

Minutes\*

**Senate Research Committee  
Monday, February 19, 2007  
1:15 - 3:00  
238A Morrill Hall**

- Present: Dan Dahlberg (chair pro tem), Linda Bearinger, James Cotter, Donald Dengel, Genevieve Escure, Bridget Helwig, Jennifer Linde, James Luby, Ellen McKinney, Timothy Mulcahy, Selam Rodriguez, Steven Ruggles, Charles Spetland, George Trachte, Sanford Weisberg, Jean Witson
- Absent: Richard Bianco, Arlene Carney, Sharon Danes, Robin Dittman, Stephen Ekker, Steven Gantt, Shikha Jain, Paul Johnson, Mark Paller, Federico Ponce de Leon, Thomas Schumacher, Virginia Seybold, Barbara VanDrasek, Michael Volna
- Guests: Professor Susan Berry (Chair, Faculty Education Advisory [committee]); Lisa Carlson and Faith Mrutu (Certified Approver Program); Assistant Vice President Winifred Schumi, Associate Vice President Ed Wink (Office of the Vice President for Research); Carol Foth (Training Coordinator, Office of the Vice President for Research)
- Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) update on responsible conduct of research; (2) research collaboration and interdisciplinary research efforts; (3) certified approver survey; (4) search update]

Professor Dahlberg convened the meeting at 1:15 and explained that Professor Ruggles was in transit (Professor Ruggles joined the last part of the meeting).

**1. Update on Responsible Conduct of Research**

Professor Dahlberg welcomed Professor Susan Berry to provide a report to the Committee on Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) educational programs and the FIRST (Fostering Integrity in Research, Scholarship, and Teaching) program.

Professor Berry told the Committee she is a Professor of Pediatrics and current chair of the Faculty Education Advisory (FEA) Committee, appointed by the Vice President for Research as a peer group to provide guidance and oversight for the FIRST curriculum. FEA is responsible for RCR; "we the faculty decided by Senate vote to carry it on." The policy requiring education in RCR was approved by the University Senate in 1999.

FEA has been trying to make RCR useful and valuable in helping faculty meeting regulations and do the right thing. They have tried to provide programs relevant to the faculty that teach what they need to know. They have worked on changes to RCR, one major one of which is that some of the courses are now offered on line. This spring, instruction on research data management will be broken into qualitative

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and quantitative sessions. The social responsibility session will remain in-person so researchers can discuss sensitive topics with their colleagues. They are also adding instruction on social-behavioral case study research.

When a faculty member has completed the RCR courses (which all faculty must do), there are then continuing-education requirements based on the Senate policy requiring continuing education for faculty in order for them to retain funding. One must complete an annual on-line review of policy and procedures updates and a continuing-education course once every three years, Dr. Berry explained. There is tremendous flexibility in what can be taken; individuals self-report through the web. The Vice President for Research provides small grants for funding a speaker for a department, for example; he has also agreed to assist in organizing a University-wide seminar series. One upcoming presentation is by Professor Michael Oakes on social sciences and the IRB; if one attends, that fulfills the continuing education requirement.

One troublesome issue has been failure to complete RCR on time. They have changed the rules so that approval is in the unit, not the Office of the Vice President for Research, but people are still required to complete the instruction/continuing education and they do track completion. They are trying to make the automated elements as user-friendly and collegial as possible.

Dr. Berry said that before she joined FEA, she had no idea it existed. She now realizes that the faculty have taken on a special responsibility to do RCR—and she is proud of the faculty for doing so. This fits the ethics of Minnesota on how to do things.

Several questions were asked and points raised in the ensuing discussion.

- Much of RCR 1 and 2 will be on line, except for sessions on authorship and on social issues; they require about 2 hours in class and 4-5 hours on line.
- What students must do in terms of RCR varies with the program.
- They will make sure that people know when their three-year continuing-education period is ending and will not give them notice that they must act immediately.
- The qualitative research RCR is for people who do observation and interviews versus those who work primarily with numbers, but it is true that many researchers do both. They are trying to minimize the need to do so.

Vice President Mulcahy commented that a lot of the decisions about revising RCR were an outcome of the streamlining process that has taken place in his office.

Professor Dahlberg thanked Professor Berry for her presentation.

## **2. Research Collaboration/Interdisciplinary Research Efforts**

Vice President Mulcahy next began a discussion of research collaboration and interdisciplinary research efforts; this agenda item was to be led by both Vice President Mulcahy and Graduate School

Dean Gail Dubrow, but she was ill so Dr. Mulcahy simply provided preliminary information for a discussion to be continued later.

The question to talk about is institutional efforts to encourage interdisciplinary activities and interaction between his office and the Graduate School to effect change, Dr. Mulcahy said. The Provost appointed an interdisciplinary team (him, Dean Dubrow, Vice Provost Swan, Dr. Taylor from the President's Office) to try to coordinate interdisciplinary initiatives. They have developed a work plan and have developed a compact, a la the colleges, and have received feedback on it.

He and Dean Dubrow are joint stewards for \$1.75 million for new interdisciplinary initiatives, with about 50% of the funds in each of their offices and with each aware of what the other is doing. The funds must be committed to initiatives identified in their work plan. About 10% of the funds will be for added staff; 90% will go to programs.

In terms of the work plan for his office, Dr. Mulcahy reported briefly on several items:

-- He has appointed Professor Frances Lawrenz as associate vice president; one of her primary responsibilities will be interdisciplinary research.

-- He is establishing a collaborative research services unit to provide administrative support, especially for initiatives seeking large, complex grants, and may also provide central grants management support in the event these large and complicated grants are awarded (colleges may also provide this support if they wish and are able). This service should reduce the burden on individual faculty. Most of the funding will go to support new collaborative activities: either to help existing centers increase their competitiveness in winning upcoming awards or to encourage new activities. They will help leverage funding from the colleges and work with members of the interdisciplinary team to identify other internal sources of support.

-- They are taking a "dream, do, deliver" approach, based on Keck Foundation sponsorship of 3-4-day workshops in a targeted area to which scholars are invited; they have 200-500 participants who are eligible to apply for grants that emerge from the workshops. His office will do the same thing on a smaller scale: 2-3 times per year they will offer thematic workshops; those who participate will be eligible to apply for funding.

-- He will appoint a scholarly advisory panel to increase the transparency in the process of selecting proposals for funding. The panel will be composed of 10 faculty and 3 P&A staff who will advise on the selection of the thematic workshops and review proposals.

-- -- This scholarly advisory panel will also be used to coordinate grant proposals when a limited number is allowed for the campus. Some of the proposals are very good but not chosen by the University for submission; in order to reduce the discouragement, those that are meritorious will be provided bridge funding so that they can be more competitive in the future. And if the University's best proposal is not selected by the agency for funding, it may also be provided bridge funding. Dr. Mulcahy explained how his office would interact with the Academic Health Center in coordinating grant applications when a limited number is allowed.

-- A big area that his office and Dean Dubrow's office will work on is an area that the task forces saw as deficient: developing leadership for collaborative research. There are many scholars who don't have the ability to bring a collaborative research team along.

-- One critical element is making opportunities as broadly available and well-known across the campus as possible, so that recipients do not receive funding solely because they were the ones who happened to know about the opportunity. His office will have a web site with funding opportunities for interdisciplinary research, both internal and external, and will keep it up to date.

Dean Dubrow has parallel programs in the Graduate School that are focused on interdisciplinary graduate training opportunities, and since many overlap with interdisciplinary research, he and she collaborate on the effort.

Professor Dahlberg said he did not have either a question or a comment but a plea. Interdisciplinary research would not occur without outstanding individual faculty who have excelled in their fields and are qualified to lead and be part of interdisciplinary work. Even more important is the reputation of any university is based mostly on the scholarship of individual faculty. As funds are invested in interdisciplinary activities, will they be new funds or taken from sources that have gone previously to recruit and develop individual faculty? From what he has seen, it is more and more difficult to recruit and nurture outstanding scholars at the individual level; this includes the number of faculty lines and their support. He urged that funding for interdisciplinary work come from sources that do not reduce the funds needed for faculty lines, the development of individual faculty, and the general support of faculty. Dr. Mulcahy said that is what they are trying to do; they also must recognize the opportunities to use internal funds more effectively. They are trying to set priorities in allocations so they align with academic priorities, but the significance of individual faculty is not lost on them and they are a top priority.

Does interdisciplinary equal intercollegiate, Professor Dahlberg asked? Many times it will be, Dr. Mulcahy said, but many times it may be within a college. They have not defined it so it cannot be within a college, nor is intercollegiate necessarily interdisciplinary. They are not defining the term in too specific a way.

Professor Dahlberg thanked Vice President Mulcahy for his comments.

### **3. Certified Approver Survey**

Professor Dahlberg next welcomed Lisa Carlson, Director, Office of Oversight, Analysis and Reporting and Faith Mrutu, Chair, Certified Approver Advisory Committee, to provide the results of a survey conducted by Certified Approvers.

Ms. Carlson provided an overview of the Certified Approver Program (CAP). It has been around for about six years and was created in response to the University's NIH exceptional status in the 1990s. It is a gem that came out of the trouble, Associate Vice President Gail Klatt (the University auditor) has said, and they talk about the program nationally. Before CAP, all proposals went to Sponsored Projects Administration for approval, which was not an efficient system. CAP came with decentralization of sponsored financial approving to the departments; exams are administered to certify individuals in the role, annual continuing education is required, and there is an elected advisory committee for the program

(chaired by Ms. Mrutu). There are now about 180 certified approvers and they are doing an excellent job. They help keep the University out of trouble and serve as part of the internal control system. Since they serve on the local level, they know the individuals and the work and approval need not be delayed by the central administration.

Ms. Mrutu informed the Committee about the survey of the certified approvers, intended to help determine what could be done better. Audits of the process showed compliance rates over 90%, but they did learn anecdotally that there were gaps in the working relationships, so they conducted the survey. They had a 32% response rate from chairs/research associate deans, 10% from PIs, and 60% from certified approvers. Three themes emerged that will help shape where CAP will go: program knowledge, education/training, and communication/customer service. The certified approvers understand they play a positive part in the grants management process and have expertise to approve financial transactions on sponsored accounts. They have a tremendous responsibility to keep current with grants management policies and procedures and the training improves efficiency and provides opportunities to share knowledge with PIs and financial support staff.

Areas for improvement include understanding each group's roles and responsibilities, communication of the legal responsibilities of the certified approvers to all groups, support for the CAP from PIs and chairs and college research associate deans, and addressing time constraints on certified approvers to fulfill their responsibilities.

It is critical that CAP be a partner with the Faculty Education Advisory (FEA) committee; they should be aligned and there should be no conflicts in the training. They also need to encourage certified approvers to be problem-solvers, which means a customer-service approach that enforces policy but minimizes power struggles. There also needs to be clarity with the college research associate deans about their role in CAP, which includes best practices in college programs to support certified approvers. The certified approvers can be active leaders in their departments so that people know what to do with documents.

The role certified approvers play in departments varies, Ms. Carlson said. It is important that people know they are benefiting from the work of the certified approver. It is also important, Ms. Mrutu added, that the certified approver not want to say no and would rather find a way to work through a problem—although sometimes the answer must be "no." It is more difficult to have a give-and-take when the certified approvers are the enforcer of the rules, Professor Dahlberg commented. Dr. Mulcahy said he has seen, especially in new programs, that those who are responsible for making decisions tend to stick to the letter of the law. With the certified approver program, as people get more experience, they need to be encouraged to be more creative in finding a way to do research within the rules. Not every situation is a federal case and certified approvers can be problem-solvers. He said he was pleased with the way the program is evolving and PIs should see the certified approvers playing more of an advocacy role for them over time.

Certified approvers are not specialized by discipline nor do they help in seeking grant funding; they are focused on high-risk transactions. They do, however, know the funding sources within their discipline, so know the regulations of the organizations that researchers must work with. They do not see all of the times grant money is spent; they focus on the high-risk transactions.

Effort reporting comes up, Ms. Mrutu said in response to a query. Each year they evaluate the risk to see if the program should change. They have determined that certified approvers should approve the payroll, and many certified approvers are effort coordinators.

The work of certified approvers is backed up by CRAD (the college research associate deans). In her case, Ms. Mrutu said, she works in the Academic Health Center and is backed up by that office through other appointed certified approvers. It is left up to each dean how to back up the certified approvers, Ms. Carlson said. They knew this would be a problem, Ms. Schumi commented, because while any certified approver can approve any document across the institution, they can be reluctant to approve documents from other units because they take the risk they may not know the rules for other organizations as well. This is not seen as a big problem, however. They are not personally liable, she said, but can be subpoenaed if there are inquiries.

If a PI submits an expense and Sponsored Projects Administration questions it, does that mean SPA believes a certified approver approved something SPA does not, Professor Bearinger asked? Mr. Wink said that SPA would not play that role; any audit would catch questionable transactions. Ms. Mrutu said that SPA and certified approvers should not be disconnected; SPA can see across the campus and help the certified approvers.

Professor Dahlberg thanked Mss. Carlson and Mrutu for joining the Committee.

#### **4. Search Update**

Ms. Schumi provided an update on the search for the associate vice president (Sponsored Projects Administration). They wanted in particular to give two groups an opportunity to talk with the finalists: the members of this Committee and the college research associate deans. Dr. Mulcahy said the position is the most important in his office in terms of impact on the faculty. People have issues and they wanted Committee members to have an opportunity to talk about them with the candidates.

Professor Dahlberg adjourned the meeting at 2:50.

-- Gary Engstrand