

Senate Research Committee (SRC)
February 1, 2021
Minutes of the Meeting

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

[**In these minutes:** Council on Governmental Relations - Uniform Guidance Changes; Annual Report; Committee Discussion: Undergraduate Student Research]

PRESENT: Julie Olson (chair), Krista Brackman, John Freeman, Kelsie Full, Sumanth Gopinath, Ole Gram, Tasoulla Hadjiyanni, Lisa Johnston, Diana Karwan, Leslie Kennedy, Boyd Kumher, Tucker LeBien, Katsumi Matsumoto, Dianne Neumark-Sztainer, Nicole Pilman, Shashi Shekhar, Susannah Smith, Kathleen Vohs, Carston Wagner, Tammy Walsky, Abdi Warfa, Pamela Webb

REGRETS: Greg Cuomo, Daniel Heemstra, Mohammad Saleem Bhat, Nelson Rhodus, David Roberts, Jayanthi Sasisekaran

GUESTS: Bob McMaster, vice provost, Undergraduate Education; Paul Silicano, director, Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP); and Jennifer Deane, Director, McNair Scholars Program (TRIO)

OTHERS ATTENDING: Bri Keeney, Jennifer Rivers, Victoria Munro, Heidi Fahning

Chair Julie Olson welcomed the committee and the members introduced themselves.

1. Uniform Guidance Changes

Pamela Webb, associate vice president for research, and Nicole Pilman, director, Sponsored Financial Reporting, shared slides titled [Uniform Guidance Changes](#), which Webb noted were adapted from a previous presentation by the Council of Governmental Relations (COGR). Their presentation included an overview of recent updates and major regulatory changes related to Federal sponsored projects.

Webb told members that the same presentation had been given to central and departmental research administrators, and that it would also be given at the [Sponsored Projects Symposium Series](#).

2. Annual Report

Vice President Chris Cramer then presented slides from his annual report to the Board of Regents, titled [Annual Report: Status of Research and Technology Commercialization](#), which he presented to the board in December 2020. Cramer told members that the presentation is to help board members understand what the research mission entails.

Chair Olson asked what metrics the board has indicated interest in, regarding research. Cramer noted the following rankings:

- Remain in the top ten on the National Science Foundation (NSF) Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD)
- 5-7% growth rate in funding awards
- Continued increase in business and industry funding

3. Committee Discussion: Undergraduate Student Research

Chair Olson introduced the next topic by reminding members that undergraduate student research was previously discussed when committee members were identifying research priorities for the Systemwide Strategic Plan. She explained that research is important to graduate and professional students, and many are engaged in it, but it is equally important to offer research opportunities to undergraduate students. She pointed out that the opportunities are already available, and should be promoted to undergraduate students.

Olson then introduced Bob McMaster, vice provost, Undergraduate Education; Paul Silicano, director, Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP); and Jennifer Deane, Director, McNair Scholars Program (TRIO), who were invited to provide an overview of undergraduate research at the University, and how it is accomplished.

McMaster and Silicano presented slides titled [Office of Undergraduate Research](#) (OUR), which introduced the OUR team, the annual budget, scholarships and other offerings, mentorships, and the 2021 strategic plan.

Jennifer Deane then introduced herself as a faculty member and chair of the social sciences division on the Morris campus and the current director of the [McNair Scholars Program](#). She told members that even though Morris is small and specifically liberal arts focused, it has an established undergraduate research culture that is accessible to students. More recently, she added, there has been growth in undergraduate research related to social sciences and humanities. She told the committee that the research culture is largely attributed to faculty members that identify strongly as researchers and share an excitement for exploration with their students. She then pointed to a few initiatives on the Morris campus that have strengthened the culture of undergraduate research, including:

- An annual or bi-annual research symposium, similar to the symposiums hosted on the Twin Cities campus.
- The McNair Scholars Program grant, which the Morris campus has had for the past four years. Deane explained the campus always has a cohort of 25 students doing summertime research and the McNair program has provided a structure to better support outreach for undergraduate research initiatives. She also said that the program is a good fit for the campus demographic (40% first generation college students and 30-35% low income), given that the program is designed to:

prepare undergraduate students for doctoral studies through involvement in research and other scholarly activities. McNair participants are either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group that is traditionally underrepresented in graduate education and have demonstrated

strong academic potential. The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society.

- Given the new research environment as a result of distance learning and online work and instruction, researchers are becoming more creative about how to conduct research, which is impacting its outreach as well.

Olson suggested that some undergraduate students may not feel comfortable approaching faculty early in their education, and recommended that connections between undergraduate students and faculty should happen when students get to campus so that students feel comfortable pursuing research opportunities early as undergraduates.

Tamara Walsky, a graduate student representative on the committee, told members that she recently joined a graduate/undergraduate mentoring program, [A Friend in STEM](#), and was matched with a freshman student in their first semester, taking classes while living at home. She explained that the student had asked her fundamental questions about how to get involved, how to contact people, how to look up things, etc., which led Walsky to believe that there is probably an information gap for freshman students with the switch to remote learning. She suggested that perhaps professors who teach undergraduate classes could do specific outreach to let students know that undergraduate research opportunities exist.

Sumanth Gopinath commented that faculty time has always been a huge barrier and wondered what ideas the University had identified to incentivize faculty to do more undergraduate research and mentoring. McMaster and Deane both explained that the work can be part of a faculty member's service work, but also acknowledged that it is a labor of love. Deane added that she also believed the work should be recognized and supported by the institution. McMaster noted that the issue of faculty getting credit for this work is raised often, and suggested that the types of work that faculty get credit for in some ways depends on the culture of the department. Silicano agreed and said that in some schools, faculty feel overburdened and do not see the value in mentorships.

Associate Vice Provost Ole Gram pointed out that undergraduate mentorships are hugely important for 7.12 statements and said that almost all tenure dossiers include information about the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and other types of student advising. He added that colleges using [Works](#) for annual reporting have reported an uptick in UROPs because they are specifically called out in the system.

Tasoulla Hadjiyanni explained that while the College of Design values undergraduate research, the issue their faculty face is that students would prefer to work in the industry. Therefore, a faculty member may spend time investing in a student, building a relationship, and completing the application materials, only to be dropped by the student if an industry opportunity surfaces. She explained that this is discouraging for faculty and makes them hesitant to make the time commitment.

Katsumi Matsumoto posited that undergraduate students are less tethered to the academic units than graduate students, and suggested that would be beneficial to build some sort of structure for students to engage in in order to keep them in the pipeline, and get them involved in undergraduate research. He cautioned that relying on the good will of faculty may not be sustainable, and suggested if a unit does not have an undergraduate research culture, then they should develop one. Directed research, he suggested, could be a good approach for units looking to build this culture.

With no further business, Olson adjourned the meeting.

Bobbie Erichsen
University Senate Office