

Minutes\*

**Senate Research Committee  
Monday, September 9, 2013  
2:00 - 4:00  
238A Morrill Hall**

- Present: Maria Gini (chair), Arlene Carney, Jayne Fulkerson, Brian Herman, Philip Herold, Brian Johnston, Seung-Ho Joo, Michael Kyba, Frances Lawrenz, Hinh Ly, Scott McIvor, LaDora Thompson, Kathleen Thomas, Thomas Vaughan, Kyla Wahlstrom, Joel Waldfogel, Lynn Zentner
- Absent: Goran Hellekant, Tucker LeBien, Suzanne Paulson, Federico Ponce de Leon, James Orf, Emily Saunoi-Sandgren, Leah Colvin Wansura
- Guests: Sarah Waldemar (Office of the Vice President for Research)
- Other: Peggy Sundemeyer (Office of the Vice President for Research)

[In these minutes: (1) welcome, introductions, committee chair, and issues pending; (2) draft survey from the Office of the Vice President for Research; (3) research policy risk recalibration]

**1. Welcome, Introductions, Committee Charge, and Issues Pending**

Professor Gini convened the meeting at 2:00, welcomed Committee members to the first meeting of the year, and called for a round of introductions.

Professor Gini reviewed the charge to the Committee (recommend to the Faculty Consultative Committee such policies as it deems necessary and appropriate with respect to research activities, facilities, personnel, and patents; consult with and advise the president and senior academic officers on the stimulation of and support for research activities; assist in the evaluation of research programs within the University; speak for the faculty on governmental, industrial, and other private sector and foundation support of the research programs of the University; and advise the Vice President for Research and the Dean of the Graduate School on matters relating to research).

The list of issues pending identifies a number of matters to come before the Committee, Professor Gini next observed, and she asked for comment on them as she narrated the list.

-- "H" numbers and "performance evaluation" systems are being used in a number of colleges; Vice Provost Carney said this was a relevant issue because these factors are appearing in promotion-and-tenure dossiers but there is no consistency across colleges, and this is becoming a bigger issue over time. It would be valuable to have an open discussion of the value of these measures and how they should be interpreted.

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- The Committee will welcome a report from Associate Vice President Webb about the results of the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) and what the University is doing to overcome the burdens identified by the FDP survey.
- Professor Scott Lanyon is chairing a Special Committee on Graduate Education; it has a subcommittee on financing graduate students. The Committee will wish to hear from Professor Lanyon on funding graduate education, including about tuition issues.
- The Committee wishes to have a report on what more is being done to promotion University faculty for membership in the national academies and for national awards; Vice Provost Carney said she would be glad to talk about what is being done. She observed that nominations must come from the faculty but the provost's office is facilitating the process of making nominations.
- At the request of Professor Barbara Elliott at the Duluth campus of the Medical School, the Committee will take up the question of research with Native Americans.
- There is need for continued discussion of research and public engagement, and the Committee needs a representative to the Public Engagement Council (Professor Fulkerson volunteered to serve).
- The Committee will wish to know of any follow up from its statement, adopted by the Faculty Senate, about decisions about training grants with low F&A rates.
- There have been periodic questions about Internal Service Organizations (ISOs); Professor Thomas commented that it seems like they are not consistently administered across the University and it would help if the Committee could understand how they operate. Dr. Sundemeyer said there will be a report later in the year that will be of value to the Committee.
- The Committee will learn about any proposal for a "scholar's exception" to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, which would protect raw data in research in progress; a proposal may come from the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure.
- The Committee will wish to hear a report on the Open Access fund that was created last year: how well it worked and how the money was spent. Dr. Sundemeyer suggested the Committee hear from Nancy Sims from the libraries.
- To the extent there is anything of substance to report, the Committee will wish to hear from Associate Vice President Webb on changes to the job classifications or job families as they may affect research.
- The Committee will receive regular reports on the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program, the Human Subjects Protection Program, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, biosafety, compliance, and on royalties and patent income.

## **2. Draft Survey on Research from the Office of the Vice President for Research**

Professor Gini turned to Associate Vice President Lawrenz to review with the Committee a draft survey about research issues to assist the Office of the Vice President for Research in its strategic planning process. She described the strategic planning process, with a goal of identifying how the

University should move forward in research in the next five years, and emphasized that they want the widest possible participation in the discussion. They are using various methods to reach as many people as possible. She reviewed the strategic priorities of the office:

We will **advance research excellence** by investing in research infrastructure and faculty and educating our students for the industries of tomorrow. We will **accelerate the transfer of knowledge** by creating opportunities for public/private partnerships that move information out of the ivory tower and into the community where it can do the most good. We will **enhance transdisciplinary partnerships** by encouraging collaboration between researchers and among disciplines to derive new concepts and approaches and enable new ways of understanding. And we will **promote a culture of serendipity** where researchers can come together across departments, colleges and disciplines—and with colleagues and communities outside the university—to think creatively and cultivate new ideas.

The survey is to go out next week; Dr. Lawrenz asked for comments.

Committee members provided a number of suggestions about the phrasing and organization of questions on the survey. Professor McIvor said the survey had great questions and he hoped that Dr. Lawrenz receives answers, but added that the biggest challenge will be time: many faculty delete email surveys without responding. What incentive can be provided to recipients to complete it? Professor Thomas suggested that Dr. Lawrenz emphasize how important the survey is to planning for research activities at the University. Dr. Herman said that because investments required will be large, it helps him to be able to report to the Board of Regents and others that the proposed investments, drawing on the survey results, reflect the judgment of the faculty. Dr. Carney commented that Dr. Herman's explanation is the most compelling reason for the faculty to respond: what the University will propose is due to what the faculty have said is needed. And for that reason, they want responses from across all research areas.

Dr. Lawrenz thanked the Committee for its suggestions.

### **3. Research Policy Risk Recalibration**

Vice President Herman next introduced Ms. Waldemar, who is responsible for Research Education and Oversight, to provide an update on the review of policies: why a policy exists, whether it is needed, and the impact of any changes that might be made in time and money.

Ms. Waldemar recalled that she had spoken with the Committee in the past about risk recalibration and said that initially they had looked at processes. Vice President Herman then asked them to look at policies and whether the University is over- or under-regulating and whether there are any policy gaps. They identified the appropriate policies and asked the units to review them and to indicate whether there could be changes and what the financial impact of them would be.

Ms. Waldemar explained the current initiative and the next steps.

#### **Current Initiative:**

- Undertaken as part of OVPR contribution to Operational Excellence
- Compared federal regulations related to research funding against UMN policies
- Assessed opportunities for further additional strategic risk management via a policy “lens”

- Included only policy related initiatives from initial risk recalibration to date
- Represents a "point in time" but sets up process for continuing, quantifiable initiatives in strategic risk management
- Financial impact identified via this initiative = **\$8,676,598**

**Next steps:**

- Tell the stories resulting from the current initiative
- Undertake process and operational initiatives already identified as recalibration activities in OVPR unit workplans for FY14 and 15
- Determine how these impact current policies and UMN risk profile
- Quantify potential impact – both financial and operational
- Collaborate with other units as necessary to revise policies

This is a process in which they will engage continuously, Ms. Waldemar told the Committee. They will see if they are reducing the burden and doing so has a positive impact on the research enterprise.

Committee members reviewed a table of data itemizing the policies that had been reviewed, the number of changes made, and the financial impact. The table identified the sources of \$8,676,598 that had been saved. One that received attention was changes to Education in the Responsible Conduct of Sponsored Research and Grants Management; changes only saved about \$33,000, but they will implement an online system that will replace the 4-hour session now required, so that there will also be substantial savings in faculty time.

Ms. Waldemar noted that risk recalibration also means filling in policy gaps, which could lead to increased costs, but their analysis thus far has produced only one change in that direction, with an increased cost of about \$15,000 (in processing account transactions, but it filled a large hole in compliance).

Professor McIvor commented that the benefits from streamlining may be missed in this analysis. He related a story about a grant proposal and how the streamlining made it possible for him to obtain grant funding he would otherwise have lost. Anything that can be done to streamline the process will save a great deal more than the amounts that appear on the table. Ms. Waldemar said they appreciate suggestions from researchers about places where things can be streamlined.

Professor Vaughan asked if they are considering allowing salary charges for administrative staff to assist in preparation of renewals and continuations. Ms. Waldemar said they are working on that question. With respect to risk recalibration, it is certainly under consideration, depending on the role a staff member holds on a project. However, no changes will be considered until the new Circular A-81 is released and implemented.

Professor Gini recalled two items that had come from Professor Konstan last year related to payments to research subjects and funds for travel. On the first, Ms. Waldemar said there is a group looking at making payments easier; on the second, they have drafted language to change the policy for payments for grants and workshops for students.

Professor Waldfoegel asked how it would be decided which issues will come to the Committee. Professor Gini said that Committee members should send her an email indicating which issues they believe to be most important. She welcomed suggestions of any additional topics.

Professor Gini adjourned the meeting at 3:25.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota