Minutes[*]

Senate Research Committee
Monday, May 9, 2011
2:15 - 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Melissa Anderson (chair), Breanne Byiers, Margaret Catambay, Jerry Cohen, Marc
               Dunham, Greg Haugstad, Seung-Ho Joo, Frances Lawrenz, Jennifer Linde, Kola
               Okuyemi, Federico Ponce de Leon, LaDora Thompson

Absent: Mustafa al'Absi, Arlene Carney, Paul Cleary, Robin Dittman, Tucker LeBien, Timothy
               Mulcahy, April Rose, Thomas Vaughan, Karen Williams, Lynn Zentner

Guests: Sarah Waldemar (Office of the Vice President for Research)

Other: Associate Vice President Pamela Webb, Peggy Sundermeyer (Office of the Vice
               President for Research)

[In these minutes: (1) Solutions for Integrated Research Compliance (SIRC); (2) certified PI program; (3)
bioinformatics; (4) report of the chair]

1.   Solutions for Integrated Research Compliance (SIRC)

        Professor Anderson convened the meeting at 2:15 and welcomed Ms. Waldemar to provide an
update on SIRC.

        Ms. Waldemar explained that Vice President Mulcahy's vision is for an electronic system to
manage compliance committee functions (IRB, IACUC, etc.), a central portal that will help PIs prepare
protocols as well as update and renew them. It is scheduled for launch in May, 2012. She provided a
one-page handout describing SIRC:

        The Solutions for Integrated Research Compliance (SIRC) system is a new, Web-based
        technology that will combine the functionality of numerous isolated, siloed compliance systems
        into a new, integrated compliance solution. SIRC is being implemented by the Office of the Vice
        President for Research (OVPR), in conjunction with the Office of Information Technology (OIT).

        SIRC will facilitate the research compliance process for researchers, management staff, technical
        teams, committee members, and reporting units by making a number of research compliance
        processes easier to use and manage. Researchers and staff will see a number of benefits,
        including:

        -- Intuitive, Web-based interface with dynamic, question-based forms ("smart forms")
        -- Elimination of duplicative data entry for common compliance processes

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-- Ability to modify and edit drafts, pause form completion and continue later, and forms that can be completed by someone other than the form signatory
-- Reporting and email notification features

Homepage: http://www.research.umn.edu/sirc.html

This will make a significant difference in the amount of time required to get protocols through committees, Ms. Waldemar said. They are now discussing SIRC's impact on people in departments and on the committees and their staffs as well as determining key points for benchmarking. They do not expect job losses as a result of implementing SIRC, but there will be changes and it will cause a change in culture about how to submit and review proposals and for staff who serve the committees.

Will this be a mechanism to decrease the number of inspections, Professor Thompson asked? Probably, Ms. Waldemar said. They have analyzed results of a survey done jointly by Occupational Health and Safety, the Department of Environmental Health & Safety, and Vice President for Research units that collected information from researchers and research staff regarding the frequency and burden of lab inspections. They hear loudly that there are too many inspections. They are trying to find a way to reduce the amount of time required for them.

Ms. Waldemar assured the Committee that there will be an opportunity for faculty and staff members to test the system before it is made operational. Professor Cohen commented that when there is a public test, those who use the system a lot will participate, and it would help to get people who only use the system infrequently to participate as well—they should want the system to not require experience in using it.

2.   Certified PI Program

Ms. Waldemar next distributed a handout listing all "Research Requirements and Resources" and the corresponding websites. She said that there has been considerable discussion of a "certified PI" program, but noted that if one has grants that involve animals, humans, or drugs, the dates for renewal cannot be altered. SIRC will have a PI's data about what the PI and staff need to do. They are trying to identify a way that PIs can fulfill their Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) requirements every 12 or 36 months without a lot of emails. It is on her agenda to review the Responsible Conduct of Research program to be sure that the University is meeting but not exceeding sponsor requirements. SIRC will provide researchers with information regarding their training status, as well as that of anyone listed in a protocol, related to their studies that have human or animal research subjects. At this time, however, they have no pat answer and are not proposing a certified PI program.

Dr. Lawrenz recalled that Professor Bitterman raised this possibility when he joined one of the Committee's discussions earlier in the year, and asked about the possibility of having everything happen at once. Not everyone agrees that that is desirable, she reported. A major point of his remarks was that it is difficult to see when one must do certain things, and SIRC will help with that. Moreover, not all educational items related to research are within the control of the Office of the Vice President for Research, but SIRC will be able to help coordinate requirements.

The Committee has seen Vice President Mulcahy's presentation on tolerance of risk. Associate Vice President Webb noted that the Office of the Vice President for Research has launched a "Risk

Recalibration Initiative," and all of the units that report to Vice President Mulcahy have been asked to implement steps to better manage risk and to see if they are taking precautions farther than they need to in order to avoid risk. They are looking to cut bureaucracy—and may learn that they need to spend more time on higher-risk activities. This is an effort to recapture time and spend it where it is most needed. At the end of the month, each unit must select from a list of changes it has developed and implement the change. In the fall, she and Ms. Waldemar can talk with the Committee about the items that were selected. The units were asked to select significant items, she added.

Ms. Webb also commented that the SIRC program will show all of a PI's work on the basis the PI wants to see it, such all human-subjects research, by grant, etc. The PI can slice and dice the information however he or she wishes—as well as by the people they are supervising, to see where things stand on the approvals needed, Professor Anderson added.

Professor Cohen asked why the implementation of SIRC would not change the number of people required. The number of programs and protocols will not decline, nor will the number of reviews, Ms. Waldemar said. They will be streamlining the review process but it will not go away, and there will still be a need for staff review; the goal is faster turnaround. It is geared to reducing the demand on faculty members' and lab time, Dean Ponce de Leon said.

Ms. Waldemar also reported briefly on the work of her office, Research Integrity Oversight Program. It is responsible for University-wide compliance with policies and procedures governing RCR, animal and human subjects, controlled substances and sponsored research financial management. It has been siloed, but they are now blending together the compliance units under the broad categories of education, analysis and compliance. They will have a more integrated staff that is able to use its expertise more broadly.

Professor Anderson thanked Ms. Waldemar for joining the meeting.

3.   Bioinformatics

Dr. Lawrenz reported briefly on RISS, Research Informatics Support Systems, an initiative to provide support for research using informatics. Dr. Anne Francoise Lamblin is the program director of this initiative, which is housed within the Minnesota Supercomputer Institute.   There are varying levels of expertise among people who want to conduct informatics research; the initiative will provide support that is appropriate to the level of expertise of the researcher. The initiative is beginning with a focus on bioinformatics. In addition to incorporating existing MSI staff, RISS will hire three new Ph.D.-level staff with prior experience in providing informatics support. One new person has already been hired and will be starting in the fall.

Professor Cohen asked if these will be public hires with presentations (they will); he said this will be a big advance for the University.

4.   Report of the Chair

Professor Anderson next reported on several matters.

-- She thanked Committee members for signing the message to the Governor and legislative leaders. Committee members all voted positively on the statement within 24 hours. She said she has not heard anything in response to the statement.

-- She will not continue as chair next year; Professor Bearinger will succeed her. She will remain on the Committee. She very much enjoyed serving as chair. It is her strong recommendation that other Committee members volunteer or be selected to serve on some of the committees that require representation from the Senate Research Committee, to lighten the chair's load.

-- The Committee reviewed several issues discussed in previous meetings.

        Professor Anderson thanked everyone for their service on the Committee and adjourned the meeting at 3:25.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota