

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH

Annual Report 2019-20

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), and travel grants, and works to develop policy and

initiatives.

I. OVERVIEW

Much discussion this year was devoted to questions of how COR might best focus on improving research support and climate for the campus. In this regard, COR enjoyed regular interaction with VC Scott Brandt of the Office of Research (OR) to cooperatively explore how OR might best facilitate research opportunities for all divisions. This conversation will be ongoing, especially in light of the very challenging environment this campus (like all universities) will face over the foreseeable future. COR would like to become more proactive as opposed to reactive in helping to promote a supportive campus research environment. Towards that end, COR encourages faculty to contact members of the committee to alert them to policy-related concerns and suggestions.

II. RESEARCH SUPPORT

A. Funding

Historically COR has supported faculty research endeavors through two specific funding mechanisms: the COR Grant Program that encompassed the New Faculty, Faculty Research, and Special Research Grant Programs (NFRG/FRG/SRG), as well as the Scholarly Meeting Travel Program (SMT). These are funded by two pools of discretionary funding composed of University general funds and endowment funds dedicated to supporting work in the Physical and Biological Sciences (Earle C. Anthony or ECA). The ECA funds are used only for research activities and are not used for supporting the SMT program, thus they have only been used for the NFRG/FRG/SRG programs and not for the SMT program. The annual permanent funding allocation for the Research Grant program is \$167,886, the annual permanent allocation for the Travel Grant program is \$125,483. In addition to the regular annual allocations, there was a carry forward of \$21,148 for a total of \$314,517

Up to this year, the committee had solicited applications for these three research programs, NFRG, FRG and SRG. To increase the amount of available funding for COR FRG research grants, COR

decided to augment the maximum award for FRG grants to \$2,500 (in increase of \$1,000), and eliminated the SRG program.

COVID-19 Travel Restrictions: In March 2020, the University implemented policies to mitigate the onset of COVID-19. As the policies developed over the course of the remainder of the winter quarter, travel restrictions were put into place. As a result, much of the scholarly travel that would have taken place for the remainder of the year was cancelled. Half of the funds that would have been used for the SMT program remained unspent and were shifted to the FRG program. Changes to the allocation of funds for the FRG program resulted in an increase of approximately \$60, 000.

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 11 NFRG requests, all 11 were funded. The award amount decreased from last year’s \$53,551 to \$22,140 while the number of the NFRG applications decreased from last year’s 17 to 11. All NFRG proposals were reviewed by COR.

Faculty Research Grants (FRGs). The number of grant applications in this category was 128, which is 11 proposals up from 117 applications in 2018-19. This year, COR was able to fund about 74% of the FRG proposals. COR notes that it had many more qualified applicants than it had funds available for support. Indeed, only because circumstances allowed COR to shift travel funds to FRG support, was the committee able to fund the percentage of grants that it did. In this regard, the score used as a cut-off for funding reflects the financial constraints on COR, and is in that respect not a true reflection of the merits of the applicant pool.

The Travel Grant Budget (\$125,483) 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. This travel limit for 2020-21 will be raised to \$900 for scholarly meetings to better reflect the actual cost of travel. COR appreciates that this amount remains well below the cost of typical travel to meetings. However, COR attempts to balance this factor against a desire to make funds available to as many faculty members as possible given limited resources.

Research Grant Program	Funded	Amount
New Faculty Research Grants (NFRG)	11	\$20,065
Faculty Research Grants (FRG)	95	\$229,045
Travel Grants	92	\$64,483
Total		\$314,493

B. Research Into Systemwide Support for Faculty Research

This year Chair Roth furthered a research project initiated by former COR Chair Pitterman on research funding for faculty across the UC system. UCSC currently is solidly in last place among UC campuses (including Merced) regarding research funding for faculty. This includes grants, travel, and computer support. Travel and computer support are particularly glaring areas of lack in terms of basic infrastructure support for research. On March 3, 2020, COR consulted with Chancellor Larive and CPEVC Kletzer to discuss the disparity in faculty research funding between UCSC and her sister campuses.

C. Change to COR Meeting Time

COR voted to change the time of its meeting for next year to bring the meeting time in accord with current campus teaching time blocks, as well as the practices of other Senate committees. The meeting time was changed to the 3:15 – 4:50 teaching time block for Tuesday-Thursday.

III. REVIEWS OF POLICY AND PROCESS

The committee discussed and provided feedback on various issues related to the Academic Senate and research related proposals, but especially the impact of COVID 19 on campus research and access. COR continues to explore ways to improve campus-based research support for UCSC faculty in all divisions. The committee encourages and invites faculty to forward research-related concerns and issues to committee members for possible discussion and evaluation. The following are issues on which COR commented in 2019-20.

A. Systemwide Review of Proposed Revised Presidential Policy on Copyright Ownership

After a discussion of the materials included in the packet, COR found nothing to object to in the proposed changes.

B. Systemwide review of proposed revisions to APM-230, Visiting Appointments

COR discussed the proposed changes to APM-230 regarding Visiting Appointments. COR commented that any modifications to existing Visiting Appointment guidelines that facilitate the research and scholarly activity of graduate students, post-doctoral fellows or lecturers (UC members of Academic Researchers United/UAW), are welcome. Members were perplexed, however, by the reduction of the Visiting Appointment duration from a maximum of two years, to a maximum of one year, while mathematics scholars were granted a maximum appointment period of 3 years (page 2 of APM-230, redline copy). In its response, COR suggested that this discrepancy warranted further explanation.

C. Systemwide Review of Proposed Presidential Policy “Travel Regulations”

COR reviewed the proposed changes to the Presidential Policy on “Travel Regulations.” and registered the following observations. Referencing the redlined version, COR noted that under Section I (“Reporting Travel Expenses,” p. 40), subsection 2, “Completion of a travel expense claim,” Part a, “Substantiation of expenses,” the new wording (as indicated by the color-coding) on p. 41 (copy attached) was very troubling. It imposes, in the best of cases, a substantial new and additional paperwork burden on the academic traveler, insofar as requiring documentation be submitted “that justifies each day on travel status”, including times and places of all meetings and all individuals involved in those meetings. Members observed that this requirement appeared to be quite onerous in and of itself. COR’s primary concern was that it was completely inappropriate for researchers who spend months in the field on research projects. One COR member noted that it would not be unusual for him to spend 60-90 days in the field. It struck COR as inappropriate as well as a serious obstacle to field research to require people doing work of this sort to meet the reporting requirements as currently stipulated in the proposed change of regulations. More generally, the degree of specificity required (individuals, times, places, dates, times, topics, other attendees) seems tailored to bureaucratic interactions, not academic ones. For a typical academic context, COR noted that any need for reporting at the prescribed level of detail demanded would be difficult to comprehend or justify. COR’s greatest concern involved the gratuitous burden this requirement poses to all extended field research.

Respectfully Submitted;
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