University Senate Research Committee Meeting
(online)
15 April 2022
1:00 PM

In Attendance: M. Holland, K. Kanthak, M. Levine, P. Morel, S. O'O'Shea, R Rutenbar, S. Sant, M. Scott, K. Wood, B. Yates

The minutes from the March 18 meeting were approved

Research Report from Rob Rutenbar

R. Rutenbar announced that discussion of the new conflict of commitment policy had been paused .

Several questions were raised by the committee:

K. Kanthak asked about whether the Office of research was instituting a research concierge service, so that faculty can find easy access to grant opportunities and budget initiatives. R. Rutenbar noted that there is one in development and the plan is to have a point person who will be able to direct people to the appropriate places and sites. At present the office is working out how best to achieve this.

P Morel asked about the recent report in the paper about semi-conductors and whether Pitt was going into this area. R Rutenbar noted that he was asked by the Post Gazette to comment on a new Biden administration initiative to beef up chip production in the US, since this is his area of expertise, but that Pitt is not getting into this arena.

M Scott had a question about the new ARPA-H and how this might affect investigator-initiated T01 applications. At present there is no clear structure and no leader. It will be based on the model used by DARPA. R Rutenbar noted that something similar exists in NSF and that at present it is too early to say how it will be organized.

S. Sant asked about the possibility that NIH could increase the modular grant to $350K/year. During the discussion it was noted that PIs are now encouraged to budget above the current $250K modular limit. This is not always positively viewed by study sections however.

New Policy on Institutional Conflict of Interest

B. Yates presented the new institutional conflict of interest (ICOI) policy. He described the process by which the policy was created – Shilpa Sant was a member of the committee. Policies at other universities were bench marked and the policy will apply to University officials at the rank of Department Chair and above, including the Chancellor. The composition of the ICOI committee was described and the thresholds that would trigger review by this committee were outlined.

The committee had several questions and there were all answered by Bill Yates

No changes to the policy were recommended by the committee.

As there was not a sufficient quorum for a vote at the meeting it was decided that an email vote would be conducted.

Update: the email vote by the committee was unanimous in approving the ICOI policy, which will now be presented to Faculty Assembly and Senate Council at the May meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm. The next Research Committee meeting will be on May 20th at 1 PM via zoom

Minutes submitted by P. Morel and S. Sant