

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL
Minutes of 7 May 2015

Members present: Steve Bertman, Paul Ciccantell, Martha Cuncell-Vargas, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Dan Litynski, Muhammad Razi, David Rudge, Jessaca Spybrook, Susan Stapleton, Susan Steuer, Patti Van Walbeck, Andre Venter, Udaya Wagle. **Also present:** Beth Beaudin-Seiler (for Lori Brown)

Council Chair Paul Ciccantell called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

Procedural Items

Acceptance of the Agenda

A motion was made by Rudge, seconded by Bertman, to accept the agenda. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of 9 April 2015

A motion was made by Wagle, seconded by Razi, to approve the minutes of the 9 April meeting. Correction: Susan Steuer was not present Motion carried.

New Business

There was no new business.

Continued/Old Business

Report from Committee to Consider Using Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award Rubric for the Support for Faculty Scholar Award Rubric – David Rudge, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Andre Venter

This was tabled from the previous meeting, where concerns were expressed that the requirements were too intensive for the intent of the program. An addition to the new format includes an overall assessment of the proposal as a whole and rationale for funding which would be outside of the numerical scoring for criteria 1-5. This procedural change does not require ratification by the full Senate. This would be of particular use for those proposals which are near the cutoff for funding. This allows for a qualitative decision which does not give equal weight for each category. We may also need to consider increasing the amount per award to reflect real travel and research costs. Providing some information for unsuccessful applicants is necessary and the scored portion of the form assists the Office of the Vice President for Research in providing an adequate response. This should also streamline review of proposals and improve fairness and transparency in making judgments about competing proposals. Committee members observed that this is similar to many reviews for external funding and that the guidelines for reviewers need to be well explained for future years.

Comments based upon the criteria outlined would be needed. This is provisionally approved pending another report by the subcommittee in June.

Reports

Council Chair – Paul Ciccantell

Research and Creative Activities Poster Day: The Research and Creative Activities Poster Day will no longer be a part of the charge of this committee. A separate standing committee will be convened, next year chaired by Mark Wheeler, to plan that event. This will allow RPC to focus upon research policy and allow the event to be planned by a dedicated group. This committee will be governed by the Executive Oversight committee.

Meeting with the Humanities Center: Ciccantelli and Rudge met with the Humanities Center about their concerns about research on campus. This group felt that the SFSA could not be used for travel, which is not true. Funding for travel is a major issue for this group, as well as those in the sciences, and declining funding and increasing travel costs. How do we use funding to encourage research to enhance the reputation of the University? How do we encourage junior colleagues to do the things which will enhance their research? How do we serve as advocates through policy for these needs? There are clearly misconceptions about how these funds can be used and we need to address them. Ciccantelli asked Litynski if his survey addresses this, and Litynski said he would report on this at the next meeting. This work will go beyond the committee to other groups.

This is also an issue for grant writing, because not all individuals receive academic credit from their departments for involvement in grants with multiple participants. This is also a problem for individuals in joint appointments. These problems are software-related. We need to distinguish monetary amounts from academic achievement and effort and participants who are not PIs need to be included. Stapleton notes that reports can be run in a variety of ways, and that chairs need to be trained to make the most of the system.

Vice President for Research – Daniel Litynski

Litynski provided information on the SFSA and FRACAA statistics as well as evaluation results from the Research and Creative Activities Day survey.

Dean of the Graduate College – Susan Stapleton

Stapleton reported on a National Science Foundation (NSF) program on National Research Traineeships (NRT) which will help establish learning communities for student leadership, teaching and writing. It is very science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) focused. There will be a ½ day Saturday workshop for students on job search, fellowships, grants, and research which has 92 students registered. It was advertised to students, chairs, social media and the Graduate Student Association.

Business from the Floor

Bertman asked for further information about how the FRACAA survey subcommittee will be formed. Do we have deadlines or just committee volunteers? Is this a good time to collect information, or should it begin in the fall? Rudge noted that outlining the goals of the survey would be a good summer project. He also believes that we should have the survey go out with the advertisements for applicants for these opportunities. Bertman asked if this should only apply to internal funds and Rudge pointed out that Litynski's recent survey covers the other aspects of research obstacles. The charge has been held off until the results of the existing survey have been reported.

Ciccantell noted that the next meeting is focused on setting our charges, so this is something we should address at the June meeting. This will also deal with ethical issues of research. Rudge wants to know if this will include the issues of surveys of students on campus; there was a presentation on a potential policy which has not been enacted.

Adjournment

A motion was made by Stapleton, seconded by Litynski, to adjourn. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on June 11, 2015 at 2:30 p.m.

Susan Steuer
Secretary