

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL
Minutes of January 12, 2017

Members Present: Osama Abudayyeh, Onur Arugaslan, Paul Ciccantell, Martha Councell-Vargas, Robin Criter, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Katherine Joslin, Dan Litynski, Vladimir Risukhin (substitute for College of Aviation), Jessaca Spybrook, Sue Stapleton, Patti VanWalbeck, Andre Venter

Members Absent: Steve Bertman, Damon Chambers, Chris Coryn, Paul Solomon, Susan Steuer

Guest: Sherine Obare, Associate Vice President for Research

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 p.m. by Council Chair Paul Ciccantell. A quorum was present.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

Acceptance of the Agenda

Litynski made a motion to accept the agenda and Criter seconded the motion. The agenda was accepted as proposed.

Approval of the Minutes

VanWalbeck made a motion to approve the minutes of November 10, 2016.

Arugaslan seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Announcements/Chair's Remarks

None.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

DISCUSSION / INFORMATION ITEM(S)

*Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award Study Committee –
Steve Bertman*

Spybrook summarized the subcommittee investigating the effects of FRACAA. It has enlisted a student to help with the work. The timeframe is to present findings at the April meeting.

FRACAA awards are due soon and will be submitted with the online system. Applications are due January 20 and then go to the chairs to sign off.

Support for Faculty Scholar Award applications are due January 31. RPC will discuss the applications at the February 9 meeting. Deadline cards were passed around as a reminder.

*Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund
and SFSA Guidelines Discussion*

Guidelines were distributed. Proposed changes were included, as indicated by underlines. Reviewer process will also be online. It would also make it easier to release comments to applicants. Ciccantell suggested RPC may want to see how it goes this time and take notes to see how it works for the future. Ciccantell noted that many of the changes are intended to align more with NSF review procedures using the same rating system: poor, fair, good, very good, excellent. Abudayyeh noted that the procedures for the guidelines will need to be updated since it is moving to an online format. Ciccantell noted these are partially revised but the committee will continue to work on the revisions.

*Discussion of the Office of the Vice President for Research Data on External
Funding (information distributed at September RPC meeting)*

Updates from Vice President Litynski on funding allocations were based on recent figures from OVPR. He began with discussion of the spring convocation and passed along the fliers. Also distributed was the Discovery magazine, which showcases outcomes from research. Discovery is an internally focused update on funding and research outcomes and lists all internal and external funding awards. Statistics on funding are also included in the Discovery magazine.

Several documents were distributed about the value of externally funded awards, the number of externally funded awards, and the breakout by departments. Litynski highlighted the trends in funding and noted the positive trend in general. He also noted that the average amount of submission is higher than the average amount of awards. One explanation for this is that the larger grants are more competitive and rates are lower.

Joslin brought up a discussion around who gets credit for a grant when it is a collaboration across multiple departments at WMU. Litynski noted that current practice is that the PI gets the credit. He also noted that this may not accurately represent the level of effort. Stapleton noted that strides have been made to recognize co-PIs – through Facilities and Administrative Costs splits, etc. Ciccantell noted that this is still an area that WMU needs to improve to encourage external funding applications.

Litynski distributed budget information for how funds have been allocated thus far this year. He also passed around a three-year summary and history of funds and expenditures. He provided projections for RPC spending as a basis for discussion. Ciccantell opened the discussion about how to best use funds to create opportunities and encourage research. Stapleton also commented on the importance of being able to show that there is a return on investment with the money being awarded to faculty. The total budget has not changed recently. Questions were raised about whether there is a need to increase expenditures in order to increase external awards. How does WMU compare to other similar universities? Litynski emphasized the importance of keeping return on investment at the front of the conversation. Stapleton commented that the University has not examined the distribution of the F&A costs and how that is used to spur research.

The question is whether there may be a possibility of allocating it differently to encourage research. This issue has not been revisited recently. Litynski explained the current distribution of F&A. Giving some of the F&A back to faculty is intended to be an incentive for faculty to seek funding. It was asked what other incentives might the University be able to put in place. Ciccantell encouraged council members to continue to think about this as it is part of the charge of RPC.

Reports

Chair's Report – Paul Ciccantell

Ciccantell had nothing additional to report.

Vice President for Research – Daniel Litynski

Litynski had nothing additional to report.

Sherine Obare distributed announcements with dates of workshops being help by OVPR, which are open to all faculty. Also passed around was a list of research officers and their specific colleges/departments at OVPR. They have a posting for a position on the Human Resources website.

Dean of the Graduate College – Susan Stapleton

Stapleton had the following updates:

- January 27 is the next deadline for student travel funding applications through the Graduate College.
- The Graduate College is trying to focus on interdisciplinary work and thinking about opportunities to help graduate students get involved in research earlier in their training.
- All new graduate students must complete ethics training. Last year's cohort of students had over 900 students complete the ethics course, with a greater than 80 percent pass rate. On average, it took students 5 hours to complete.
- In support of research, there have been many conversations about how funding for graduate students is distributed to colleges across the University. Stapleton has been gathering data compared to similar universities and WMU tends to fund more heavily on teaching rather than research. In the future, base distribution will not change. However, if there is extra funding, there may be additional money allocated strictly for funding students for research related work. Venter asked questions about how money within the colleges is allocated for graduate students. Obare described that it goes to the chairs, who allocate the money for graduate positions. She commented that, in the College of Arts and Sciences, it does primarily go for graduate teaching positions. Stapleton commented that it is a slow process to start to shift allocation towards more research funding. She would like to see WMU increase doctoral enrollment.

ADJOURNMENT

Abudayyeh made the motion to adjourn and Joslin seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Jessaca Spybrook, Acting Secretary