

University of Rhode Island  
Meeting of the Council for Research  
Monday, February 2, 2009  
URI Library, Conference Room A

Attendance:

Members Present: Chairman John King, S. Bradley Moran, Nikhilesh Dholakia, Cynthia Blanthorne, Graham Forrester, Sookhyun Kim, Marcella Thompson, Jami Halpern, Thomas Mather, Mark Wood, Karen Markin, Joelle Rollo-Koster, Betty Young, Clinton Chichester, Raymond Wright, Sookhyun Kim

Others Present: Jill Diehl

Members Absent: VP Peter Alfonso, Harold Bibb, Ginette Ferszt, Jane Miner, Theodore Walls, Manbir Sodhi

Chairman John King opened the meeting at 3:07pm.

Minutes of the meeting of December 1, 2008:

The minutes of the meeting of December 1, 2008 were approved unanimously. Council members commented that they appreciated the level of details in the minutes.

VP Report:

VP Alfonso was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

Old Business: Chairman John King asked members if they had received the Provost's revised Vision Statement. Many had not, so he offered to forward it to members. Concerns were voiced that the new statement is related more to Academic Affairs than to the University as a whole, and that it ignores the problem of de-escalating state support. The Provost was reported as saying that we spend 90% of our time worrying about the 11% of our revenue we get from the state. Council members felt that greater efforts need to be made to increase the level of state support to alleviate some of the negative impact that increased teaching loads have on research. It was noted that two URI faculty members are now legislators.

Joelle Rollo-Koster noted that departments are commenting as departments on the Vision Statement. Chairman King felt that the Council for Research should also comment based on how the Vision Statement document will impact research at the University, and that perhaps recommendations should also be sent to the Presidential hiring committee. Some members questioned why there is a rush to adopt a new Vision Statement while the Presidential search is underway.

It was reported that because the URI Foundation has a small endowment, it didn't take a huge hit; however, the flip side is that because it is a small endowment, it cannot provide what is needed to offset cuts. While Research & Economic Development funds will help stop the bleeding in the short term, mandatory out of state student tuition rates charged for research grants make us uncompetitive. The Provost seems to appreciate this, but corrective action has not been assured. Research overhead, IP, and private funding won't get us there.

Federal economic stimulus funds may soon pass through the state to support a special area management plan for offshore wind. This will be the first time that the state will have given a large award, \$3.2 million, for research. STAC funding, one of the few RI funding opportunities for research, was somewhat disappointing for URI this year, with \$1.4 million or 75% of these state funds going to Brown University. URI did receive two grants in Engineering (Spaulding & Grilli, and Sharpe), and one at GSO (Roman). Concerns were voiced about the lack of transparency and clarity of the STAC review process, as some URI proposals received top scores for the past three years, yet they were not funded.

Members requested that VP Dr. Alfonso illuminate the Council about the STAC review process, as he serves as a member of STAC. Questions to address include: Who serves on the review panel? How is the process conducted? What evaluative criteria are used? How can URI do better in the future? The Council asked that this item be added to the March meeting agenda.

#### Progress Update: Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations for Sponsored Projects Review

Assistant VP S. Bradley Moran reported that Mary Kate DeMarco has been hired as the new Director of Sponsored Projects Review, replacing Gail Wing who retired. DeMarco had previously worked as a Business Manager at HSS and CPRC and holds a Master's degree in Accounting. She will start March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Garrison Hull has been hired as a temp to replace Elaine Bezak who is out on medical leave.

With these two hires, all Sponsored Projects Review positions have now been filled.

Concern was expressed by the chairman and some members of the council that the announcement of these new hires was not handled in a manner that was sensitive to the feelings of the internal candidates. Chairman King said that he intends to discuss this matter with Dr. Alfonso.

The new Post Doc Policy was received last week from Laura Kenerson and is now in process of being posted on the Research & Economic Development website. (It is now posted at <http://www.uri.edu/research/tro/postdocfellow.pdf> )

Discussion about the requirement to charge out-of-state tuition for graduate students supported by external research grants was recommended as a topic for next month's agenda. Assistant VP S. Bradley Moran has conducted an analysis of this problem and has discussed this with Dr. Alfonso, the Provost, and several Deans. His analysis concludes that the current policy reduces URI's competitiveness of research grants and argues that one could double students with a marginal (~20-30%) increase in IS tuition. Also, using current data, there could be an increase of as much as 30% in graduate researchers using an IS tuition model. On the other hand, it is guaranteed that the number of graduate researchers will continue to decrease with the current OS

tuition policy and predicted flat external funding. Council members noted that increased grant revenue has already been demonstrated at GSO, where all salary and tenured faculty costs for full professors are covered by grants, yet GSO brings in more grant money than anywhere else at the University.

### Center review schedule

Chairman King has been calling contacts for existing centers that are due for review to ask that they complete a two-page questionnaire (see attachment). Once they return it, he will schedule a ten minute meeting for each of them to meet with the Council for Research. The link to the University Manual page governing centers is <http://www.uri.edu/facsen/8.90Centers.html> which list center review rules.

Some centers never went through the official process as they began before these rules came into effect. The Board of Governors now wants all research centers and institutes to be reviewed by the Council for Research, as some unofficial centers have been troublesome for the university. Centers that provide outreach rather than research may be able to avoid review by the Council for Research.

### Council for Research Faculty Grants Schedule

The schedule for this year's Council for Research Proposal Development and Career Enhancement grant programs is as follows:

- February 20<sup>th</sup>, grant deadline for receipt of proposals
- March 3<sup>rd</sup> all proposals will be posted online for reviewers; instructions for accessing and scoring will be emailed to all Council for Research Members
- March 23<sup>rd</sup>, reviewer ratings are due via email per instructions
- Proposal score data will be entered, averaged, and standard deviations determined; anonymous comments will be included for each proposal. Reports for reviewers will be completed by March 30<sup>th</sup> and disseminated at the review meeting.
- Review Meeting to determine awards during the week of March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Members will be emailed a few potential dates for the meeting (3pm on March 30, 31, or April 2) for consideration. Members should email [jdiehl@mail.uri.edu](mailto:jdiehl@mail.uri.edu) with choices. Suggestions to hold the meeting at the Multicultural Center or U-Club were made. Once a date and place has been selected, members will be notified.

### Conflict of Interest Policy

After reviewing the Conflict of Interest Policy adopted by the Council for Research on 12/19/00, members decided that it is necessary for members to recuse themselves from reviewing any proposals submitted by any departments or college in which they have a direct association or conflict of interest.

If a reviewer is also submitting a proposal, he/she may not review any of the proposals submitted to that competition.

A motion was made by John King, seconded by Nik Dholakia to add the following statement to the Conflict of Interest Policy Related to Proposal Evaluation:

“Recognizing that we have two competitions, if a reviewer submits a proposal to one competition, he/she cannot serve as a reviewer for that competition, but he/she may serve as a reviewer for the other competition for which they have not applied.”

The motion passed unanimously. A copy of the revised Conflict of Interest rules is attached.

There was a suggestion to limit faculty grants for only new faculty, based on the premise that tenured faculty have more experience and therefore better opportunities for outside grants. Most Council members disagreed, noting that historically more than 60% or 70% of the Council’s grants were awarded to new faculty members, and a even a few to post docs and research staff. The Council’s faculty grant opportunities have also historically provided essential support for more seasoned faculty to jumpstart or continue their research. The Council rejected making any changes to the program’s eligibility or selection criteria, saying that the process works well as is.

Reviewers were then instructed to review proposals based on the quality of hypothesis-driven research, a high level of scholarship, and how well-written they are. When reviewers are not knowledgeable about the subject matter, they should evaluate the proposal based upon common knowledge. Proposals instructions state to “submit a clear and concise proposal that is understandable to an evaluator who may not be familiar with the researcher's discipline or area of specialization.”

The meeting was adjourned at 4:38 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Diehl  
Grants & Contracts Specialist

The next meeting of the Council for Research will be held on **Monday, March 2, 2009** in the URI Library, Conference Room A.