Cannot hire as Student Assistant b/c that would affect next year's financial aid. Vouchers? Faculty grant money management? Free parking? Might be workarounds for costs incurred, but difficulties still exist.
- Many students are not applying b/c of potential hit against their financial aid.
- Fall/Winter 2019 – there were 15 students out of 60 who needed to have UROP coordinated against their financial aid on an individual, manual case-by-case basis. 4 wound up having their financial aid cap raised, but the others had the amount of their loans reduced b/c of the UROP award; at least 2 were unable to accept the full award amount, 1 had to decline it.
- There is a need to streamline the financial aid review process in the UROP administration. Perhaps in the process of creating the proposal's budget. And adding

a consent box on the application where students can elect to have Financial Aid review their funding in line with the UROP award if it is granted.

- Orr: wants to find a way for students to get formal recognition on their records for receiving a UROP (zero-credit directed study, for ex., which is already done for writing intensive with pass/fail grade, assigned when report is submitted – introduces responsibility/accountability)

Next Steps

- Assemble ideas for preliminary report over email to isolate particular themes going forward and identify concerns
- AS Sub-committee will continue to function and hopefully find a way to integrate with Provost's Office / UROP team