

University of Rhode Island  
Minutes of the Meeting of the Council for Research  
Monday, December 7, 2009  
URI Library Conference Room A

Attendance:

Members Present: VP Peter Alfonso, Chairman Mark Wood, John King, Theodore Walls, Cynthia Thomas, Karen Markin, Clinton Chichester, Manbir Sodhi, John King, Theodore Walls, Joelle Rollo-Koster, Betty Young, Zahir Shaikh, Kelsey Molloy

Others Present: Jill Diehl

Members Absent: Asst. VP S. Bradley Moran, Nasser Zawia, Jane Miner, Anne M. Seitsinger, Kathleen Davis, Cathy Roheim, Marcella Thompson (excused)

Chairman Mark Wood opened the meeting at 3:09 pm with concerns about the lack of a quorum. However, several members who had scheduling conflicts came in late and a quorum was present for some of the meeting. Others needed to leave early so a quorum was again not present. It was decided to act as a subcommittee and send all motions requiring via email for a vote by all Council members.

The minutes of the November 2, 2009 meeting were approved.

Vice President Report:

VP Alfonso summarized the October award reports which will be distributed soon. We are about \$4million ahead of FY09, our record year which provided overhead revenue exceeding projections. Software is being purchased to streamline efforts for pre-award, compliance, and tech transfer. It is anticipated that Cayuse will be operational within the next few months. S. Bradley Moran, Mary Kate DeMarco, and Karen Markin will be speaking with all colleges about how these changes will improve pre-award services. Cayuse will enable PI's to work on grants at the same time that pre-award staff are reviewing them. New IRB Net is software that will keep track of federally mandated compliance regulations. Besides software, funds will be available to upgrade labs and equipment. An RFP will be announced and a review committee will vet proposals. Dr. Alfonso spoke with Mark Wood to select a couple of Council for Research representatives for the review committee.

VP Alfonso announced that he will hire a nationally leading consulting firm in Washington, D.C. to encourage Congressional support of research at URI. They will focus on language for authorizations and appropriations and Congressional interests so that the needs list that URI submits is in sync with available funding. Rhode Island hasn't had a very good track record for attracting earmark funds in the past, as the highest amount received was \$6 million received two years ago. Joelle Rollo-Koster asked if the return on investment would cover the costs. Dr. Alfonso replied affirmatively, and noted that receipt of just one average size grant would generate enough revenue to cover the expenses. It was noted that Senator Jack Reed's staff are top notch, and some Council members felt that URI's list of requests had been the weak link. Dr. Alfonso noted that the consulting firm will help URI provide a list that Washington can support. Manbir Sodhi recommended providing training for faculty before February 1<sup>st</sup> when the list is due, so they understand Congressional priorities.

VP Alfonso noted that an additional \$6 million in state cuts are projected due to the state budget deficit. Despite this, Dr. Alfonso reported that he will raise the funding allotment for the annual Council for Research faculty grants to \$150,000. This will be possible by building in funds from the SPA budget, combined with the state allotment, as well as receiving additional support from the Provost's Office. The Council was pleased to hear this announcement.

### Provost Academic Plan:

Committee members expressed surprise that the Provost's Academic Plan has already been printed and disseminated; therefore, further input seems moot. VP Alfonso noted that the Provost and VP for Academic Affairs is creating task forces to tweak and implement the plan. One of the Task Forces will focus on the section on "Research & Innovations" in the Academic Plan.

As the Provost Academic plan has already been formalized, printed, bound, and distributed, Council members decided to review the Research & Innovation section (in blue) and email their comments to Mark Wood for dissemination to Council members, as well as food for discussion by the Council representatives who will serve on the implementation committee.. John King recommended that innovators serve on the committee to add new ideas and energy. Joelle commented that Humanities still doesn't seem to be represented in "the plan". Members thought that at least three members from the Council for Research should serve on the committee.

The following concerns were expressed:

- \* faculty hiring limitations may affect institutional research, especially if replacements are part-time instructors;
- \* the current system seems to be more entrepreneurial rather than strategic; a greater balance is needed
- \* the need to compete for positions due to the lack of a strategic plan for hiring
- \* many positions that originate from big grants such as EPSCoR and ADVANCE end after a few years
- \* the new strategic plan should drive decision making for hiring
- \* how will the move to four credit courses and greater teacher/student ratios impact research?

Members decided to formulate an analysis of the Provost Academic Plan relative to research, based on Council members' email responses, submit it to President Dooley, give him time to review it, and then invite him to discuss his ideas and plans for research at a special meeting (with no other agenda items) to be held sometime in April with the Council for Research. Chairman Wood invited Council members to start an ongoing lively discussion via email critiquing the Academic Plan, noting what they think is important, what would advance research, and how members think it should be interpreted.

### Center reviews

There are 23 centers up for review this year. The Council discussed their preference to review only centers that have extramural research funding or scholarly publications. A couple of centers that are not primarily research centers, such as the Confucius Institute and the Center for Peace and Nonviolence, should be transferred to Tom Dougan for his review instead of by the Council for Research. Members discussed the length of re-certification status, currently seven years, as being too long, and agreed that four or five years would be better. Noting that most funding periods for grants are limited to three years, members decided that four years is probably the right number.

The Council decided to send the following email motions to the full Council for their votes concerning the following recommendations for center review changes:

#### **Motion #1: Manbir Sodhi made a Motion which was seconded by Mark Wood:**

The Council for Research recommends that the Faculty Senate change the period of review for recertification of centers from seven years to four years.

#### **Motion #2: Mark Wood made a motion which was seconded by Joelle Rollo-Koster:**

The Council will establish criteria to forward center applications to Tom Dougan for his review if it is deemed by the Council that they are not predominantly or sufficiently research oriented, as indicated by extramural research funding or scholarly publications.

Discussion about how to track funding for centers resulted in another motion.

**Motion #3: Mark Wood made a motion which was seconded by John King:**

The Council for Research will ask the Office of Sponsored Projects Review to request that grants that support Centers use a prefix with their submissions, similar to prefixes used for ARRA grants, indicating which center the grant will support. A list of Center prefixes will be devised for current and new centers and required on all future grant applications in order to track center funding. It was noted that monies will not have to flow through the centers. Clinton Chichester said that most colleges prefer that money go through the colleges and not the centers. As with ARRA funds, the center prefixes will serve as codes to make it easier to track grants that PI's indicate are being used to support their centers.

Mark Wood suggested that a subcommittee comprised of himself, John King, Ted Walls, and Jill Diehl revise the flow chart and center applications to reflect all the steps needed for recertification. Smaller groups may then review center applications and make recommendations to the full Council. Mark Wood recommended that the Council for Research accomplish their part of the application process but not coordinate each step in the process. He recommended that the Council for Research complete their part of the process of notifying and distributing applications for center reviews and then reviewing the applications once the appropriate dean and department signatures are obtained. Then the Council will forward the approved continuing center applications on to the Faculty Senate for their review, but will not be in charge of further coordination of the additional steps (signatures of Provost, President, BOG, final notification of centers, and final recordkeeping) once the applications are passed on to the Faculty Senate.

The Council for Research asked Jill Diehl to review the Provost Academic Plan and add any centers that are listed in the plan onto the center review schedule.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Diehl  
Grants and Contracts Specialist

There is no January meeting. The next meeting of the Council for Research is scheduled for 3pm on Monday, February 2, 2009 in Conference Room A, second floor of the URI Library.