

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY SENATE

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL  
Minutes of Thursday, 11 January 2018

**Members Present:** Osama Abudayyeh, Onur Arugaslan, Steve Bertman, Martha Councell-Vargas, Anthony DeFulio, Muralidhar Ghantasala, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Katherine Joslin, James Kiddle (for Andre Venter), Terri Goss Kinzy, Patti VanWalbeck, Sherine Obare, Jill Rowe, Paul Solomon, and Sue Steuer

**Members Absent:** Stevens Bonhomme, Damon Chambers, Chris Coryn, and Willem Homan

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

Council Chair Susan Steuer called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.

*Acceptance of the Agenda*

A motion was made by Bertman to accept the agenda, seconded by Ghantasala. Motion carried.

*Approval of the Minutes*

A motion was made by Bertman, seconded by Ghantasala, to approve the minutes of 7 December 2017. Motion carried.

*Chair's Remarks*

None.

DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS

*Welcome to Dr. Terri Goss Kinzy, Vice President for Research and Discussion with RPC Members*

Dr. Kinzy was welcomed and discussion followed on the mission and some of the goals of the RPC, and in general with many aspects of Western Michigan University, with an emphasis on topics related to research and to teaching. Discussion indicated that the work of the council has changed in recent times and discussion may continue at upcoming meetings. Among specifics discussed in this portion of the meeting were the following: the work of faculty submitting Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award proposals; the research culture at WMU writ large; also the world of external research at this time.

Kinzy presented an overview of her career to date, and welcomed and answered questions from members. Topics in this portion of the meeting included: launching and re-launching people's careers; programs at Rutgers University that Kinzy has been involved with in both the sciences and humanities; information about the Support for Faculty Scholar Award (Muralidhar Ghantasala); evidence based teaching (Paul Solomon); the difficulty of finding external funds in the humanities and arts (Katherine Joslin); word that Kinzy has been fortunate with obtaining

grants for the art community and social sciences at Rutgers University (Kinzy); subvention costs; speculation that the new head of the WMU vice president for development and alumni affairs will be a good partner for research at WMU; discussion about the provost search; Faculty Senate; the notion that 'Policies are not rules, but a process,' that need to be transparent (Kinzy). In addition: Onur Arugaslan addressed the difficulty of finding external grants in business. Kinzy led an extended discussion about grants to the Foundation, and how they will be dealt with and credited as a barometer of research success. There was also discussion by members of the importance of enhanced cooperation and collaboration between the WMU School of Medicine and the University.

Kinzy and the council members commended Sherine Obare for her acumen, her proactive stance for research and related values, and her very hard work as interim vice president for research.

*Proposal Submission Timeline Policy – Obare*

Detailed discussion of this topic included: challenges with faculty submitting late; timelines; how best to introduce new guidelines. On the question of whether this new protocol meets the definition for policy or procedure, Kinzy suggested that this is a 'small p' policy that is procedural, and might also be referred to as "operational" policy. Also mentioned was that the new policy: should minimize delays and attempt to ameliorate challenges such as weather cancelations and may result in stronger applications, as research officers will be able to review materials before submission and offer suggestions. Also: that the proposal approval form (PAF) that includes the budgets, justifications and project description will have to be routed for approval seven days in advance, in order to give chairs and deans the opportunity to review and take proper actions.

*Sponsored vs. Non-sponsored Projects – Obare*

Discussion took place about the proper procedure for the correct routing of contracts, depending on whether the work is based on a research project versus whether it is a departmental service. Obare prepared and shared a document that distinguishes when a contract should be routed through the OVPR and when it should be routed through the Office of Business Services. It was noted that projects routed through OVPR are captured in the monthly grants reports which gives credit to the faculty member, department and the college. The OVPR would like to see a fuller picture of research at WMU and is exploring how to document this so these activities contribute to the reputation of the University.

One indicator is the specified deliverables. In addition, sponsored contracts stipulate how funds should be used and require a report at the end of the project. Contracts "small" for research with a small agency are acceptable, departmental activities which are classified as sponsored projects that have been routed through Business Services have not received research credit, because there is no PAF. This does not safeguard researchers with the protection for compliance, human subjects, etc. which they might need.

Discussion of departmental service contracts led to questions (Ghantasala) regarding grants that don't necessarily provide funds but instead lead to in-kind grants such as access to facilities. Obare indicated that there have been a few faculty members who have successfully obtained in-kind grants that are awarded through a highly competitive process. The OVPR and the former provost discussed how to recognize faculty who get these in-kind grants. Obare shared that additional discussions will take place between the new provost and the deans on this topic.

Kinzy hopes to work with individuals with expertise in a given area. Discussion followed about research ethics, and the danger of fraud with the opportunities presented by technology. Byrd-Jacobs noted the triangle: perceived pressure, perceived opportunity and rationalization. The need for information literacy for students and graduate students to improve research was also discussed and the Libraries' efforts to assist faculty, staff and students.

#### **Action Item**

##### **Cost-share Procedure and Flow Chart (Follow-up)**

Obare shared a flow chart prepared by OVPR to accompany the cost-share procedure. While cost share is not always required and should not be sought if it is not needed, it is important that faculty has a process that makes it easy to navigate the cost-share request process. When grants require mandatory cost sharing, there should be a clear process for seeking needed support. Obare has already shared the documents with the college associate deans for research who have approved the form and would like feedback from RPC before it is shared with the deans.

Sometimes there is a need for community matching funds. RPC provided recommendations for small changes, but overall the council found the flow chart helpful. This will be revisited at the next meeting.

#### **Reports**

##### *Council Chair – Steuer*

Next month is SFSA review at 2 p.m. on February 8. The information for submission and review at Info Ready should be updated for this round.

##### *Associate Vice President for Research – Obare*

Obare distributed a budget report showing the current funds spent of the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund. The report highlighted the funds available for the next cycle for SFSA as well as other internal awards.

##### *Acting Dean of the Graduate College – Byrd-Jacobs*

Byrd-Jacobs noted the high rate of compliance with ethics training for graduate students. Since 2010, the National Science Foundation has required appropriate training about ethical issues and best practices for the responsible conduct of research, RCR how to be professional, the need for faculty to get involved in RCR training, set a good example for students, plagiarism, how to validate publishable results, and stress management.

#### **Adjournment**

Paul Solomon moved to adjourn; seconded by Patti Van Walbeck. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Paul Solomon  
Secretary