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University Senate Research Committee Meeting
(online)
20 January 2023
1:00 PM

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In attendance: R Rutenbar, M Scott, K Wood, S Sant, S Wells, Z Xia, P Morel, D Reed, C Hay, M Holland, R Kear, M Levine, F Luyster, P Morel, J Woodward, B Yates, A Sethi, B Shieu

Approval of Minutes: The Dec 16, 2022 meeting minutes were approved without changes.

Appointments and Promotions – follow-up on old business
How the appointments and promotions process works and how the "Research" prefix for appointment stream personnel originated, were revisited at the beginning of the meeting. The topic was brought up at the December 2022 Research Committee meeting by M Scott, with Tom Songer of Faculty Affairs in attendance. Any new information/reports on numbers of personnel in each stream (appointment vs. tenure) were solicited by M Scott.

F Luyster reported numbers for the School of Nursing**:** personnel in appointment stream (38 Assistant Professors, 6 Associate Professors, 7 Full Professors) and in tenure stream (20 Assistant Professors, 9 Associate Professors, 9 Full Professors).
S Sant said she would try to get similar information for the School of Pharmacy, including Pharmacy's structure for promotions.

Information on the typical promotion and tenure process was requested; it is believed to vary by department but usually starts with the Chair, then goes through the School, followed by the Appointments and Promotions Committee. M Scott asked if the SRC can make recommendations for standardization?

There was the question of whether the "Research" prefix found use in the appointment stream anywhere at Pitt apart from the Department of Medicine (M Scott). It was suggested by R Rutenbar that answers to those questions could be attained directly from HR, a list from Faculty Affairs, and Joe Losee at the School of Medicine. Talking about promotions in the Committee meeting with R Rutenbar present was deemed to be problematic given the ongoing negotiations between his team and the collective bargaining unit.

Michael Holland, Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Research Development

A response to an OSTP request for information on the National Biotechnology and Bio-Manufacturing Initiative was formulated and submitted prompted by the $100 million commitment to Pitt made by RK Mellon for the BioForge Project at Hazelwood Green. Pitt's response identified the need for a suite of facilities and equipment throughout the nation to support researchers working on biomanufacturing (similar to the National Nanotechnology Coordinated Infrastructure for researchers working on materials

problems). There is limited infrastructure in support of biotechnology, presenting an enormous opportunity for the research agencies to rethink this.

There are also 2 major NSF proposals being worked on by M Holland and Robert Cunningham. A new NSF PAPPG will be sent out soon via J Woodward's office. (https://nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=pappg)

M Holland also explained the federal debt ceiling issue, since there is a risk that the government borrowing limit will be reached this year. Budgets with structural deficits have been passed on a regular basis for decades, but there is no agreement on where spending cuts will come from to manage the deficit problem. The confluence of the Anti-Deficiency Act (government can spend more than is appropriated) and the Anti-Impoundment Act (government can spend no less than is appropriated) means government has no discretion in spending appropriated by Congress. If the debt ceiling is not raised, then no borrowing will be allowed creating a bind for the government.

Once the debt ceiling has been reached, the Treasury must decide how to manage the cash flow. This could result in a delay in funding grants since contracts get paid before grants. While the FY2023 funding has been appropriated, the vote on the debt ceiling still needs to happen. Institutions like Pitt will be paying close attention to this because of the potential impact.

Z Xia and M Scott: Cuts to grant funds because of delays in funding the budget have been common and make life very tricky.

Jennifer Woodward, Vice Chancellor for Sponsored Programs and Research Operations

NIH Data Management and Sharing Policy is set to go into effect January 25, 2023. Pitt is hoping for input from the NIH on what they will want. Program officers will oversee compliance with the policy; the requirement will not be a focus of Review. Data management will be a combined effort between the Library and OSP; the Library has the intellectual pieces (background, resources and tools) to help faculty determine the appropriate repositories and how to write data management sections, while OSP has the transactional pieces for getting things to the sponsor. B Yates's group will conduct periodic audits to ensure that faculty are being compliant with their data management plans.

Research Concierge Initiative Program – included PowerPoint presentation

The Research Concierge Services program is a big initiative for OSP. The program was initiated by R Rutenbar with the goal of increasing the number and success of complex/large research proposals. The service is meant to be used for connecting the right people with each other and to research resources and for the expansion of research development resources   It will be staffed by expanding existing staff.

Marketing and campaigning for the program will be strategized. The one part of the Service is intended to be the "front door" to research resources that will facilitate the navigation of Pitt research infrastructure, operations, compliance, training, and services. The other part of the Service is the expansion of research development resources which will include programming and outreach, research analytics for decision making, proposal development and project management. The Research Concierge Services will have a page on R Rutenbar's website to jump-start it.

The Service will provide personalized customer service to faculty and staff, streamline processes to increase operational efficiency, enhance the quality of services provided to the research community, and improve the flow of information and communication between central offices, faculty, and administrators, for the overall purpose of expanding research development.

An assistant director for strategic services (Kerri Jackson) was hired. She will help with day-to-day issues.

External concierge programs were benchmarked (Boise State, Case Western Reserve, Cornell, Harvard, Medical College of Wisconsin, NYU Grossman SOM, Penn State, Rice, Ohio State, U of Iowa, UT Austin, UCLA, UT Health San Antonio, UVA Health). None were found to be providing comprehensive services and most focused on health sciences research. Interviews of research administrators, research support services, faculty and faculty focus groups were conducted to get input on needed/desired resources.

Research Administrator interviews revealed the following suggestions for the top 5 resources to include in the Concierge Service: boilerplate language, faculty research orientation, research administrator orientation, proposal project management tools, and a proposal repository.

Faculty interviews were conducted and there were suggestions/calls for budget guidance and templates, grant writers and editors, boilerplate language, a proposal repository, as well as grant writing assistance for non-native English-speaking faculty. Faculty want to have access to other successful types of proposals beyond NIH, NSF and foundations.

Faculty focus groups were organized. These were more in-depth and generated some new ideas. Some major resources of interest were research support services, funder insights, workshops, facilitation of internal collaboration, proposal development, and funding identification.

Suggestions for additional resources are still being taken with Kerri Jackson being the contact person.

A salesforce application for the Help Desk is currently available, open positions are being posted and interviews conducted. Current postings are for a "front door person" and a senior grant writer.

The Office of Research Health Sciences will not be part of the new Concierge Services but those needing the services offered by the Office of Research Health Sciences will be connected to them by the "front door" concierge. Post-award activities are under management of the CFO; the Concierge Service will work with them.

- Getting necessary signatures will be a centralized process through Peris.

- Faculty orientation will be made available as it becomes relevant to the researcher, in a step wise manner, instead of all up-front at the start of tenure. Faculty orientation will also be made available online.

- The Read/Feedback service provided by R Rutenbar's office will continue to be available.

- A set of service lanes is planned for addressing problems people are having with finding assets, to help people with their problems and based on their roles. The goal is to keep the Concierge Service updated and fresh.

Concerns and questions:

M Scott: Will there be training for postdocs and junior level investigators?

M Scott: Will there be a surrogate for ELI, which is being discontinued? P Morel: ELI deals with the conversational/communication side of second language learning, which is different from the reading and writing side of grant skills. That is different from the scope of the Research Concierge services.

Z Xia: asked for templates, webinars for appropriate language to use in funding applications. Asked that a K-to-R training program be included. Indicated that people often don't know what questions to ask. M Scott: has relied on word of mouth for most of her information. J Woodward: for the Concierge Service, a long-term goal will be to come up with routine/general questions that can be addressed using AI; Dr. Rutenbar is working with Microsoft on a different initiative, and as that develops, we want to get access to the AI technology for Concierge Services.

Brief report from Bill Yates

Regulations for the CHIPs and Science Act are eagerly being awaited.

Preparation for next (Feb 17th) meeting of the SRC

Uduak Ndoh, Vice Chancellor and Deputy Chief Information Officer, Health Sciences, will attend along with people from R3 to address questions about Pitt-UPMC intercommunication problems and getting access to electronic medical records. People should come with their questions /concerns regarding R3 and its leadership.

New items of discussion: none

The meeting was adjourned at 2:31pm.

The next Research Committee meeting: February 17 (unless issues arise in the meantime)

Minutes submitted by: K Wood and M Scott