

Official Memorandum of Action – MOA-03/10

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL
Name of Council/Committee

12 June 2003
Date of Meeting

RECOMMENDATION:

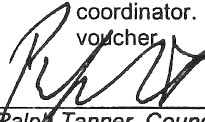
DATE
1 July 2003

Distribution of the Faculty Research Travel Fund shall be made as follows:

Each year, a base amount of travel support per bargaining unit faculty will be calculated by dividing the amount available in the faculty research travel fund by the total number of bargaining unit faculty. The resulting amount will be available to each qualifying faculty member.

At the end of the fiscal year, all remaining monies in the faculty research travel fund will be divided among those individuals who have completed an authorized trip subject to separate caps for North American trips vs. international trips. The division will be by the ratio of the actual expenses of the trip. In no case will the amount of payment exceed the actual cost of the faculty expenditures.

Faculty seeking funding must submit their request to the Faculty Research Travel Fund coordinator. Each request must contain documentation of the presentation and a travel expense voucher.


Ralph Tanner, Council Chair

6/16/03
Date

☒ Approve

☐ Disapprove

☐ Return to council/committee

Route to council(s): (1)

(2)

Comments: Acting on behalf of the Faculty Senate (Constitution, Article VII: Executive Board and Committees, Sec.3), the recommendation was approved by the Faculty Senate Executive Board at its regular meeting on 19 June 2003. However, all decisions made by the executive board shall be subject to review by the Senate (Constitution, Article VII: Executive Board and Committees, Sec.4).


Faculty Senate President

23 June 2003
Date

☒ Approve

☐ Disapprove

☐ Other action

Comments:


Vice President for Research

6/25/03
Date

☒ Approve

☐ Disapprove

☐ Other action

Comments:


Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

14 AUG 2003
Date

Report to accompany MOA-03/10

Background

The Faculty Research Travel Fund (RTF), along with the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund (FRACASF) and the Support for the Final Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition of Creative Works (PPP&E), was originally created under contract between Western Michigan University and the WMU AAUUP. The contract appointed the Research Policies Council as the agency to determine distribution of these funds.

Several contracts ago, this funding was dropped from the contract. However, recognizing the importance of this support to the advancement of Western Michigan University in the research arena, the administration has continued, and even increased, the funding for these activities. Bargaining unit faculty members have come to expect that the Faculty Research Travel Fund would reimburse actual, allowable expenses up to the reimbursement ceiling for one trip per fiscal year for the presentation of the results of research or creative activities.

In recent years, the Research Policies Council has established a zone system based upon the distance of travel. Furthermore, they advertised the allowance of funding for a second trip, if there was money available in the Faculty Research Travel Fund.

While this plan was equitable, demand outstripped the resources and left the fund deeply in debt. Funding was never available for second trips – the funding for first trips alone left the fund tens of thousands of dollars in debt annually. This debt was eventually relieved by various administrative sources.

With the advent of the current fiscal crisis, finding a source to relieve overruns was no longer feasible. In December 2002, funding for travel had to be suspended until the end of the fiscal year. All travel from the hold date through June 30, 2003 would then be funded based upon the travel zone, the total amount requested from the fund, and the remaining money available in the fund. Faculty member that traveled before the hold date received full funding (up to the zone limit). Faculty members that traveled after the hold date may not receive full funding. This is not equitable. Furthermore, it has caused hardship for both the travelers and their departments.

The Research Policies Council appointed a Select Committee composed of William Wiener (Chair), David Code, Eileen Evans, and Ralph Tanner to develop a distribution mechanism that would be equitable, yet fiscally responsible. This report and the MOA come from the work of that committee – as modified by the Research Policies Council itself.

Alternatives Discussed

The Select Committee investigated several options – ranging from a competitive scheme similar to that employed for distributing FRACASF awards to placing controls upon the awards through the faculty member's department chair.

The Select Committee considered segmenting the fund by a smaller time period than a year such as quarters, months, etc. This segmentation was considered as parcel to each of the considered schemes. However, the committee did not recommend such segmentation. The committee felt that this would advantage faculty that traveled during segments of light travel to the disadvantage of faculty that traveled during segments of heavy travel.

The Select Committee considered and recommended against simply holding all payments for the entire fiscal year (or smaller time segment), then disbursing them proportionally to a zone scheme relative to available funding. The committee felt this would place too much uncertainty upon faculty members considering travel and would continue the hardship created by the current holding scheme.

The Select Committee considered and recommended against the competitive scheme for several reasons. First, it felt that the mechanism for such a scheme would be unwieldy – requiring a standing committee of judges for the duration of the fiscal year. Second, it felt unless all awards were held until the end of the fiscal year (or the end of the time segment), faculty members traveling later would be disadvantaged relative to those traveling earlier. This, again, would continue the hardship created by the current holding scheme.

The Select Committee also considered placing a control upon the awards by requiring Department Chairs to pre-approve the travel and provide a match for any award. This scheme was rejected because there are departments that are incapable of matching any travel awards. Therefore, many faculty members would be completely ineligible for awards under such a scheme.

The scheme proposed by the Select Committee (and contained in MOA-03/10) makes a partial (but equal) annual award available to any bargaining unit faculty member that wishes to travel in order to present their work. Furthermore, it uses any funds not expended (because every faculty member may not travel) to augment the funding of those faculty members that did travel.

Proposal – MOA-03/10

Distribution of the Faculty Research Travel Fund shall be made as follows:

Each year, a base amount of travel support per bargaining unit faculty will be calculated by dividing the amount available in the faculty research travel fund by the total number of bargaining unit faculty. The resulting amount will be available to each qualifying faculty member.

At the end of the fiscal year, all remaining monies in the faculty research travel fund will be divided among those individuals who have completed an authorized trip subject to separate caps for North American trips vs. international trips. The division will be by the ratio of the actual expenses of the trip. In no case will the amount of payment exceed the actual cost of the faculty expenditures.

Faculty seeking funding must submit their request to the Faculty Research Travel Fund coordinator. Each request must contain documentation of the presentation and a travel expense voucher.

An illustrative example

As a simplified example of the proposed distribution, assume that the total RTF is two thousand four hundred (\$2,400) dollars and there are a total of twelve (12) bargaining unit faculty members. Furthermore, assume that the caps have been established as five hundred (\$500) dollars for North American Trips and one thousand (\$1,000) dollars for international trips. All twelve bargaining unit faculty members would have two hundred (\$200) dollars available for travel. Assume only four (4) bargaining unit faculty members travel to present their work. Their respective expenses are as follows:

Faculty Member	Cost of trip	Location
A	\$150	Terre Haute, IN
B	600	Windsor, Ontario
C	1,500	Bangkok, Thailand
D	2,000	Cairo, Egypt
Total	\$4,250	

Faculty member A receives one hundred fifty (\$150) dollars reimbursement upon filing the appropriate travel expense voucher. NOTE THAT NO PERSON CAN BE REIMBURSED FOR MORE THAN THE ACTUAL ALLOWABLE COSTS. Faculty members B, C, & D each receive two hundred dollars reimbursement when they file their respective travel expense vouchers. At the end of the fiscal year, the remaining one thousand six hundred fifty (\$1,650) dollars are divided as follows:

Faculty Member	Cost of trip	Proportion	Additional Allocation
B	\$600	15% (600/4100)	\$247.50
C	1,500	36% (1500/2000)	594.00
D	2,000	49% (2000/4100)	808.50
Total	\$4,100	100%	\$1,650.00

The additional allocation for faculty member B and C are both within the cap. However, the additional allocation for faculty member D would be capped at eight hundred (\$800) dollars. ($\$200 + \$800 = \$1,000$) The excess from faculty member D's additional allocation is available to faculty members B & C (up to their respective caps). The final total allocations would be as follows:

Faculty Member	Cost of trip	Total funded	Percent funded
A	\$150	\$150	100%
B	600	450	75%
C	1,500	800	53%
D	2,000	1,000	50%
Total	\$4,150	\$2,400	

Translation to current situation

Assuming a funding level of one hundred ninety thousand (\$190,000) dollars for the RTF, with nine hundred forty three (943) bargaining unit faculty members, this would result in a base funding of two hundred one (\$201) dollars. Any bargaining unit faculty member that wished to travel to present their work would know that they had this base funding available.

For the past five years, the average number of trips sponsored by the RTF was two hundred seventy three (273) trips per fiscal year. These trips would each have received the base funding of two hundred one (\$201) dollars when the travel expense voucher was filed. One hundred thirty five thousand one hundred twenty seven (\$135,127) dollars would still be available at the end of the fiscal year. This remaining funding would be available to support faculty members who had traveled at a higher level – in this case an additional four hundred ninety five (\$495) dollars per faculty member for an average of six hundred ninety six (\$696) dollars per faculty member. Since some faculty members may have expenses totaling less than six hundred ninety six (\$696) dollars, additional funds might be available for faculty members with greater expenses.