

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL
Minutes of 9 June 2011

Members present: Brooks Applegate, Steve Bertman, Eileen Evans (for Provost T. Greene), Gene Freudenburg, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Carrie Leatherman, Sharie Falan (for M.A. Stark), Paula Kohler (for Vice President D. Litynski), Vladimir Risukhin, Stephen Tasko, Jan Van Der Kley (for Vice President L. Rinker), Alan Wuosmaa. **Also present:** Allison Green, Research and Sponsored Programs, Betty McCain, director, Grants and Contracts.

Council Chair Brooks Applegate called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of 19 May 2011

A motion was made by Evans and seconded by Ghantasala to approve the minutes of 19 May 2011. Motion passed.

Approval of Agenda for 9 June 2011

A motion was made by Tasko and seconded by Wuosmaa to approve the agenda of 9 June 2011. Motion passed.

Reports

Council Chair – Brooks Applegate

Chair Applegate reported that the purpose of holding the optional June meeting was to discuss continuing business related to proposed changes to the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA) Guidelines.

Office of the Vice President for Research – Paula Kohler

Kohler reported that the recent transition to the electronic buck sheet was going well. There have been a few errors in correctly assigning the college of a Principal Investigator which can affect the approval protocol. Kohler reported that due to interest from other universities, there are plans to commercialize the electronic buck sheet. The next phase in the project will be to set up a budget template. It is anticipated that the template will be complete by the end of summer. One goal of the new system is to have specific information (e.g. fringe rates) that will automatically complete portions of the budget for submissions to major funders such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health. Kohler also reported that future phases of the project will include a similar budget template for FRACAA awards and to develop a database for all internal functions so that reports can be generated.

Applegate suggested that a report about FRACAA results for this past year be included in the OVPR newsletter. Kohler noted that this and other information are being considered as part of a larger marketing plan for the FRACAA program.

Interim Dean of the Graduate College – Gene Freudenburg

Freudenburg reported:

- the Graduate College is making plans for fall. There were 29 Ph.D. degrees granted in the June 2011 graduation. There were a total of 131 Ph.D.s granted for the 2010-11 year. This is up from 112 Ph.D. degrees granted in the previous year.
- the Graduate College recently conducted a “dissertation training” session.
- WMU, along with Wayne State University, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University are part of the Michigan Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP). He just returned from a meeting in Washington D.C. that focused on attempting to increase students to work in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) areas. Applegate asked if AGEP was having positive outcomes in this area. Freudenburg noted that he was not sure if outcomes were being evaluated.
- the Graduate College Plans were developed based on input over the past year and those plans were being reviewed by the provost. Following the provost's review, it will be distributed to the community for review.

Continued Business

Review of Progress Made on AY 2010/2011 Charges (Based on Report to the Faculty Senate Executive Board)

Discussion was organized around the specific charges outlined in the RPC report to the Faculty Senate Executive Board. Therefore, the charges are outlined below along with any related discussion.

1. Review the RPC role statement and evaluate the processes used to support and enhance creative activities and scholarship. Based upon this evaluation develop goals and policies for enhancing faculty and student activities in scholarship, creative activities and research.

Related to this item, it was reported that there is still no GSAC member sitting on the Research Policies Council. Kohler noted that this was an issue for coordinating Poster Day.

3. Conduct yearly review of the state of the research ethics policies and procedures in collaboration with the Vice President for Research. Initiate changes or additions where appropriate. (Taken from WMU Self-Study Report.)

There was no formal evaluation during the 2010/11 AY. Kohler noted that the OVPR was determining whether WMU should seek a higher level of certification for animal use research. One issue is that animal facilities are used for both teaching and research. This makes getting facilities and administration (F&A) recovery for these facilities challenging. Kohler also noted that OVPR is looking into training processes and the Animal Use Committee and considering changes to make it similar to the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB). Kohler noted this charge should be rolled over into the 2011/12 AY. Applegate noted that since Kohler's comments were mostly about animal use issues, he would hope to see a more specific charge for 2011/12. Kohler countered that she would rather see the RPC work on research

training/misconduct issues. Specifically, changes in NSF policy have prompted a new research ethics training for NSF-funded investigators. Kohler thinks there needs to be more work done in this area since it is likely that other federal agencies will adopt such requirements.

Applegate reported the past RPC Chair Steve Ziebarth should work with OVPR to clarify the language of this charge for the 2011/12 AY. Van Der Kley suggested that this charge be closed and begin a new charge for 2011/12 AY. Applegate stated he would talk to past Chair Ziebarth regarding this charge.

4. Continue to work with the Office of the Vice President for Research on issues related to the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Kohler noted that this charge has been kept open in the case of any cases that may have come through to 'test' the policy. As there were no 'test' cases, it was suggested that the charge be closed. If/when a test case comes forward, an ad hoc committee can be established to deal with it.

6. Continue with the celebration of Research and Creative Activities Day. Celebration of Research Day 2011:

Applegate congratulated the group who organized the 2011 Research and Creative Activities Day. It was also suggested that planning for next year needs to be on the agenda for the September 2011 RPC meeting.

7. Continue review of Support for Faculty Scholar Award proposals.

A question was raised whether it was an appropriate time to review SFSA program. Van Der Kley suggested it was still too early to evaluate the program. Kohler reported that examples of funded projects will be posted on the OVPR website. In addition, postcards and posters will be used to advertise the programs.

There was some discussion about a survey to get a better sense of faculty awareness and opinion about the FRACAA funding sources. Applegate wondered if there were graduate students available to conduct a survey.

Consider Changes to the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA) Guidelines

A proposed revision of FRACAA guidelines was presented along with the previous FRACAA guidelines.

During initial discussion, Ghantasala asked if there is information about the rate at which new faculty apply for FRACAA. Wuosmaa asked if we knew the rate at which FRACAA recipients go on to secure external funding. Specific answers were not provided.

Bertman reported that a number of concerns about existing guidelines came up during this year's grant cycle which resulted in the proposed revisions. Van Der Kley asked if any structural changes were being proposed. If so, it would need to go to the Faculty Senate. Bertman noted that no structural changes were being proposed. The main changes were reported to make it easier for individuals to complete an application

without problems. It was reported that the most important changes were to clarify details of the application documents. Kohler added the main reason for the revision was to eliminate conflicts within the existing document and to make the guidelines as clear as possible.

Applegate made reference to the section regarding the appeals process. He noted there is nothing that says the appeal process is final, although it is implied. Van Der Kley stated that changing the language related to appeals would constitute a structural change to the document requiring approval by the Faculty Senate. Applegate responded that, in the past, there have been issues with applicants understanding that appeals are not allowed.

Kohler stated that the chair of FRACAA, if not an RPC member, will be an ex officio member of RPC. Kohler would like a motion on this issue.

Regarding the review FRACAA process, Bertman mentioned that a lot of the questions in the review process prompted yes/no responses and that he wanted to get more graded responses, which would help with justifying the decisions that are made about funding. Applegate noted that a few years ago, there was a discrepancy between the rubrics for the three categories, and that, overall, he doesn't think the categories serve the process very well. Kohler noted that it would be an appropriate charge for the RPC to look at the issue of classification and review criteria for the FRACAA awards. Van Der Kley asked to be specific about what was not working about the current system. Bertman responded by stating that, in his view, the real problem relates to determining the best method for getting the best review system. A number of attendees highlighted the importance of getting a high quality review and that it requires expertise/content knowledge.

Kohler was also concerned that criteria have not been applied to the selection of the review committee and that more thorough screening was necessary. Applegate summarized that the OVPR will facilitate the development of a database that will help RPC get new committee members.

Bertman moved that information about weighting factors in funding decisions be included in the guidelines. Applegate seconded the motion and the motion was carried.

There were a number of other editorial recommendations and suggestions discussed. Van Der Kley made a motion to approve the report pending the approved changes. Wuosmaa seconded the motion. The motion passed with full support. Van Der Kley also suggested that the specific wording changes be included in the minutes.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjournment

Wuosmaa made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Van Der Kley seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Stephen Tasko, Vice Chair