The University Senate

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Senate Research Committee (SRC)
October 6, 2025
Minutes of the Meeting

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[**In these minutes:** Committee Orientation; Update on Research Security; Committee Discussion to Identify Topics for 2025-2026; Open Seats on the Openness in Research Subcommittee]

PRESENT: Jayanthi Sasisekaran, chair, Hatley Christensen, Darin Erickson, Savio Ferreira, Jon Guden, Joleen Hadrich, Daniel Harki, Boyen Huang, Fang (Alice) Lei, Beth Lewis, Emma Molls, Nicole Pilman, Shashank Priya, Courtney Roberts, Jimmy Schryver, Jaideep Srivastava, Shaker Zahra

REGRETS: Kathleen Boris-Lawrie

ABSENT: Courtney Aldrich, Jovany Betancourt, Liam Chen, Stephen Contag, Peter Crawford, Jody Gray, Dave Hagen, Vinal Menon, Gavin Wilson

OTHERS ATTENDING: Pat Briscoe, associate director, Research Integrity and Compliance, Danielle Rintala, director, Research Integrity and Compliance, Laurie Cooper Stoll, director, University Senate Office

1. Call to Order

Professor Jayanthi Sasisekaran, chair, called the meeting to order and invited the committee and guests to introduce themselves.

2. Committee Orientation

Laurire Cooper Stoll, director, University Senate Office, then reviewed the committee's charge and duties and provided a brief committee orientation, emphasizing the importance of shared governance. She highlighted the process of legislative action and provided four key strategies for effective governance: (1) cultivate good working relationships; (2) consult widely; (3) pay close attention to the insights from ex officio members, other governance leaders, and the University Senate Office; and (4) focus on achievable goals and realistic solutions.

3. Update on Research Security

Pat Briscoe, associate director, Research Integrity and Compliance, then provided an update on research security to the committee. Briscoe first discussed the NSF notice on updates to research security policies, published in early July. He noted that there were not many surprises, but one important update for the university research community was the requirement for everyone submitting proposals starting October 10th to certify that they had taken research security training. The University of Minnesota decided to use a prepackaged class managed by the CITI program, and instructions and reminders went out in August.

Briscoe also mentioned that a blanket prohibition on participation in Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Programs (MFTRPs) was put in place. He explained that this was a long-standing issue and that the U had already taken steps, such as adding a question to the REPA form, to get researchers to disclose participation. Additionally, personnel were now required to certify this information within Research.gov.

Next, Briscoe addressed the USDA's “America First Memorandum for USDA Arrangements and Research Security,” published in early July. Briscoe highlighted two key issues from the USDA memorandum: (1) proposers would face enhanced disclosure requirements, needing to provide much more information about research activities and foreign connections; and (2) there was a research security training requirement expected to operate similarly to the NSF’s, but the start date was unknown. Most significantly, a broadly written subsection in the memorandum appeared to require researchers to certify they had no activities with organizations or individuals in countries of concern (China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea).

Briscoe then moved on to the NIH, starting with a recent publication on September 24, taking effect on October 24. This new policy regulated the export of human biospecimens to countries of concern. He stated that any biospecimen, regardless of size or value, could not be exported to these countries unless an exception applied. Materials commercially or publicly available prior to October 24th were excluded. Briscoe noted that the exceptions were “fairly generous,” but the RIO office was working to determine who would be given the authority to approve these exceptions and grant permission to export. Briscoe mentioned that in July the NIH published a “new requirement” to train senior key personnel on other support disclosure, recommending the use of research security training. However, in an FAQ a few weeks later, the NIH stated that this was not a new requirement and was only a reminder for personnel to understand their duties for full reporting on disclosure forms.

Shaker Zahra asked for clarification on the content of the research security training. Briscoe explained that it generally referred to an hour-long module covering topics the U.S. government determined researchers needed to know, including disclosure, conflict of interest, export controls, smart travel practices, and developing a security mindset in an open research environment. Briscoe added that the general expectation was for researchers to take the course, or a shorter annual refresher, with the university hoping to eventually use its own content rather than the National Science Foundation's (NSF’s) pre-packaged module.

Briscoe then shifted focus from the executive branch to the legislative branch, noting that the U.S. House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party had published reports that were highly critical of both U.S. universities and federal funding agencies. A major recommendation from these reports was the proposed Securing American Funding and Expertise from Adversarial Research Exploitation (SAFE Research) Act of 2025. Briscoe explained that this proposed legislation was an amendment to the annually required National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and was currently in the House version. Efforts were underway to prevent its inclusion in the Senate version or to secure major changes due to its potential impact.

Briscoe outlined the three most consequential parts of the proposed act: (1) applicants for all federal agencies would have to detail five years of their interactions, including travel to countries of concern; (2) it would impose a five-year post-award data management and reporting obligation; and (3) it would effectively end Department of Defense (DoD) funding to universities that maintain “covered partnerships” with any “hostile foreign entity.” Dan Harki asked if his long-standing work with a Contract Research Organization in China would make him ineligible for federal funding. Briscoe responded that the act included a carve-out allowing for a researcher to avoid disqualification if they terminated the relationship within 60 days of the act being signed, though full disclosure of the past relationship would still be required.

Sasisekaran asked if the act would apply to recruiting students or any type of research effort associated with China. Briscoe clarified that it would not apply to recruiting students but would apply to exchange programs and affiliation agreements with Chinese universities. In closing, Briscoe detailed the ongoing efforts to cope with the changing regulatory environment in his office.

4. Committee Discussion to Identify Topics for 2025-2026

Committee members were then assigned to breakout rooms to discuss the topics they would like SRC to focus on this academic year that aligned with their charge. Following the breakout rooms, each group reported out to the committee.

Courtney Roberts reported out for Group 1, detailing three topics they discussed. First, they addressed the NIH open access policy for publishing, noting it would impose a significant financial burden on researchers because they would be required to pay for open access from the day a paper was published. They anticipated that other funding agencies, such as the NSF and DOE, would follow suit, and the group sought guidance on how the university planned to handle this cost, which individual researchers currently bore. Second, the group discussed research agreements and the roadblocks encountered when trying to collaborate with companies the university had not frequently worked with. While the university was good at facilitating collaborations with companies that had master research agreements, new partnerships often faced months of delays due to back-and-forth with lawyers and difficulty with Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs). The group requested standardization of these processes and a clear understanding of the issues that caused the university to get “hung up.” Third, they discussed the rapid pace of policy changes during the summer, which was challenging for researchers who typically operated on a nine-month academic year. The group suggested exploring ways to streamline communication during the summer months.

Harki reported that Group 2 discussed four main points. The first was the uncertainty surrounding federal grant funding due to political scrutiny of certain units and research areas. The group wanted to understand what university resources were available to those who might lose funding due to political reasons and what the university’s strategy was for responding to new government mandates and pushback from institutions like Harvard. This dovetailed into the second point: concern about the ability to continue financially supporting international students and postdocs because of the limited external funding opportunities available to them. The group worried about how to continue recruiting and supporting a diverse graduate student and postdoc base. Third, the discussion shifted to local politicians who seemed to share some of the negative opinions of the university seen in Washington. The group questioned the strategy for dealing with this, particularly concerning big-ticket items like capital improvements on facilities needed to advance the research mission. Finally, the group suggested an action item for the committee to focus on fostering interdisciplinary research collaborations among different colleges and units, especially where such efforts were currently limited, to create new technology and research support opportunities.

Sasisekaran then summarized the discussion from her group, stating that they, too, focused on real-time federal issues and changes and how faculty should receive, navigate, and adjust to the funding changes within colleges. The group thought they would benefit from hearing about recent updates from bodies like the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and suggested formalizing a way for those committees to connect with the SRC to provide timely information on federal changes, like the security updates discussed earlier. They also talked about inviting the chair of the Council on Research Associate Deans (RAD+) to discuss possible collaborations, which will happen at the next SRC meeting. A strong theme in their conversation was determining what information could be conveyed to their departments from these meetings, who the best point of contact should be, and which topics were appropriate to communicate to departmental colleagues.

5. Open Seats on the Openness in Research Subcommittee

Stoll then asked for the committee's help in filling two open student spots on the Research Openness Subcommittee, which reports to SRC. She explained that the Research Openness Subcommittee was not time-intensive because it was only convened when an exception request needed consideration. All review and voting were conducted online, and the subcommittee's work was completed before the request was brought to SRC for a final vote. Stoll clarified that the student members could not be members of SRC, but because they are appointed by SRC, the committee needs to actively identify interested students to fill the currently vacant spots. Roberts asked if the students could attend SRC meetings and Stoll confirmed that students could do so. Emma Molls confirmed that the open positions were for any type of student, without stipulation for graduate or undergraduate status.

6. Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Sasisekaran adjourned the meeting.

Laurie Cooper Stoll
University Senate Office