

MINUTES*

Senate Research Committee November 16, 1990

Present: John Sullivan (Chair), John Basgen, Sue Donaldson, Robert Herman, Harry Hogenkamp (for Tony Faras), Essie Kariv-Miller, Eric Klinger, Kenneth Reid, Winifred Schumi, Jeffrey Weis

Guest: Mark Brenner, Robert Holt

1. Schedule

The December 14 meeting was listed as tentative on the original schedule. The committee agreed that there is sufficient business to warrant meeting then, and the meeting was confirmed.

2. Research Support Policy

Mark Brenner said that the Research Support Policy recommended policy which he distributed at the October meeting was the version adopted over the summer. He wanted the committee to see it because some of the changes in it were made in response to SRC input to previous versions of indirect cost recovery policy drafts. Dean Brenner also distributed copies of two pages of the biennial legislative request that concern research directly.

3. Chief Research Officer

It was reported that President Hasselmo, Vice President Kuhi, and Associate Vice President Kvavik will be conferring on this and a decision will be made soon. A memo to them expressing the position of the Senate Research Committee was suggested, and it was agreed that following today's discussion one will be drafted. Professor Sullivan said that he spoke with consultative Committee Chair Warren Ibele (who sat in on part of the October SRC meeting). Professor Ibele agrees that the position should go with the position of Graduate School Dean, and he wants the duties to be defined before a search process is begun.

It was observed that opposition among deans to the Chief Research Officer position is based on three concerns: a sense that adding this position is a proliferation of hierarchy; questions of whether one person could have a broad enough knowledge to deal with all areas of research, combined with a feeling that the deans can put together grants well within their own areas; dislike of additional centralization, inserting another person to check with, and require its own budget and staff. It was suggested that if deans prefer to deal with their research issues in the Provost office, the CRO might function better with the rank of Assistant Provost. Professor Sullivan noted that part of the argument has been that the position at a vice presidential level was to have equal standing with the Vice President for Finance.

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

Sue Donaldson reported that at a recent Health Sciences meeting there was concern that the current system works against research across unit lines and questioning about who is charged with looking into this. Changes have been made with no clear input from researchers. The National Institute of Health keeps changing funding so that it is increasingly important to have channels between funding sources, decision makers on campus, and researchers in real situations. The regulation that grants under \$100,000 can't be split between units discourages interdisciplinary projects. Accounting doesn't apply to the way science cuts across units. Robert Herman added that the primary action is at the principle investigator and department levels; departments will help PIs first, then go to the Graduate School for further assistance. Sue Donaldson expressed the fear of researchers that a CRO will be primarily a business person. They want a researcher with grants in the position, analogous to the way the NIH requires persons with grants to serve on their study groups. It was noted, however, that these groups, which meet for only about a week, aren't really comparable to a permanent job. Several committee members noted that the job description could state experience with grant support research without requiring current grants.

Dean Holt commented that the CRO position is a research policy-making position and is needed to deal with the backlog of policy of issues. There is need for policy making at many points and crossing jurisdictions. There are many graduate studies and research matters that cross unit lines and the new thrust in both is increasingly interdisciplinary. Many projects will share facilities equipment, and graduate research assistants. He emphasized the need for a voice and information access at the President's Cabinet and Provost Council level. A central office has access to aggregated data and lower levels have disaggregated data; both are needed.

Kenneth Reid asked at what point the CRO would act -- solving problems or initiating processes. He said that he gathers Dean Holt has upward communication channels, but that the majority of problems are with downward communication. Dean Holt agreed that there are many problems with downward communication due to the backlog of policies to be formulated and disseminated and to staff changes. For example, he said, ad hoc polices have been made to provide cash matches to a center from indirect funds, as an amount rather than as a percentage. In this way matches from flexible funds become locked up and are no longer flexible. Now there is a policy in place that (a) grants are not to be sought outside the University's priorities and (b) money will be built into the grant throughout the grant's life so that it is part of the operation at the time of grant renewal.

There were several comments to the effect that when researchers were consulted regarding whether the CRO and graduate school dean should be the same person, the only position expressed was that it should be a scientist. Several stressed the importance of listening to and involving PIs in decision making. Dean Holt added that the question is not what field the person should be from but the level of involvement with research funding. He said it is important to have input from various perspectives. People with a vested interest in a research proposal will naturally advocate for it. A research-based review panel could provide more objective input. Academics reviewing the proposals would make recommendations in terms of whether the research was a good thing to undertake in itself; decisions about where it ranks in terms of University priorities would come at a later and higher level. Financial decisions will relate to venture capital expectations.

Dean Holt was asked a question about the change in health care for graduate assistants. He replied that the health care for research and teaching assistants is being shifted from salary to fringes for one year. There is no salary increase. An increase in total compensation is needed. Concern was

expressed graduate assistants are an important aspect of research support and in making expenditures according to the Research Support Policy there should be recognition that money from grants is not state money.

Professor Kariv-Miller questioned whether the strong voice for research concerns which is needed could best be provided by a Graduate School Dean and Vice President or perhaps by a Vice Provost in Academic Affairs. Dean Holt responded that in general the Research Advisory Council has paid attention to proposal review including questions of bringing in new faculty without adequate set ups, and there is awareness of how closely entwined graduate education and research are. When resources must be divided up coalitions form and it is useful to have a separate group which, like the Research Executive Council, has no sense of obligation to Academic Affairs. In order to avoid having good research ideas killed off at an early level it is useful to have an alternative line of reporting for information, but not with final decision making authority.

Professor Sullivan said that whether the CRO position titled as a Vice President for Research or an Assistant Vice President under the Provost, the issue remains representation of Principle investigators, and this committee will have a role in policy making. If panels are used it could be recommended that they also report to the Senate Research Committee. Dean Holt added that a strategic planning committee is needed at the top. Eric Klinger observed that the situation is different for the coordinate campuses. He asked whether changes can best be implemented within or without the President's Cabinet, and said that his uncertainty about the position concerns the function, not the title.

Professor Kariv-Miller said that she had done an informal poll of active colleagues and their general view is that things have been going well under Dean Holt and that much depends on the personality of the person doing the job. If adding a specific title will be helpful they are agreeable to it, but they consider the important thing is having the right person in the position.

Professor Sullivan suggested taking an informal poll of the members present, and, if there appears to be consensus or near consensus, writing up the results, faxing the report to the committee for approval and then [sending] it as a memo to President Hasselmo, Vice President Kuhl, and Associate Vice President Kvavik. In the resulting poll there was broad, but not complete, consensus the CRO should also be the Dean of the Graduate School, and a division on whether the CRO should be a Vice President or and Associate Vice President under the Provost. It was agreed that Professor Sullivan should forward the results in a memo, also stating the concerns about adding another layer of administration and the need for PIs to be represented. The promotion of research and assistance in helping new researchers into the process were seen as important responsibilities, regardless of the title of the position.

5. Policy for Renting Space Off Campus For Research Activities

Dean Brenner distributed copies of the November 14 draft of this document, and said that the December 14 meeting would be adequate time to take it up. He said that in the past rental decisions for several large research centers have been made without a policy in place. In an effort to be fair to other researchers on campus he has tried to develop policies that are consistent with the Minnesota Facilities Model and with space on campus, he said. He added that to create an even playing field so that off campus rental does not produce either a gain or a loss for the dean involved, he took the position that if a dean authorizes a program off campus the dean should take responsibility for paying some of the expense. Projects such as state specials that don't general full indirect cost have to be considered. Basically the

policy tries to encourage responsible use of off campus space and not create barriers to acquiring space that will be needed.

Dean Brenner asked committee members to call him with any concerns about the document, noting that he will share it with the Research Executive Council today, but for information and discussion, not approval. At the December 14 meeting he will have copies of the most recent version available.

6. Bidding System Changes

In response to proposals to alter the bidding system to obtain standing discounts for equipment and adjust bid limits to reflect inflation, Professor Kariv-Miller moved the following resolution.

The plan to negotiate master purchasing contracts with vendors that supply commonly used equipment will reduce paper work and save time, and thus significantly facilitate the purchasing process. The Senate Research Committee endorses the use of the new bidding system and encourages Purchasing to assign high priority to its adoption.

The resolution carried unanimously. Professor Sullivan will prepare a memo to the Director of Purchasing stating this.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10.

-- Catherine Winter

University of Minnesota