

[Meeting topics: discussion of Policy on Principal Investigator Eligibility on Sponsored Projects and Education in the Responsible Conduct of Research and Grants Management.]

MINUTES

SENATE FACULTY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE (SCFA)

Thursday, January 21, 1999
3:00-4:30 p.m.
229 Nolte Center

Present: Kent Bales (Chair), Josef Altholz, Avner Ben-Ner, Carol Chomsky, Robert Fahnhorst, Janet Holdsworth, Cleon Melsa, Marcia Pankake, Anne Pick, Thomas Walsh

Regrets: John Fossum, Roland Guyotte, Richard Purple, Caroline Turner

Absent: Gerry Baldrige, Carol Carrier, James Perry

Guests: none

Others: Leonard Kuhi (chair, Senate Research Committee)

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

1. Education in the Responsible Conduct of Research and Grants Management

Professor Bales convened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed Professor Len Kuhi, chair of the Senate Research Committee, to present the policies on 1) Education in the Responsible Conduct of Research and Grants Management and 2) Principal Investigator Eligibility on Sponsored Projects.

Professor Kuhi said the first policy was crafted by the Research Committee in response to an agreement with the NIH and is part of the overall effort to revise the grants management system at the University. In the NIH agreement, the University must provide appropriate training to all University personnel involved in externally and internally funded research and public service activities. Professor Kuhi then briefly walked the committee through the draft policy, reviewing the statement of purpose and guidelines.

Following are comments and suggested changes:

- In the purpose statement, the phrase "mutually binding requirements" raises some confusion. Does it mean that if one side doesn't meet its requirements, the other is excused? That was not the intent, said Professor Kuhi. After some discussion the committee agreed to change the language to "shared responsibilities."

- It was agreed that Item 2 under guidelines needed clarification and, thus, was modified to read: "The VP and Dean will establish three advisory committees, one for each of the major constituencies having organizational and functional responsibilities on projects."
- A question was raised concerning whom the policy applies to. It assumes only those involved in funded research, yet the policy as written does not make that distinction. After some discussion, a recommendation was made to change the title of the policy to: "Education in the Responsible Conduct of **Sponsored** Research and Grants Management."
- The VP and Dean of the Graduate School establishes the three advisory committees, including selection of the membership. While the tasks of the advisory committees are outlined, some of which are to make recommendations, the policy does not identify a mechanism for reporting, reviewing, or responding to those recommendations. SCFA recommended the policy include some such mechanism.

Professor Kuhi thanked the committee for its input and said he will take the comments back to the Research Committee and discuss them with Professor Hamilton.

2. Policy on Principal Investigator Eligibility on Sponsored Projects

Professor Kuhi explained that the original policy on Principal Investigator Eligibility on Sponsored Projects approved in 1980 by the Senate does not conform to current practice. Thus, the Research Committee has begun revising it in the hope that it and SCFA can come to a mutually acceptable policy that is reflective of present practice. Defining a "principal investigator," it turns out, is more difficult than one might think.

The policy before the committee allows department heads and deans to determine who will be the principal investigator. The Research Committee, Professor Kuhi said, had some concerns about having an administrator judge the merit of a project and the authority to deny a faculty member the ability to act as the principal investigator (PI) for that research. In view of this, the Research Committee believes there needs to be very clear guidelines and criteria regarding PI eligibility.

As a point of information, Professor Kuhi said it is his understanding from Senior Vice President Cerra that grants are actually made to the University, not to individuals, and when one is awarded, it is the University that has the responsibility to judge whether a person has the qualifications and ability to carry out that research. All regular faculty appointments automatically carry PI status. Other employees, such as P&A and research associates, may also serve as PIs, but need to go through an approval process. Presently, the policy is confusing and should be clarified to indicate that regular faculty do not need to go through the approval process, but others do. It may require dividing the document into two separate sections and possibly modifying the title of the policy.

Professor Altholz suggested moving Section II, which outlines who may serve as a PI, to the beginning of the document. It is important, he said, that faculty not be confused by the language and wonder whether they too need to go through an approval process. Moreover, the term "academic employees" must be defined.

The discussion turned to Section V, which addresses the grievance process when PI privileges are rescinded, but not when PI status is denied. It was recommended that it be amended to include such cases. It was further noted that there could be, and actually have been, instances where a grant proposal has been denied, yet it was not clear to the committee where denials of that nature would be grieved. Should that be included in this document? Moreover, the policy should cite the grounds for denial of either PI status or a proposal. Section V also refers to ORTTA which no longer exists, and the roles of the department head and dean need to be clarified. Finally, Professor Altholz questioned whether the University grievance process is the appropriate avenue for reviews, and suggested the policy address the issue of timeliness in order that research does not get held up by the grievance process.

An editorial correction to change "non-regular" to "term" faculty to comply with the Tenure Code was also suggested.

Citing a specific case, Professor Walsh raised the point that some agencies appear to be defining the PIs independently of how the University does it. This may be something the committees need to look at.

Ms. Holdsworth asked for clarification of two items in Section III concerning graduate assistants. Does the student seek approval from the department head or dean, and what is meant by "nor does it commit the University to any future position?" Professor Kuhi responded that he believes it should be the department head OR the dean of a college or school, and by giving a student PI status, it does not mean the University is giving the student a position. He appreciated the comments and agreed to rephrase the wording.

A final query had to do with the intent and implementation of the policy. It appears no one has paid attention to the policy during the past 20 years. How will modifying it change that behavior?

Before adjourning, Professor Bales drew member's attention to the new Faculty Resource Guide, which he thought should be reviewed by SCFA.

-- Martha Kvanbeck