

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL
Minutes of February 9, 2017

Members Present: Osama Abudayyeh, Steve Bertman, Paul Ciccantell, Chris Coryn, Martha Councell-Vargas, Robin Criter, Regina Garza Mitchell (sub for Jessaca Spybrook), Muralidhar Ghantasala, Katherine Joslin, Sue Stapleton, Susan Steuer, Andre Venter

Members Absent: Damon Chambers, Paul Solomon

Guests: Sherine Obare, Associate Vice President for Research; Melanie Greer, Coordinator of Research Data, Office of the Vice President for Research

The meeting was called to order at 3:37 p.m. by Council Chair Paul Ciccantell. A quorum was present.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

Acceptance of the Agenda

Ghantasala made a motion to accept the agenda and Coryn seconded the motion. The agenda was accepted as proposed.

Approval of the Minutes

Venter made a motion to approve the minutes of January 12, 2017 with amendments. Coryn seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Announcements/Chair's Remarks

None.

ACTION ITEMS

None.

DISCUSSION / INFORMATION ITEM(S)

RPC member to serve on the Committee on University Strategic Planning (CUSP)

Ciccantell requested a volunteer to serve on this committee. Stapleton summarized the role of the committee in reviewing midterm strategic planning reports. It involves 2-3 meetings annually, and is a higher-level committee monitoring the implementation of the University's strategic plan, how progress should be measured and where expected outcomes can be adjusted or improved. Ciccantell will approach potential recruits.

Discussion of Support for Faculty Scholar Award Policies and Procedures

Ciccantell distributed materials regarding proposed policies and procedures based upon work by the subcommittee to attempt to make the reviews that are provided more helpful for researchers in design of their proposals and in applying for

funding in the future. The first was a revised scale for evaluation and the other showed proposed changes to the wording of the questions asked of the applicant. The first five questions have been changed to address problems and confusion experienced by evaluators and applicants. The goal was to align the questions with the evaluation criteria, to provide substantive feedback and to make the process as fair and transparent as possible.

Bertman suggested a scale of fundability rather than a yes or no answer to the final question of whether something should be funded (which was absent on this year's form, due to the transition to the electronic system). He pointed out that this allowed proposals with problems, but which represented laudable projects, to still receive a positive review. Discussion ensued. The committee also debated whether the yes/no answer carries more weight than the ratings for the different sections. The numerical scale is currently primary, rather than the yes/no decision.

Venter moved for a vote on whether the committee should have a yes/no question or a numerical scale for ranking the fundability of the proposal. Joslin seconded. Councell-Vargas made a friendly amendment that both a scale and a yes/no component for overall rating of the proposal be included. The vote was to have both items in the last box.

Coryn argued that the scale is not valid for some of the questions. He argued that for the budget question "is an itemized/justified budget provided?" is a yes/no question. He also has concerns about the questions as they are phrased and their clarity to applicants. Joslin argued that the sentences provide important cues for the applicants. Venter, Joslin and Councell-Vargas asked that Coryn look at the criteria and provide suggestions. Coryn agreed and will provide suggestions to Ciccantell, who will reconvene the subcommittee to discuss his revisions. He also asked that RPC provide an exemplar for applicants.

Ciccantell noted that the goal is to make this as clear a process as possible.

Some discussion of improvements to the software which would be desirable for applicants and reviewers and OVPR were discussed. Abudayyeh asked how the system is working for the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award for chair and dean approval. Melanie Greer was asked about improvements she would seek. She felt that it went fairly smoothly from their end and that the vendor is responsive. Name length can cause a problem and there are some glitches with the interface.

Reports

Chair's Report – Paul Ciccantell

Ciccantell will be on sabbatical next year. He had nothing additional to report.

Vice President for Research – Daniel Litynski

Sherine Obare requested that council members attend convocation.

Dean of the Graduate College – Susan Stapleton

Stapleton distributed GA/TA budgets to the deans today. She noted that the base levels have not changed, but this year one-time funds are being distributed by various criteria, but only for research positions. She noted that graduate student support is different than at peer institutions, resulting in fewer master's theses than peers. This is an attempt to use the labor pool of graduate students to bolster external research, which it is hoped will result in more funds available to support graduate students. This is for AY 2017-18. She described some of the ways in which the Graduate College is attempting to attract stronger students through funding and improve the University's research profile through new ways of doing business.

ADJOURNMENT

Stapleton made the motion to adjourn and Coryn seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Susan Steuer, Secretary