

University Senate Research Committee Meeting

(online)

21 October 2022

1:00 PM

In Attendance: M Scott, K Wood, Z Xia, S Sant, P Morel, B Yates, R Rutenbar, M Holland, Z Xia, F Luyster, S Wells, B Shiu, R Cunningham, Lu-in Wang, Tyler Tenney, A Puniani, D Todorescu, A Linares, A. Sethi, L. Rodzicz

Absent with apologies: Doug Reed

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the *September 16* meeting were approved without changes.

Update from SVC Rutenbar:

New office/team location on 7th floor of Cathedral

Policies in the works: IPA policy (discussed today) – Licensing human biological samples and data (in progress) – Charter drafting for Centers and Institutes policy update (last version 1987 – R. Rutenbar is working on a white paper to outline potential updates required or points for consideration) – Policy on outside engagements/consulting currently in draft stage but potentially on hold because of discussions with union.

Important updates on federal level (e.g., CHIPS in Science) – see M. Holland update presented today – some new enhanced restrictions on research engagements with China and semi-conductors – update to come.

No major COVID policy changes or updates.

Discussion of ITAC committee representative from SRC:

Governance of data, cybersecurity, IT access – Mark Henderson is CIO. Committee meets once per quarter (next Feb 9th, 2023).

Z. Xia volunteered to serve as representative. M. Scott will pass his name on to ITAC and President Kear.

Discussion of Institutional Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) policy:

Introduction by Rob Cunningham, Vice Chancellor for Research Infrastructure – policy designed to improve Pitt’s understanding of government, provide faculty and staff opportunities for growth, establish and grow relationships with other institutions and individuals, improve our understanding of related research activities, improve quality, success rate and impact of proposals on research and learn about opportunities for students and trainees. Want to encourage across the institution but need to balance schools and individual needs.

Policy needed to streamline application process and clarify the process and requirements.

Opportunities at multiple federal and other institutions e.g. NSF, NIH, DARPA, ARPA-H etc. at various levels but mostly at associate/full professor level (although not exclusively)

IPA governed by federal law so there are specific regulations/restrictions. For organizational benefit not individual benefit; initial assignment for 2 years with opportunity for up to 2 more years; pay, travel consistent with government position; restricted to certain select nonprofit organizations; IPA assignees guaranteed a return position at or above the level of the position they leave.

Policy was benchmarked to those at similar institutions.

Veterans Administration NOT included as it follows different set of rules.

Policy outlines responsibilities of IPA assignee and also supervisor to aid with planning for absence and return – COI included in this and should be taken into consideration. Also plans for continuity for students and teaching responsibilities and grants – also note post-IPA restrictions such as no applications from the assignee for grants within 1 year following end of appointment, not taking jobs as career lobbyists for specific time periods, etc. Supervisors can approve/delay/deny IPA request – mostly based on whether the assignment aligns with the academic mission of the department; delay of assignment may occur if there are no current resources to allow the IPA assignee to leave at that time and the position is not time-sensitive. An appeals process is in place.

Questions:

P. Morel – will IPA assignees have already been approached or approved by the federal institution before making use of the policy? R. Cunningham – can be a back and forth discussion but obviously good to discuss with all parties concerned prior to applying. M. Holland also helped clarify where and how these positions are posted and some of the application process.

K. Wood – is it possible for person who has concluded an IPA take another position at a similar federal institution rather than returning to Pitt – or can people go to another academic institution? R. Cunningham – restrictions of rehiring into the same federal division, and intent of the law is to provide experiences for 2-4 years in federal government and then return with enhanced experience and information. Possible of course for people to switch academic institutions.

K. Wood – are there protections in place for IPA assignees, such as non-dismissal from IPA assignment prior to end of 2-year term, once at the federal institution? R. Cunningham – no protections from Pitt specifically but are guaranteed to be able to return to Pitt even if they leave early from an IPA position. M. Scott – clarification of tenure-track plans to achieve tenure? L. Wang – there needs to be tenure plans in the IPA assignee's plan and protection of ability to move towards tenure – usually after mid-point review. For faculty in early tenure-track stages, it may be better to take a professional enhancement leave.

P. Morel – asked about ability to 'stop-the-clock' on tenure if IPA assignees are in early career stage? Answered mainly above – but L. Wang clarified – professional development leave would still be considered IPA assignment and can get tenure extension.

Z. Xia – can IPA assignee leave early if they are not happy? R. Cunningham – can be done but Pitt would like to understand the circumstances (why)

Z. Xia – outside work? R. Cunningham – not written into the policy as it is part of a government policy and organization-dependent – most (e.g. NSF) allow 1 day per week for other activities such as keeping research going, etc.

B. Yates – how does this work for dual Pitt/UPMC employees? R. Cunningham – not sure but most people who have done this were via the VA. R. Rutenbar – clarified it means both supervisors from Pitt and UPMC will need to approve the plan. If the assignee's paycheck is from Pitt, then would coverage extend to dual Pitt-UPMC employees?

R. Rutenbar – highlighted the potential opportunity benefit for the individual as well as for the University – policy designed to make transitions easier and to encourage people to come back to Pitt with their enhanced experience and information – most appeals or denial stem from lack of previous planning and lack of consultation with supervisors/chairs to ensure that assignee's absence can be covered – Pitt generally has positive view of these positions and will work to try to accommodate

whenever possible. Also noted that many of these opportunities are in DC, which is quite close to Pitt and able to be relatively easy to access without having to move whole families etc. Sees this as a big plus for an institution that is not well-known and should be promoted more.

M. Scott – how many people are part of this at one time? R. Cunningham – small number 5-10 across the University – many more via the VA system.

P. Morel – what is the difference between ‘on appointment’ and ‘on assignment’ positions? R. Cunningham – the law isn’t absolutely specific but in general most are ‘on assignment’ and paid via Pitt, but there are a few (usually) more senior/higher level positions that may have preferred to be ‘on appointment’ and paid via federal government with government benefits.

M. Scott – position has to be kept open, will faculty/staff get yearly raises via Pitt? R. Rutenbar – seems like yes. R. Cunningham – not specified in the policy but will be dependent on yearly appraisals by supervisors at Pitt and the assignee’s federal institution.

Motion made by Z. Xia to approve the policy and move the question to faculty assembly for approval.

Unanimously approved by voting members – no abstentions and no opposed.

M. Scott – commented that it would be useful to promote this policy and the opportunities to Pitt faculty and staff, especially when considering ARPA-H input by Pitt. e.g., via informational seminar/webinar for faculty as well as chairs

New Federal Initiatives affecting research and research funding “CHIPS plus” – presentation by Mike Holland, Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Research Strategies

3 massive pieces of legislation recently that have impact on research enterprise.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs act - \$1.2 trillion – transportation, energy, water, broadband – establishes ARPA-I infrastructure at the Department of Transportation – most of the money for research is in the Dept. of Energy for eg. battery technology

Chips and Science act – big piece of appropriated funds (CHIPS side - \$54 billion to DoD, Dept of Commerce to reinvigorate the semi-conductor industry) – Research side: \$11 billion in R&D and workforce development programs and \$2 billion in microelectronic funds for prototyping lab-to-fab programs. Also \$200+ billion authorization for NSF, DOE Science and NIST (\$82 billion above prior authorized levels. Some important aspects: new national engineering biology research and development institute (biomanufacturing focus); NSF Technology Innovation and Partnerships (TIP) directorate (active interest to Pitt in conjunction with CMU); also push for NSF to fund more work at minority-serving institutions and emerging research institutions; EPSCoR states/institutions benefit with 20% NSF funding; \$10 billion authorized for Commerce Dept to create 20 regional technology hubs to help research have demonstrable impact.

Research and security – highlighted in CHIPS and Science act

Inflation Reduction Act – mostly not related to research (mostly clean energy projects) but shared with research cores within DoE. Has \$1.5 Billion appropriated to DoE to get projects underway and fund cost overruns secondary to COVID

Authorization bills – have monetary values attached but with more permission than actual money given

Appropriations bills – have specific amounts of money attached – require yearly approval – most have discretionary spending that needs to be reapproved yearly.

Importance for Pitt:

NSF/DoE Science – Congress has given them clear direction to have translational aspects similar to CTSI in NIH.

CHIPS act – dramatic change on industrial policy (bipartisan) and exactly how it will affect related research is still to be determined but could be significant in terms of funding priorities to maintain international competitiveness.

Willingness to actually fund these initiative may be better now than in the past, given the increase in R&D spending in China.

Comments/questions:

M. Scott – going to be pressures to fund these policies in addition to the NSF

P. Morel – are these underway or is there a wait for appropriations? M. Holland: all these pieces of legislation have some parts with appropriations – going to depend on proving value to societal and congressional goals – highlighted importance of advocacy, especially writing into your representatives to highlight how this is important to you

M. Scott – FASEB supports biomedical science funding, primarily NIH – is there a similar group for NSF?

M. Holland – Coalition for National Science Funding – all professional societies and trade groups – not sure if still active – obviously AAU APLU actively advocate on both authorizations and appropriations on NSF side.

P. Morel – thoughts on getting congressional/political representatives to our meetings to highlight what they think is important

Z. Xia – highlighted usefulness of form letters that may be promoted via the University or us; M. Holland – pointed out that those letters are worthwhile if the timing is right, but building relationships is better and highlighting value to everyone, including friends and family

New items of discussion: none

The meeting was adjourned at 3.00 pm.

The next Research Committee meeting: November 18 (unless some issues arise in the meantime)

Minutes submitted by: K Wood and M Scott