

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL  
Minutes of April 13, 2017

**Members Present:** Osama Abudayyeh, Steve Bertman, Paul Ciccantell, Chris Coryn, Martha Councell-Vargas, Robin Criter, Katherine Joslin, Dan Litynski, Betty McKain (for Patti Van Walbeck) Paul Solomon, Jessaca Spybrook, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Sue Stapleton, Susan Steuer, Andre Venter

**Member Absent:** Onur Aruguslan

**Guests:** Sherine Obare, Associate Vice President for Research; Kay Mortellaro, Research Program Officer

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*

Solomon motioned to accept the agenda as amended and Venter seconded the motion. The agenda was accepted as amended.

*Approval of the Minutes*

Spybrook made a motion to approve the minutes of March 16, 2017. Coryn seconded the motion. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

*Research and Creative Activities Internal Funding Request  
for New University President*

The Faculty Senate Executive Board requested a one-page budget summary and justification to provide to the new president of the University. Ciccantell believes the request implies funds writ large for research and creative activities, not limited to what RPC distributes. Bertman recommends a commitment to maintain and replace research equipment and instrumentation and an ongoing plan for this important infrastructure. Examples would include Nuclear Magnetic Resonance machine and Mass Spectrometer in chemistry, which are very old and nearly non-functioning. Litynski said he has requested a complete inventory of this kind of equipment and a plan for maintenance and replacement. Venter noted that Facilities and Administrative (F&A) funds could be earmarked for replacement and maintenance, but unused funds are often swept by the Provost. Litynski believes a plan could help, but plans need to be in place and communicated to administration. Litynski noted that how other institutions handle this is only known anecdotally and could be investigated and McKain concurred. Stapleton noted

that WMU sends a good ratio of funding back to departments and colleges, but it is not clear how that is being spent. She believes that there will be scrutiny at the federal government level on F&A funds and they may be capped. New models offer jobs which become tenure-track when the faculty member hits an external funding goal. Bertman says we could get more and better graduate students if we could provide stronger packages for them. Litynski spoke about hiring plans which target positions/individuals for strong research funding. Bertman noted that we need more people so we have more research time. Joslin asks how the new president is going to help us grow and if he has put ideas forward. Stapleton, who served on the search committee, said that she feels that he will have a lot to learn about the institution to make those kinds of decisions. Solomon asked what the timeline would be for the summary. Ciccantell believes it needs to be done as soon as possible.

Bertman also suggested that we need strong and unambiguous continuous support for our research agenda. He believes even a statement of support would be helpful to emphasize the importance of research to the institution. A strong statement about intellectual leadership and value provided by our faculty would also be helpful in reinforcing this value (Joslin). The Office of the Vice President for Research noted the need for that office to champion this to improve the climate. Solomon noted that there is a need to make this a place where undergraduates learn from good researchers. Stapleton noted that there is a need to communicate more clearly to our various audiences what education and graduate education offer to the larger culture.

ACTION ITEMS

*Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award Recommendations for Funding*

Bertman reported 43 applications this year, up in numbers and quality from previous years. He outlined three proposals funding between 19 and 21 applications. This year's pool was strongly quantitative, but also saw proposals from Aviation and Business where faculty often do not apply. Because of funds which are underspent, there are adequate funds to cover 21 projects. Bertman made a motion to fund 21 and Councell-Vargas seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports

*Chair's Report – Paul Ciccantell*

Ciccantell noted that his discussion with the Faculty Senate Executive Board included questions about lack of funds, and the reorganization and restaffing in OVRP that Sherine Obare is leading. Ciccantell believes RPC must support these efforts. The Internationalization survey has been postponed at this time due to a survey on student engagement which was given priority. The committee developing the survey is very concerned that there is no clear trajectory for this survey.

*Vice President for Research – Daniel Litynski*

Litynski discussed changes in staffing at OVPR including new research officers, introducing Kay Mortellaro, who was present. He congratulated Sue Stapleton and her staff on the good job they did on the Research and Creative Activities Day, which was the morning of the meeting.

*Dean of the Graduate College – Susan Stapleton*

Stapleton noted that 48 graduate students presented and 17 prizes were awarded at the Research Poster event. She was very pleased with the results. She reminded RPC that the Honors Convocation for graduate students is on April 27 at 5 p.m. and a Board of Trustees member will be there to help present awards. Graduation is coming up as well.

#### **OTHER**

None

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Bertman moved that to adjourn and Coryn seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Susan Steuer, Secretary