

MINUTES***SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE****Friday, June 7, 1996**

- Present:** Alan Goldman (chair), Susan Hupp, Kathy James, N.L. Gault, Marilyn DeLong
- Regrets:** Mark Snyder, Joel Eisenger
- Absent:** N/A
- Guests:** Individuals with the Grants Management Project: Alexander Alex, Ann Warner, Michelle Gross, Carol Clack, Nancy Kehmeier, Win Ann Schumi, David Hamilton; Graduate School: Francis Larenz

1. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The minutes were unanimously approved.

2. PRESENTATION FROM GRANTS MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Ms. Nancy Kehmeier said that about 140 people had been involved in the development. Included at the meeting were Alexander Alex, Ann Warner, Michelle Gross, Carol Clack, and David Hamilton. The goal of the project is to develop a format for assuring quality financial reporting from principle investigators. The new system, "warehouse," provides storage of two past years of transactions along with those of the current year. Ms. Kehmeier explained the new system allows users to not only review their transactions, but also enter information into their CUFS account for immediate turn-around time on bookkeeping. Previously, this process could take up to ten days. This system is eligible for "high volume" users. 70 such users have been identified on campus. Michelle Gross said that a test project of the new information system began approximately 14 months previous to this meeting. This system is delivered through internet connections. Additional points made by Ms. Kehmeier were:

- * The new system is allow for encumbrances beginning 15 April on regular payroll. Encumbrances on bi-weekly payroll will take effect by the end of the summer.
- * Paper reports will now be available in three to five days for departments. It is hoped that departments will begin to rely on the internet sources of the reports rather than requesting them from Grants Management.
- * The system will be completed by 1 July. Development on the system will continue throughout the year.
- * Misinterpretation of the forms is possible. Therefore, some training will be necessary.

Ms. Gross said that personal interviews and focus groups with principle investigators and administrators to develop the reports for the Grants Management Project. These reports include:

- * PI Active Projects Report: Summary of budgets for all ongoing projects
- * Project Summary (Current Month): Summary of one specific project
- * The Drill Down: A detailed description of all expenses
- * Grant Summary Report: Overview of the each grant
- * Grant Account Journal: How the expenses occurred in order by date
- * Flexible Period Expense Summary: The user may define how much information to review. "Drill down" function is available.

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities 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.

Ms. Kehmeier proceeded to demonstrate how the forms appear on a computer screen. Because the system is available through the internet, PI's can gain access from any location on or off campus, on all types of computers (IBM format, 386, Windows 3.1 or 95NT; Macintosh with 4-6 meg of memory). Access to the system is available through Netscape (a World Wide Web "browser"). Individuals need to complete an "security access application form" available on the Web or by mail. Training Services will be offering classes on how to use and interpret the system and on how to use Netscape. Ms. Kehmeier provided a step-by-step "walk through" of Grants Management Web page including all the information listed above. By clicking on "Reports," she proceeded to demonstrate all the reports listed above. It is possible to send e-mail messages to Grants Management through this Web page. It is possible for PI's to e-mail or fax reports to Grants Management. It is possible to merge information to and from data base managing programs (Lotus, Excel, etc.).

Questions & Answers:

Q Has this information been presented to the NIH Exceptional Committee yet?

A No, that is likely to occur in the Fall 1997. In the mean time, V.P. Mark Brenner has been in communication with them.

Q If an error is reported, is it easy to correct?

A Yes. You would simply use the CUFSS process for making corrections. The "Data Warehouse" system serves as an intermediary between CUFSS and your personal computer.

Q Will this capability be available for users other than PI's?

A This system will be available for non-sponsored projects and other University business as well (i.e., Departmental Administrator).

Q What is the wait-time to gain access this system?

A At this time, an extreme wait-time is not expected. Traffic on the network may increase and slow the response time in the future. This would be responded to by the University.

Q Have the financial administrators of the University been informed of this system?

A Every week, RRC and area managers receive e-mails regarding the development of the Data Warehouse. These messages are to be forwarded to the financial administrators. Articles are included in all recent editions of *CUFSS Connection* which is received by nearly all administrators on campus.

3. FRINGE BENEFITS FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

A committee member said that this is a very serious issue that has not received a considerable amount of attention. The "compromise" still represents a 40% increase in the cost of tuition applied to departments using graduate assistants. This is very likely to exacerbate the problem facing those who rely on these students (i.e., PI's, departments, etc.). One college offered to program the University's computers, and another offered to provide accounting service in order to prevent this severe shift. None of these offers have been seriously considered by the Administration. The committee members offered several other comments and questions for Dr. Lorenz:

* When a student is 75% f.t.e., the department is charge the same fringe benefit percentage which translates into a higher deduction from the department for tuition although the tuition rate does not increase. In response, the department will hire less, 75% f.t.e., and hire more 50% f.t.e. aggravating the stress on tuition dollars.

* It is possible that departments will begin hiring graduate students without providing tuition remission.

Q What is the Regents opinion on continuing to provide tuition benefits to graduate students?

A The compromise was reached to continue providing tuition benefits. Nonetheless, there is a conscious effort to focus on undergraduate education. There are many consideration on the table including:

- * Not providing the tuition benefit
- * Providing for a select few
- * Granting jobs without tuition remission
- * Paying for part of the tuition

There is a real sense of outrage among the faculty because it is "killing" their research programs. Some are considering to contact NSF (National Science Foundation) and tell them how the University is impeding research efforts.

Dr. Lorenz said that the University was unwarranted in providing too large of a benefit for graduate assistants. There is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. A committee member said if the University is "out of line," it is so in favor of undergraduate education by supporting the graduate teaching assistants. The proposed plan for graduate assistant support will bring the University into a rank of one of the most expensive schools to attend including private universities yet without the infrastructure that "privates" provide. This will disadvantage the University's PI's (principal investigators) severely.

- * It is possible that "direct charging" of tuition rates will cause units of the University (i.e., CLA) to say we want a tuition rate corresponding to the faculty salaries and costs of instruction in our department.
- * This proposal could possibly lead to litigation against the University for infringement of academic freedom.
- * Academic departments will have difficulty fulfilling their teaching requirements as a result of this proposal.

Dr. Lorenz asked the committee to give her some ideas for V.P. Brenner regarding some possible solutions to fix the situation. Ideas from the committee included the following comments:

- * Track the money that is used on campus.
- * Allow departments to pay the amount that reflects the real enrollment rate of each graduate student.
- * If there is no way to allow for differentiation of tuition rates for programs, the entire program should be abandoned. Otherwise, less costly programs (i.e., CLA) are subsidizing those that are more expensive (i.e., Carlson School of Business).
- * This fringe benefit rate should be charged to all applicable staff on campus (i.e., MIT).
- * A measurement system should be established to determine how the change impacts the University.

The group continued to discuss various options concerning how the University could resolve the \$8 million deficit in the graduate assistant fringe benefit program that currently exists.

4. OTHER

Grants Electronic Management System:

- Phase I: To help faculty to build proposal for grants.
- Phase II - Translating the information to CUFS.

A more thorough review of this program should occur in the fall quarter 1996.

Kevin Gormley
University of Minnesota