

Committee on Research Annual Report 2017-18

To: Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division

The Committee on Research (COR) is charged with reviewing campus and system-wide policies and issues related to UCSC's research mission. The committee also advises and collaborates with the Office of Research to promote faculty research. COR directly supports faculty researchers by awarding faculty research grants (FRG), special research grants (SRG), and travel grants, and works to develop policy and strategy that assist with broad research goals, like increasing multi-principal investigator initiatives.

In 2017-18, the Committee on Research reviewed a range of proposed policies and initiatives created at the campus and UC-wide levels. We consulted with Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) Scott Brandt on long-term goals of supporting or creating new vibrant research communities across the campus that can produce high-quality research and potentially collaborate. We also discussed issues around improving experiences of submissions of proposals for extramural funding to support the research and our students.

To increase the amount of available funding for COR grants, this year COR worked with Associate Chancellor Ashish Sahni on a proposal that allowed the Chancellor's Office to provide additional funding for COR grants. To this end, COR put an extra effort to facilitate the Chancellor's Office to support new faculty and assistant professors, while not interfering with COR review process. The overall effort was worthwhile, allowing COR to increase the total amount of COR funding and award 107 grants (72% of submitted proposals) distributed as 10 New Faculty Research Grants, 75 Faculty Research Grants (FRG), and 22 Special Research Grants (SRG), with the total amount of \$324,972.

Throughout the academic year, COR worked on a survey that was deployed at the end of academic year, from June 16-25, 2018. The overall response rate to the survey was 30%, which was according to the survey analysts a "very good response rate, comparable to the response rates for other senate surveys administered this year." COR is thankful to faculty for their responses which reward the effort of revising the survey multiple times and provide valuable information on the best way to serve our campus research community.

Regarding COR's work, it is worth mentioning that besides all other activities, COR is responsible for the evaluation of proposals for faculty research grant programs (FRG, SRG, NFRG). Therefore, the committee spent a considerable time in the Fall quarter to discuss this year's proposal review process and much of the Winter quarter was spent evaluating 148 proposals. Here below is an overview of COR's work in 2017-18.

Strategic Consultations with the Office of Research

The committee continued to extend a standing invitation to Vice Chancellor for Research (VCR) Scott Brandt to attend relevant COR meetings and consult on issues of mutual concern regarding research policy and culture on campus. Those consultations were also the main

vehicle through which COR members could learn about the administrative structure and responsibilities of the Office of Research units, as well as brainstorm potential directions which could improve institutional support for research and creative activities.

As part of the consultations, this year Director of the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) Kate Aja helped COR to update COR grant award letters to be compliant with the most recent campus policies. This helped COR to focus its grant review work only on the quality of the proposed research and creative activities. Later in the academic year, Director Aja provided COR a brief overview of the OSP, which has delegated authority to submit proposals and accept awards on behalf of the Board of Regents. Director Aja provided information about the modes of communication with faculty and the OSP operation, the number of the OSP personnel and grants they process to illustrate that the OSP is short-staffed for the scale of its operation. Finally, during that consultation COR also learned about regulatory challenges that the OSP was dealing with and Director Aja highlighted the openness to informal feedback on how to improve the OSP processes.

Early in the academic year, Graduate Council (GC) Chair Gina Dent contacted COR Chair Dejan Milutinović to initiate a discussion about potentials to improve the experience of graduate student proposal submissions for pursuing research funding. As a follow-up, Chair Milutinović wrote an inquiry about the status of ongoing hiring in the Office of Research (OR) and plans to support graduate students. Following the OR's response by Associate Vice Chancellor for Research Quentin Williams and OSP Director Aja, COR summarized the response and proposed some ideas for a follow-up, and sent the summary to Senate Chair Ólöf Einarsson and GC Chair Dent for a further consultation about the issue. COR committee members were informed about the potential to work with the GC on the issue.

Last but not least, the consultation with the OR enabled VCR Brandt to present insights into: (1) Intellectual Property Campus Policies Proposal; (2) Centers of Excellence Proposal, as well as (3) Graduate Growth Initiatives. COR provided a formal response to all three documents.

Research Grants

The committee has two funding sources, the Education Fund and University Opportunity Fund. This year the Education Fund was \$0 and University Opportunity Fund was \$341,749. This year's COR did not receive any carryforward funding (\$0). Therefore, the total 2017-18 COR grant budget was \$341,749, which was 8.5% lower than the budget in 2016-17 (\$373,454). In both years, the amount from the two funding sources were identically equal (\$341,749), therefore, the drop was due to the non-existing carryforward funding in 2017-18 budget. COR distributed the total budget (\$341,749) to Travel Grant Budget (\$125,650) and Research Grant Budget (\$216,099).

Budget Source	Amount
Opportunity Fund – Indirect Cost Receipt from federally funded grants	\$341,749
Education Fund – Indirect Cost Receipt from privately funded grants	\$0
Total	\$341,749

The information about the 2016-17 budget was taken from the same spreadsheet providing the budget information for this year, i.e., 2017-18. However, COR’s annual report for 2016-17 shows that the budget for that year had \$44,987 from Education fund \$337,466 from the Opportunity fund totaling to \$382,453. In the light of that, the total COR budget for 2017-18 was down from 2016-17 for about 10.6%. In the annual report for 2016-17 COR also indicated that COR budget was cut for 15.8%. While the constant budget cuts make awarding more difficult and negative impacts of it were discussed in the 2016-17 COR annual report in its section “Research Related Activities,”¹ the source of difference between the history of COR budgets and budget that is reported in the annual report is *unclear*. Furthermore, this makes it difficult to infer COR funding trends. More importantly, it should be noted that this year’s COR did not receive information about its budget until January 2018 and clear budget information was compiled by COR analysts in February 2018, which was very late and interfered with the timing of granting awards.

Each year, the committee solicits applications for its three research programs, New Faculty Research Grants (NFRG), Faculty Research Grants (FRG) and Special Research Grants (SRG). To increase the amount of available funding for COR research grants, COR Chair Milutinović worked with Associate Chancellor Ashish Sahni on a proposal that allowed the Chancellor’s Office (CO) to provide funding of \$112,000 for COR research grants. Towards this, COR put an extra effort to facilitate the Chancellor’s Office priority to support new faculty and assistant professors, while not interfering with the review process. The overall effort was worthwhile and allowed the budget for COR research grants of \$328,099, which is an increase of 18.5% in comparison to 2016-17.

This year there were 148 proposals, of which 72% were funded. For the reference, last year the number of proposals was about the same (151) of which 44% were funded. Our approach followed the prior COR policy in funding the majority of FRGs, which tend to be for smaller amounts. Furthermore, as noted above, this year the CO provided additional funding for COR research grants and we consulted with the CO on spending their funding in alignment with their goal to support new and more junior faculty. In consultation with the CO, out of their provided funding (\$112,000), the amount of \$39,383 was used to support all New Faculty Research Grants

¹ <https://senate.ucsc.edu/senate-meetings/agendas-minutes/2017-2018/2017-December-1-Meeting/1883---COR-Annual-Report-2016-17.pdf>

(NFRG) and the rest of \$72,617 was joined to the Research Grant Budget. Therefore, the total award budget for FRG and SRG grants was \$288,716 and overall effort allowed to award 107 grants (72% of submitted proposal) distributed as 10 New Faculty Research Grants (NFRG), 75 Faculty Research Grants (FRG), and 22 Special Research Grants (SRG), with the total amount of \$324,972. A note about each type of COR grants and the list of spending are provided below.

New Faculty Research Grants (NFRGs): The NFRG program provides new faculty with access to funding in the current fiscal year. It has proved helpful to new faculty as they establish their research careers. Of the 10 NFRG requests, all 10 were funded. The award amount increased from last year’s \$19,000 to \$39,383 while the number of the NFRG applications decreased from 15 last year to 10 this year. All NFRG proposals were reviewed by COR and, in consultation with the Chancellor’s Office, the NFRG grants were fully funded by the office.

Faculty Research Grants (FRGs) and Special Research Grants (SRGs). The number of the grant applications in this category was 138 which is 2 proposals up from 136 applications in 2016-17 as it can be inferred from the annual report for that year. However, this year COR was able to fund about 70% of the proposals in this category.

Travel Grant Budget (\$125,650) is used for support of *Travel Grants*. Through these grants, the committee supports faculty travel to scholarly meetings and intercampus travel to research facilities, field stations, and sister UC campuses. Senate faculty may apply for the \$700 (scholarly meetings) or \$250 (inter-campus) travel grant, respectively.

Research Grant Program	Funded	Amount
New Faculty Research Grants (NFRG)	10	\$39,383
Faculty Research Grants (FRG)	75	\$136,279
Special Research Grants (SRG)	22	\$149,310
Travel Grants		\$152,232
Total		\$477,204

Committee on Research Survey

COR prepared a survey to collect information about the quality and scope of support for faculty research at UCSC, including COR grant programs, as well as about faculty views on how research support might be improved. COR worked with Institutional Research Assessment & Policy Studies Assistant Director for Assessment Anna Sher and the survey was deployed in the period June 16-25, 2018. As a part of the survey, COR collected contacts of faculty who were willing to serve as mentors helping other faculty to apply for COR grants. The survey response rate was 30%.

The COR survey was designed to be short, with up to 10 questions, and included questions about the division and record of COR grant awards of participants. Those data can be used to gain information about possible directions in which the COR review process or funding model may be improved. With regard to the responses focused on the submission process, the survey data indicate that across the divisions, there is a wide variance in the amount of time it takes faculty to input applications. However, above 90% across all divisions answered that the amount of time was reasonable. Therefore, while the submission process seems to work for most of the faculty, specific faculty comments can give an insight into how COR submission process can be improved.

With regard to the responses focused on faculty opinions on COR priorities, out of the 7 offered priorities, the faculty suggested that the top priority for COR should be “funding of small grants,” while the second and the third priorities were “funding pilot research” and “bringing new funding opportunities to the faculty attention.” The faculty responded that workshops on developing strategies for grant proposals and grant-writing workshops should be at the bottom of the list of COR priorities.

Faculty also provided comments on “important areas for COR to consider in the coming academic year,” which along with other general comments should be considered as items on the next year’s COR agenda. The use of the survey to inform activities in the upcoming academic year would be a big step in an improvement of COR’s service to the campus research community.

Other Committee Business

The committee discussed and provided feedback on various issues related to the Academic Senate and research related proposals, including:

- Multiple phases of the Strategic Academic Planning process
- Systemwide Review: Proposed Presidential Policy on Open Access for Theses and Dissertations
- Systemwide Review: Proposed Revisions to the Lecturer Security of Employment Series: APM 285, 210-3, 133, 740
- Systemwide Review: Proposed Presidential Policy on Disclosure of Financial Interests and Management of Conflicts of Interest in Private Sponsors of Research and Revised APM 028
- Data for Student Success Proposal

Upcoming Agenda for 2018-19

The committee will further explore the following topics in 2018-19:

- The 2017-18 COR survey analysis
- Follow-up of COR budget for 2018-19 and consultation on how to reverse the negative trend in the budget for support of COR grants.
- Consultation with Associate Chancellor Ashish Sahni about the possibility of the Chancellor’s Office funding towards COR research grants

Finally, the Committee on Research would like to acknowledge all the hard work and wise counsel provided by our staff analysts, Kim Van Le and Heather Lemson.

Respectfully Submitted;
COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH
James Doucet-Battle (F&W)
Jennifer Gonzalez (F)
Charles Hedrick
Peter Limbrick
Jose Renau
Marilou Sison-Mangus (F&W)
Victoria Stone (W&S)
Ben Storm
Ahmet Ali Yanik
Dejan Milutinović, Chair

Alex McDaniel, Graduate Representative

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