

University Senate Research Committee Meeting

(online)

22 October 2021

1:00 PM

In Attendance: M. Holland, K. Kanthak, R. Kear, M. Kenney, M. Levine, L. Melo, P. Morel, R. Rutenbar, D. Salcido, S. Sant, M. Scott, A. Sethi, D. Tudorascu, K. Wood, B. Yates

The minutes from the September 17 meeting were approved as submitted.

Research Report from Rob Rutenbar

Covid 19 update

M. Holland reported that the Health Advisory Committee is meeting regularly to discuss how Pitt will be changing his Covid stance. The vaccine mandate has been announced in University Times and will be in effect by December 1, in line with the mandate from President Biden.

Policy update

R. Rutenbar made a request to provide an update on new policy activities. Several policies will be coming to the committee in the near future. These include the "Gifts that fund research" policy that will be presented to the committee at the December meeting, and the Conflict of Commitment policy. Other policies that are being developed include the "Institutional Conflict of Interest", licensing and a policy on IPA.

Update on Office of Research Protections – Bill Yates

B. Yates provided an overview of the ORP since he has taken over as the Vice Chancellor for Research Protections. The Office is large with 80 staff and >200 faculty who serve on committees such as IRB, IACUC and IBC. The Office of Trade Compliance has been added to ORP, and this office deals with international engagement and export controls. B. Yates touched on a few topics that the ORP is working on.

Single IRB of record

The requirement that multi-center clinical trials have a single IRB of record has been a challenge as it places a lot of work on the center that is the IRB of record. The NIH now allows institutions that host the IRB to request direct costs to support the effort. At present Pitt is the host IRB for 21 such studies and B. Yates indicated that they would like to increase this number.

Foreign Influence

B. Yates described the rollout of the MyDisclosures online process for disclosing COI. There was a good compliance with 99.6% from faculty staff and students. B. Yates provided statistics on the number of disclosed interests (944) and these are mostly from faculty. The data is being looked at to identify

faculty who have outside appointments, and reminders are being sent to faculty concerning the requirement to report these appointments to funding agencies.

Metrics and new initiatives

B. Yates described how the ORP is collecting data on number of transactions, processes, workflows and response times with the aim of streamlining processes and coordinating efforts between units. A monthly newsletter has been instituted and the website is being improved. The ORP is working to provide videos for on-demand training as well as virtual trainings. The aim is make sure that new faculty have all of the information they need to obtain the necessary approvals etc.

All protocol sites will be integrated and users will use the Pitt Passport or UPMC Azure logins

The ORP is moving to the Murdock Building and will share space with OSP which is advantageous as these offices communicate a great deal. There will be a hybrid work model and thus less space is required for the staff.

R. Rutenbar noted that Eric Lander (OSTP Director and Science Advisor to the President) is working on developing unified rules that will be harmonized across government funding agencies. As a first step NSF and NIH have adopted the same biosketch. These new rules should be coming out in the next few weeks.

M. Scott asked about whether they are expecting any restrictions on the use of animals in research. B. Yates noted that a panel of the use of NHP in research had been set up in response to a request by an animal protection group that asked Congress to ban NHP research. He noted that some of these groups are quite effective in Congress, and a big concern is if riders are added to appropriations bills these are difficult to address. B. Yates reported that the Guide for Animal Use is being revised, so there may well be changes on how animals should be used and treated.

Mission Statement of the Research Committee

P Morel asked the committee to look over the mission statement with the aim of revising it. The statement has not been revised since the inception of the committee in 2015. Several suggestions from the committee were made and the proposed revisions can be seen in the attached document.

P Morel asked that the committee look this over and we will discuss this at the November meeting with a view to adopting this new mission statement.

Preparation for meeting with SVC DeJong and HR staff

P Morel reminded the committee that SVC DeJong and others will be coming to the November meeting to discuss new initiatives in HR with relation to hiring and retaining high quality research and technical staff. She noted that she brought this at a lunch that committee co-chairs had with the Chancellor and Provost a few days previously. Both the Chancellor and the Provost indicated that they are well aware of this problem and that it affects the entire university. He is very supportive of our efforts to highlight these issues with HR. He noted that a new head of HR will be coming on board and that there is some urgency to addressing this issue.

Several committee members outlined problems they have had in recruiting and retaining staff

S. Sant noted that the lack of flexibility in HR – it is not possible to hire two people from one job search. The whole process has to be repeated if two qualified candidates are identified.

B. Yates noted that it is very difficult to find nurses to run clinical trials due to the uncompetitive salaries offered

D Salcido said that we cannot compete with industry for individuals who have computational expertise

D Tudorascu described how she has been unable to fill a position for 3 years due to the fact that HR would not allow them to hire at an appropriate salary (despite having the monies available on a grant)

These issues will be brought at the next meeting when SVC DeJong will attend the meeting

New Business

M Scott complained about how the visit of Secretary of State Blinken to the CVR was portrayed in the Pitt media. No women were included in the photographs of this event. She noted that she had received several complaints about this from other faculty.

S Sant asked about the streamlining of core facilities and whether this was going to be a priority for the Research Office. R. Rutenbar said it was a priority and that they are talking with SVC Shekhar about this. The new budget model should allow for better revenue flows.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm. The next Research Committee meeting will be on November 17 at 1 PM via zoom

Minutes submitted by P. Morel and S. Sant