

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL  
Minutes of 13 September 2018

**Members Present:** Osama Abudayyeh, Onur Arugaslan, Manuel Bautista, Jennifer Bott, Chris Coryn, Anthony DeFulio, Jonathan Eiseman, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Katherine Joslin, Sarah Pratt (for Terri Kinzy), Aneudy Mota, Susan Stapleton, Susan Steuer, Betty McKain (for Patti Van Walbeck), Andre Venter

**Member Absent:** Martha Councill-Vargas

**Guest:** Richard Gershon, Faculty Senate President

The meeting was called to order at 2:35 p.m.

**A. Procedural Items**

*Acceptance of the Agenda*

A motion was made by Ghantasala, seconded by Abudayyeh, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

*Approval of the Minutes*

A motion was made by Coryn, seconded by Arugaslan, to approve the minutes of 17 May 2018. Motion carried.

*Chair's Remarks*

Introductions were made around the table. Richard Gershon, Faculty Senate President, and Graduate Student Association representatives Jonathan Eiseman and Aneudy Mota were introduced.

**B. Action Items**

1. *RPC Role and Charges for 2018-19 – Richard Gershon*

Gershon described the role of RPC as very important to help developing appropriate policies that enhance research and remove any obstacles along the way. The need to enhance the 'interdisciplinary research collaborations' through cluster hires and other means at the college and departmental level (charge 4) is identified as one of the important tasks for this year. Joslin expressed concerns that the discipline specific expertise shouldn't be compromised, while identifying/recruiting 'cluster hires'. Gershon provided an overview of all the other charges for the year. The list of charges was also circulated to members.

2. *Jennifer Bott, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Bott expressed great enthusiasm in joining WMU in the academic leadership role. A 'research vision' for the University will be developed, working with the Office of the Vice President for Research, RPC and all the stakeholders. Bautista pointed out the difficulties involved in 'interdisciplinary research' and indicated the importance of involving graduate and undergraduate students.

Stapleton pointed out that the Graduate College has the 'interdisciplinary graduate program'. Bott has shared her experience with an 'interdisciplinary undergraduate program', which may require more resources as well as greater enthusiasm from the students, who would have to do a lot more work in course selection and program focus. Bott has expressed WMU's commitment to diversity and inclusion in all areas of education and research across the campus.

3. *Allocation of 2018-19 Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund*  
Sarah Pratt, senior research program officer, OVPR, provided FRACASF allocation data to discuss allocating funds from the \$475,000 into Faculty Research Travel Fund, Publication of Papers and Exhibition of Creative Works, Support for Faculty Scholar Award, and Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award this fiscal year. She asked that the council pay attention to overspent funds, consistently in PPP&E and FRTF. OVPR has covered the deficits the last few years. It is becoming more difficult with budget constraints/cuts, and Pratt has mentioned that OVPR won't be able to compensate any possible deficit at the end of this year. So, allocations have to be made accordingly. A discussion ensued regarding award maximum. It was agreed to leave the award maximum the same as last year. The allocation will be revisited later in the year in case adjustments are needed. Abudayyeh proposed to keep the allocations at the same level as last year. Joslin seconded the motion. Steuer asked if all were in favor of the motion; approval was unanimous.

Following is the account allocation determination and award maximums:

Total Funds:	\$475,000	Allocation	Award Max
	FRTF	\$230,000	\$800
	PPP&E	\$25,000	\$750
	SFSA	\$40,000	\$2,000
	FRACAA	\$180,000	\$10,000

4. *Statement for Distribution/Presentation to Faculty by RPC members*  
Steuer has provided the statement prepared for RPC members and encouraged members to share this statement with faculty in respective colleges.
5. *Work Plan for 2018-19 Charges*  
A work plan developed by Steuer and Obare was provided to all members.
6. *Support for Faculty Scholar Award Workshop Development and Brainstorming for best Practices (Charge #3)*  
OVPR is organizing SFSA workshops to provide information regarding preparing SFSA proposals. The first workshop will be held on 21 September 2018. Sarah Pratt requested that members send suggestions on including any particular aspects in these workshops.

7. *Discuss Strategies/Subcommittees to Work on Charge #4*  
*Steuer started the discussion considering the four aspects of the charge*
- *Determining how WMU groups define interdisciplinary*
  - *Complete research equipment inventory and developing research interest inventory*
  - *Strategies to develop interdisciplinary collaborations*
  - *Recommendations to promote cluster hires*

Stapleton suggested that FARS may be used for developing expertise database. Steuer further expressed that the idea of doing a survey among faculty to determine interdisciplinary expertise may not be feasible. Coryn pointed out that “suggested examples of areas of interest” as described in charge #4 bullet points, may not necessarily be taken each as a separate charge. Venter wanted to know about the University experience with joint hires and how it can be used for cluster hires. Stapleton felt that the issues associated with joint hires in the departments will be different from the proposed ‘cluster hires’. Apart from the equipment inventory database, strategies to develop interdisciplinary collaborations across the campus along with the recommendations for cluster-hires are identified to be important tasks for the sub-committee.

‘Interdisciplinary Research Collaborations – Clusters’ Committee was proposed and several potential members discussed. Further discussion is planned for the October meeting.

Pratt has updated the members with the progress made on the equipment database. It is expected that a searchable database will be ready by the end of the semester. Ghantasala’s contributions on this committee were acknowledged.

8. *Honorary Degree Committee* – Steuer requested a volunteer as a RPC nominee for this committee and Coryn agreed to serve.

### **C. Discussion/Information Item**

1. *Highlights of WMU Research from OVPR*  
 Opioids Innovation Networking Session organized by OVPR on 15 August 2018, was attended by over 80 participants. The next meeting is currently being planned on the topics like PFAS and safe drinking water, challenges impacting our community, etc.

Pratt informed the members about improvements to the proposal submission/management PAF system software.

New features include:

- an Intellectual Credit Section, which allows WMU to assign credit for

- submissions and awards to all principal and co-principal investigators and their associated units;
- the introduction of Information Technology Resource Section, which helps understanding and plan for information technology resources needed to complete a project.

2. *Research Policies and Procedures Update*  
 Pratt circulated a list of all research policies and their current review status.

### **D. Other**

1. *Council Chair – Steuer*  
 No new items.
2. *OVPR*  
 Pratt shared the schedule for 2018-19 Discovery Acceleration workshops to be organized by OVPR.
3. *Dean of the Graduate College – Stapleton*  
 A total of 77 awards (~\$77000) were made by the Graduate College last year for graduate student travel and graduate research applications out of a total of 198 applications received. Procedures for monitoring these awarded funds are continuously updated by the Graduate College to ensure proper utilization of these funds awarded.

Info Ready is currently preparing a proposal submission software for these two applications.

The Graduate College is working on developing rubrics for the assessment of the outcomes of the graduate student research proposals.

The Graduate College is working on strategies to provide support to graduate students to improve thesis and report writing skills. Stapleton pointed out that it will be difficult to provide one-on-one support to students on thesis writing and editing support.

### **E. Adjournment**

Abudayyeh moved to adjourn; Coryn seconded. The motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Submitted by Muralidhar Ghantasala