

University Senate Research Committee Meeting (online)  
25 September 2020

1:00 PM

In Attendance: A. Crunk, M. Hravnak, D. Harrell, M. Holland, M. McCall, P. Morel, E. Oyler, L. Rodowicz, R. Rutenbar, D. Salcido, S. Sant, M. Scott, P. Smolinski, V. So, A. Stephany and W. Yates

The minutes from the 14 August 2020 meeting stand as approved.

Concerning the Covid 19 situation:

*Research update*

R. Rutenbar reported that the research enterprise is going well at Pitt, there have been very few infections so far. He announced that George Huber will be retiring in October and that Bill Yates is taking over as the interim head of the compliance office.

B. Yates noted that he will check with Lori Molinaro to see whether he can remain a voting member of the committee while he has the administrative position.

*Undergraduates in lab*

M. Holland noted that undergraduates can return to working in the lab, but that there is a backlog at HR in terms of getting the appointments finalized. There will be a delay in some cases, but HR is working to catch up with the backlog. He stated that guidance for undergraduates in research is posted at <https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/>.

Undergraduates can perform research for credit or be employed to work in the lab. There was a question concerning whether undergraduates could volunteer in labs. M. McCall stated that undergraduate volunteers are not allowed for labor law reasons. M Holland said he would check into this issue.

Follow up: After the meeting M. Holland provide the following response to the question of volunteers: “Regarding your question about undergraduate volunteers in research labs, the US Department of Labor prohibits having people doing the same work with some getting paid and others not getting paid. There’s some allowance for work as part of an academic program, which is why students can work in labs for credit or an internship. Since students are paid to work in labs, a mix of paid and volunteer students who are doing similar jobs (even across different labs) is not permitted. Apparently, this also applies to student volunteers from other universities, i.e., CMU, unless they are participating in a comparable lab for credit course or internship program.”

Systemic Racism, Inequity and Justice initiative

P. Morel and S. Sant presented a draft plan for how the research committee would address this initiative. The aim is to focus on all research personnel (excluding students) and would include postdoc trainees, research associates/staff scientists and all research faculty. Data has already been obtained on postdocs from Darlene Zellers at the Office of Academic Career development. The data will show how the level of racial and gender diversity is distributed across the

University as researcher progress in their careers. The idea is also to identify programs and support structures across Pitt that aim to recruit and retain researchers from racially and gender diverse backgrounds.

R. Rutenbar pointed out that detailed demographic information could be obtained from HR as they collect data on all employees and this database has 150 variables. He said he would look into this and provide a list of the available 150 variables. He also suggested that John Wallace (Vice Provost for Faculty Diversity and Development) and Lu-In Wang (Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs) could be valuable resources for the committee.

L. Rodowicz pointed that there are staff positions, such as Research V positions, that may require a PhD and thus it will be important to include these individuals as well.

A. Crunk raised the issue of looking at disability also since additional people may be disclosing a disability in the Covid era if they have a preference for working remotely.

There was some discussion about whether to distinguish MD vs PhD trainees, and whether it would be appropriate to interview specific members of the research workforce to find out about their support structures. These discussions will continue in future committee meetings.

#### ACTION ITEMS:

R. Rutenbar will find out about the HR variables that can be queried

P. Morel will circulate the draft proposal for committee input

Follow up: R. Rutenbar found out that the University, through Kathy Humphry's office, plans to create a Social Justice website which will provide much of the data on racial and gender diversity that the committee was going to request. This should be available in a few weeks. P. Morel has edited the draft plan to reflect this new development.

#### Concerning the transition from Box and Data Management Plan

P. Morel reported that she had been in contact with Michael Spring, Chair of the Senate Computing and Information Technology Committee (SCITC), following his report to Faculty Assembly. He talked about the development of a Pitt-wide data management plan that would allow data to be stored. There is a plan to have a joint committee meeting at the October meeting of the two committees to talk about these issues.

B. Yates pointed out that this is necessary since when faculty leave the University there is a need to keep some or all of their data at the University for a period of time, in case of research integrity issues.

R. Rutenbar noted that this was a very timely topic and that it might be advisable to include people from the library systems in the discussion.

M. Scott asked if the meeting could be moved as she is not able to make the next committee meeting on October 30. P. More said she would check with M. Spring about the upcoming SCITC meeting and get back to the committee.

Follow up: The next SCITC meeting will be on Monday October 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am. A doodle poll was conducted and since more people could attend the Monday meeting the joint meeting between these two committees will be held on October 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:30. M Spring will send out the Zoom invite.

#### New Roles for University Research Committees

R. Rutenbar described his new plans for the three committees that are concerned with research at the University to ensure that there is little overlap with their activities

#### Senate Research Committee (this committee)

Members are elected to this committee and this is the committee that liaises with the SVCR on research issues of concern from faculty, staff and trainees.

#### University Research Council

Members are appointed to this committee and R. Rutenbar is the Chair of the committee. This is broad in scope and representative of research across campus. The role of this committee will be focused on assessing and reviewing research proposals. This could be large team proposals, or a review of the Momentum projects.

#### Associate Deans of Research Committee

This committee has been created as a separate group will be focused on research operations across campus. This committee will come up with plans as needed for changes in research operations.

#### Update on the intellectual property (IP) Policy:

Work is continuing on the wording of the IP policy concerning class materials. The original IP committee is meeting next week to discuss the new wording and the plan is to present this for a vote by Faculty Assembly on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2020.

R. Rutenbar noted that there some misinformation concerning online classes, such as Outlier, had been circulating, but that the discussions had been useful.

The next Research Committee meeting will be a joint meeting with SCITC on 26 October at 10:30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 pm.

Minutes submitted by P. Morel and S. Sant