

University of Rhode Island
Minutes of the Meeting of the Council for Research
Monday, March 9, 2009
URI Library, Conference Room A

Attendance:

Members Present: Chairman John King, VP Peter Alfonso, Clinton Chichester, Cynthia Blanthorne, Theodore Walls, Manbir Sodhi, Jami Halpern, Mark Wood, Karen Markin

Others Present: Jill Diehl

Members Absent: Nikhilesh Dholakia, Harold Bibb, Ginette Ferszt, Jane Miner, Graham Forrester, Sookhyun Kim, Marcella Thompson, Joelle Rollo-Koster, Betty Young, Raymond Wright, Thomas Mather

Chairman John King opened the meeting at 3:06 pm.

Minutes of the meeting of February 2, 2009:

The minutes of the meeting of February 2, 2009 were approved unanimously.

VP Report:

Vice President Peter Alfonso had several announcements.

- 1) It has been a good fiscal year for grants and contracts revenue, and looks to be the best year ever. Through February, revenue was \$53 million versus \$34 million at this time last fiscal year. The amount of faculty proposal submissions is also way ahead of last year.
- 2) The URI Research Foundation is having a good year, too, with \$712,000 in total revenue from multiple contracts received, which is more than triple the total revenue last year (\$220,000), but not as good as Jim Prochaska's \$1.2 million received in a prior year. After paying the cost of protecting Intellectual Property, the inventor, their college, and the University each receive 1/3 of the profits. Popular perception has been that most IP revenue comes from grass seed; however, in reality we get very little from grass seed and a lot from Engineering.
- 3) Due to the economic downturn, a State law governing endowments has prevented the URI Foundation from making distributions to colleges this year. According to that law, endowments must grow the principal by a certain percentage annually. Only student scholarships will be funded this year. As a result, the Research Foundation is experiencing an \$80,000 cut to research discretionary funds. This money had been used to supplement the Council for Research grant program, staff training and conferences, and miscellaneous research faculty needs. This puts a severe crimp on available funding and has already led to cutting the pizza provided for the Research Seminar Series. Also,

this will make budgeting for next year more complicated, as we still don't know what the state budget will be, which is speculated to involve an additional 2% reduction. State funds of \$80,000 in the past have provided support toward one employee salary, patent expenses, and the Council for Research faculty grants. Because money for CFR faculty proposals comes from FY10 money, and we don't know what the budget will be, it will be hard to determine the base. Last year it was \$65,000, and an additional \$5,000 was supplemented by VP Alfonso from URI Foundation funds.

Chairman King recommended writing a letter to whoever makes the decisions to support the Council for Research state grant funds, highlighting the \$52 to \$1 return on investment for supporting faculty research proposal development. The goal of trying to get this funding back to \$100,000 with \$10,000 support from RI Sea Grant Director Barry Costa-Pierce, and \$20,000 from the Provost, was on track. He suggested a fundraising strategy like, "Your contribution will bring us up to \$100,000". With less and less state appropriation money going to research, more and more the argument seems to be that "research needs to be self-supporting," and "the Research Foundation should pay for everything." Instead, additional reallocation of F&A to support research may be needed. Most successful universities have the highest magnitude recouped for research. The State of Rhode Island has never supported research like it should. However, we can make the case that the faculty research program is a demonstrable winner. The Board of Governors sets the rate of campus reallocation. Imagine the level of payoff if more money was provided with a 5% discretionary fund to support research. A proactive approach to prevent the money from spiraling back down is needed.

- 4) HR1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also called the Stimulus Package, will provide a tremendous opportunity with \$21.5 billion for Research and Development. \$10 million for NIH, NSF, NIST, DOE, NOAA. Challenge grants are due on April 27. VP Alfonso asked Karen Markin to summarize the processes of federal agencies, which are required to post this information on their websites by April 17. A special Research Seminar will be held at the Multicultural Center on Friday, March 27 to discuss the opportunities. This is one time only money that must be spent within two years. There is a Limited Competition for Construction grants, which is limited to three grants per institution. Bob Rodgers wishes to apply for one. Karen Markin spearheads the committee process to determine who can apply to Limited Competitions. Applicants must apply to her by the internal deadline published on the Division of Research and Economic Development's webpage.
- 5) VP Alfonso sits on the National Board of EPSCOR and IDEA. One of the aims of a paper he is writing describing each of their seven programs calls for using half of the HR1 R&D money for EPSCOR states, which would go to 25% of the population of Ph.D.s. Less than 20% of federal R&D is now going to them. Some CFR members said that might cause a rebellion if EPSCOR administers the money, as they often see NSF funds as an earmark for biology at the expense of other sciences.

VP Alfonso nominated Senator Jack Reed for a national EPSCOR award, which he got. The EPSCOR renewal grant for research infrastructure must be wrapped around Biotechnology. Karen Markin noted that Shaikh has made toxicology a very wide tent. VP Alfonso noted that RI doesn't currently have a bona fide state EPSCOR office. Last

year Karen Markin and Babette Allina worked with Brown University's EPSCOR office to select three proposals from the state. URI didn't submit a proposal. VP Alfonso envisions a truly competitive, institutionally-based NSF EPSCOR state office model, and said that he thinks Karen Markin would be a good choice to manage such a program.

VP Alfonso chairs the national \$25 million competition for DEPSCOR (the DOD EPSCOR) which required the state committee to select three proposals. He supports a university model where proposals would come from universities rather than the state.

- 6) Discussion about the STAC competition was tabled until the April meeting.
- 7) The issue of hiring out-of-state graduate research students and charging them in-state tuition and fees was discussed. VP Alfonso and Provost DeHayes are working out a plan to transfer small numbers of GTA positions to GRA positions, and identifying funds to offset the cost of the differential for charging all GRA's in-state tuition rates. Currently the cost for one GTA will fund 3 GRA's. GTA's number would drop proportionally, based on needs relative to Department teaching loads, as determined by the Provost. The hope is that in the future, the University will recognize benefits by not charging out-of-state tuition rates to GRA's.

Council for Research Faculty Grants Schedule

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

- **March 25th, reviewer ratings are due via email to jdiehl@mail.uri.edu**
- March 26, Proposal score data will be entered, averaged, and standard deviations determined by the office; anonymous comments will be included for each proposal (please be brief). Reports will be completed and disseminated at the award meeting on Monday, March 30th at 3pm.
- **Meeting to determine grant awards will be held on Monday, March 30th from 3pm-4:30pm in the Galanti Lounge, 3rd floor of the URI Library.**

New Business:

Marine-Related Council for Research Faculty Grant Competition: Deadline Extended to April 20, 2009

As no marine-related proposals were received, the Council recommended reopening the competition to accept marine-related proposals only, for the \$10,000 RI Sea Grant pledge. April 20th will be the new deadline for the marine-related competition. Proposals will be provided to CFR members via email for scoring after that date, and the Council for Research will select the award at their May meeting.

IT Infrastructure Support for Research Activities

Ted Walls asked that the Council for Research inquire informally about the availability of IT infrastructure to support research. The Council agreed to do so.

Other Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Review of Academic Centers / Institutes: Chairman King announced that about fifteen centers have submitted their paperwork and are now in need of review by the Council for Research for recertification. Four others seem to be inactive, as no one has been found to be actively involved with managing them. If this remains true, those will need to be decertified.

Additionally, a policy needs to be made concerning the amount of time a new center (as determined by grant funding) has before it must apply for CFR review. Discussion determined that if they are representing themselves as a center or institute of research at URI, as evidenced by proposal submission, business cards, or title, they need to apply for center approval.

A question was asked about what benefits a center or institute receives for registering as a center or institute. This was answered that they would become a University sanctioned center or institute for sending out proposals, and for representing themselves to the world as a University Center or Institute. They would also be in compliance with the Board of Governors and University mandates.

It was decided to schedule a special 1-2 hour meeting in April or May to address the center applications. Members will be emailed a few potential dates for the meeting for their consideration. The date and time will then be determined at our next regular meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Diehl
Grants & Contracts Specialist

The next regular meeting of the Council for Research will be held on **Monday, April 6, 2009, at 3pm in Conference Room A**, located on the second floor of the URI Library.