

**Senate Research Committee  
Minutes of the Meeting  
February 2, 2015**

[These notes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these notes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

In these minutes: [Report from the Office for Technology Commercialization; employee engagement survey; recommendation on request for exception to openness in research policy]

PRESENT: Maria Gini, chair; James Orf, Lisa Johnston, Elizabeth Steinert, Daniel Habchi, Bill Arnold, Tommy Vaughan, Al Levine, Nicole Victoria, Jeannette Gundel, Melissa Koenig, Scott McIvor, Michael Kyba, Teresa Rose-Hellecant

REGRETS: Brian Herman, Pamela Webb, Bob Lewis, LaDora Thompson, Jayne Fulkerson, Beth Stadler, Hinh Ly, Brian Johnston

ABSENT: Murat Can Kalem, Sarah Waldemar, Frances Lawrenz, Philip Herold, Suzanne Paulson, Tucker LeBien, Joel Waldfogel, Michael Schmitt, Lynn Zentner

GUESTS: Judith Krzyzek, Sponsored Projects Administration; Brandon Sullivan, Office of Human Resources; Jay Schrankler, director, Office for Technology Commercialization; Leza Besemann, technology strategy manager, Office for Technology Commercialization; Rebecca Gerber, chief of staff & technology marketing manager, Office for Technology Commercialization.

Professor Gini welcomed the committee.

**1. Report from the Office for Technology Commercialization**

Gini welcomed Jay Schrankler, executive director, Office for Technology Commercialization (OTC). He discussed an article from Nature Biotechnology previously distributed to the committee, and highlighted its technology transfer office (TTO) rankings for the University of Minnesota:

Of the top fifteen private and public institutions, in 2013 the University ranked:

- 5th in total output in the life sciences
- 7th in terms of life science licenses/options executed
- 10th in terms of life science licensing income
- 5th in terms of life science startup activity
- 6th in terms of NIH funding/number of awards

Schrankler said this kind of data was very important to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and emphasized the OTC would not have been able to accomplish these rankings were it not for researchers and faculty at the University.

Schrankler then provided some highlights from vice president for Research Brian Herman's report to the Board of Regents in December 2014. He noted that every year the state holds back one percent of its biennial appropriation from the State of Minnesota, for which the University must perform in five key metrics (appropriations performance goals), one of which is increasing the number of invention disclosures by 3% every year. Invention disclosures went from 331 in 2013 to 343 in 2014, a 4% growth.

Highlights from 2014:

- 138 patent filings, compared to 52 in 2008 (includes all faculty, research staff, graduate students and post-docs)
- Fifteen startups
- \$27M in licensing income

Schrankler said in late 2011 the MN-IP (Minnesota Innovation Partnership) program was launched, an initiative that makes it easier for business to partner with the University to transform discoveries into innovative solutions. MN-IP improves access to university-developed technology while reducing the risk and cost associated with licensing intellectual property and sponsoring research. Schrankler noted that the Senate Research Committee (SRC) and the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) had been consulted in developing MN-IP, as well as many deans and department heads at the University, and companies. Leza Besemann said that since MN-IP had launched, there had been 144 agreements signed; four master agreements based on the MN IP template; and about 100 companies that have interacted under the MN-IP way of conducting sponsored research.

Lisa Johnston asked how MN-IP affected sharing research, specifically in terms of the Openness in Research policy. Schrankler acknowledged that working with industry was a conundrum, considering the University is a public, open academic institution. He confirmed that MN-IP and all research agreements comply with the Openness in Research policy. Schrankler said faculty would not be forced to take in sponsored research under terms the faculty member doesn't agree with. Gini asked what kind of companies are involved in MN-IP, and Besemann said it ranged from small, local companies to large multinationals based outside the U.S., and the companies encompassed all research areas.

Professor Kyba said faculty would not be able to do sponsored research for a company that wanted a certain result. Krzyzek said it was about research, not testing, and MN-IP was not for non-research endeavors. To Kyba's question, Schrankler reiterated that MN-IP did not make contracts that prohibited publication, and any limitations on a PI would have to be agreed upon by the PI. Schrankler provided the committee with the link to the MN-IP web page for more information: <http://www.research.umn.edu/mn-ip/#.VOJcfrDF9ew>. Krzyzek also said the SPA website would be helpful as well: <http://www.ospa.umn.edu/>

The committee discussed various aspects of the OTC's role in various situations. Professor Vaughan said that typically the institutional review board (IRB) does not allow the faculty entrepreneur to be the PI of a grant, and said the policy should be modified. Vaughan also requested a policy that a PI developing biomedical technology be able to pursue federal grants with whatever oversights were necessary. He also said there needed to be a mechanism available

for faculty entrepreneurs to help solve problems in a timely fashion that supports small business, as small businesses do not have the resources to wait years for answers.

Schrankler said OTC was a champion of faculty in issues around conflicts of interest and cited examples. He also noted that OTC had a template for conflict management, one of the few universities who provided this. However, he noted, they could not tell an IRB what they should allow, nor could they assist in projects with human subjects. To Professor Kyba's concern, Schrankler emphasized that they do not take anyone's intellectual property (IP) and do whatever they like with it. The researcher drives the process. Schrankler said they would like that IP was disclosed, as it is beneficial to the public good, but one does not have to. However, if someone publishes, it is no longer possible to secure international patent rights.

To the committee's question, Schrankler noted about 40% of invention disclosures received were filed for patents. Patents are filed by the University, which also funds all patent costs. Outside counsel for patent filing is used, each with specific domain expertise. Schrankler cited instances in which patents may not be filed, such as if *prior art* exists, instances in which someone already has a patent or the idea has already been published and the new patent would be unsustainably narrow. He added that filing for provisional patents does not cost a lot; it is the process of obtaining and keeping patents alive (especially foreign patents) that costs a lot of money.

Gini thanked Schrankler, Besemann, and Krzyzek for the information.

## **2. Employee engagement survey**

Gini welcomed welcomed Brandon Sullivan, director, Office of Human Resources, Leadership and Talent Development, to discuss the employee engagement survey that took place in October 2014.

Sullivan said the purpose of the survey was to provide some metrics around morale and how employees they feel about their work environment, and for effective productivity and retaining people. Sullivan distributed the executive summary of total results to the committee, and highlighted salient points:

- Faculty and staff responded at an even greater rate than the record levels of 2013, indicating employees are invested in the engagement process and want their voices to be heard
  - 2,484 faculty responses (52% participation, up 5 points from 2013)
  - 9,598 staff responses (68% participation, up 8 points from 2013)
- Faculty and staff continue to have very high levels of commitment and dedication while also reporting barriers to productivity
  - Commitment and dedication (pride, motivation, intent to stay):
    - Faculty scores remained strong at 73% favorable (same as 2013)
    - Staff scores increased 1 point to 74% favorable
  - Effective environment (efficient, productive workplace)
    - Faculty scores declined 1 point to 64% favorable
    - Staff scores remained unchanged at 63% favorable

Sullivan also noted engagement action, saying most faculty and staff have not yet seen evidence that their voices are being heard. Only 24% of faculty and 35% of staff report that action was taken on issues raised in the 2013 survey.

Sullivan then went on to review engagement drivers:

- Faculty and staff both report a number of key strengths, including a respectful, empowering work environment and pride in working at the University of Minnesota
- Staff also reported increased respect, recognition, training and support for innovation compared to 2013
- Faculty and staff have declining confidence in department level strategies and goals, and individual goal alignment; have emerging concerns about collaboration and teamwork within and between departments, and have not yet seen much improvement in barriers to productivity
- Faculty confidence in college leadership has declined slightly
- Faculty ethnic demographic differences suggest opportunities to build a more inclusive academic environment

Sullivan reviewed the recommendations listed on the report:

1. Identify examples of units successfully addressing issues from the 2013 survey and share these case studies across the University
2. Ensure that employee feedback on the University's strong culture of respect and empowerment is communicated to internal audiences and informs recruiting efforts
3. Increase accountability for faculty and staff review and discussion of engagement results
4. Identify specific barriers to productivity to address in connection with the strategic plan
5. Create more opportunities for discussion of strategies and goals at the department level and between department leaders and individual faculty and staff
6. Explore concerns about teamwork and collaboration at the department and college levels
7. Further explore root causes of faculty demographic differences and potential actions to address them

Sullivan said he and his team had shared the results with President Kaler and the units, and were trying to ensure the results were shared down to department level. He acknowledged that with the prior survey there were varying degrees of how the results were shared within department and units. Sullivan said they were encouraging leaders take the engagement information to establish focus for work already in progress and plan goal-setting activities.

The committee raised the following points:

- Kyba asked why the survey was conducted. Sullivan said it was to provide collective input for moving forward on some of the issues.
- Daniel Habchi asked how the survey could ask people to measure and report their own level of commitment. Sullivan said they had seen more candid responses in the second year of the survey.
- Professor McIvor said the survey felt like another demand on his time, and one that was pointless.

- Professor Arnold wondered why the survey was done again so soon after the first, given how long it takes to effect any possible changes.
- Habchi asked if there were striking differences among colleges and departments. Sullivan said in some cases, yes, and they were offering to help dig into those issues in those colleges and departments.
- Gini asked about differences in reporting among faculty of color, and Sullivan said they saw trends with different non-white groups ranking some things lower.

Sullivan said the employee engagement survey was not necessarily a diagnostic tool, and that they were trying to take a consultative approach with the survey.

Gini thanked Sullivan for the information.

### **3. Recommendation on request for exception to openness in research policy**

Gini explained the role of the Subcommittee on Research Openness. The subcommittee is not part of the Senate Research Committee and meets infrequently, Gini said. She said she had appointed Roberta Humphries chair of the subcommittee, and was still looking for another student to appoint. Gini asked the committee for nominations for the student appointment.

Gini went on to discuss the most recent request for exception to the openness in research, and reviewed the materials previously sent to the committee. The subcommittee had approved it unanimously.

Hearing no further business, Gini adjourned the meeting.

Mary Jo Pehl  
University Senate Office