

MINUTES
Committee on Research
January 28, 2014

Present: Judith Habicht Mauche (chair), Sharon Daniel, Yat Li, Jason Nielsen, Steve Whittaker, Fitnat Yildiz, Matt Robinson (Committee Analyst)

Absent with Notice: Pranav Anand, Paul Roth, Matt Wagers

FRG/SRG Review

The committee received 125 applications for Faculty Research Grants (FRGs) and 39 applications for Special Research Grants (SRGs). Adjudication will take place during the February meetings.

Composite Benefit Rate Proposal

The committee finalized its response to the consultation with Troy Lawson from UCSC Planning and Budget on December 3, 2013. The committee agrees that the proposal is beneficial up until the point it imposes new charges on faculty summer salary. Composite benefit rates will make grant proposals much easier to prepare, but COR cannot support the charging of health and welfare and retirement on faculty summer salary. The committee will make a brief presentation on this issue at the February 19, 2014 Senate meeting.

Consultation with VCR Brandt

COR asked VCR Brandt for his insights on the composite benefit rate (CBR) proposal. He answered that he sees the CBR and the summer salary charges as two separate issues. The current practice of assigning individual benefit rates to every grant is confusing and unnecessarily tedious for faculty and staff on campus. But this obvious improvement should not be joined with such a controversial decision to charge benefits and retirement to faculty summer salary. The committee agreed to pursue the issue through UCORP and other systemwide committees.

COR asked about the campus process for nominating proposals for major systemwide grants. The committee wanted to make sure that notifications for these competitions go out broadly to campus as early as possible. VCR Brandt responded that the major grant proposals are on fixed timelines and the Office of Research shares the call documents as soon as they are made available. There may be the appearance that some faculty know before others because many faculty follow these programs on their own. Regarding the on campus review procedure, the VCR explained that the first step is for interested faculty members to submit a short summary of what their proposal would be. Then, he will typically meet with the deans of the divisions that have submitted summaries and review them through the lens of what will likely get funded. COR asked about getting involved in this process. The VCR replied that he would welcome COR's participation through a representative in this nomination process, but it might be adding unnecessary bureaucracy to the process. If the issue is transparency, there is likely a better way to improve the process than to add another member to the review committee.

COR pointed out that this speaks to a large goal of the committee, which is to allow for new bottom-up opportunities for the faculty in terms of research funding and avoid the priorities of the deans driving all of the decisions. The committee asked how UCSC could nurture new

collaborations among faculty. The VCR agreed that this is a main priority for his office. The process for these major grants and certain matching funding opportunities is fairly ad hoc, and may give the impression of favoritism for certain disciplines. He hopes to grow the research development team in the Office of Research.

COR asked about the VCR's efforts to increase UCSC's success rate on large training grants to fund graduate students. VCR Brandt replied that he is working with the Dean of Graduate Studies on how to best grow this capability. COR advised that there are departments and staff members across campus that have success in this area that will be able to advise the VCR as he looks to grow capacity. COR suggested that the VCR solicit feedback from the department chairs on the issue.

COR and VCR Brandt discussed the issue of lab safety on campus. VCR Brandt noted that on some recent lab walkthroughs he saw room for improvement in safety habits. The Office of Research, with support from the faculty, needs to create a better culture of safety compliance on campus.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm