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


**In attendance:** Wood K, Yates B, Dauria E, Morel P, Arlet M, Reed D, Xia Z, C Hay, Luyster F, Rutenbar R, Caldwell A, Sethi A, Wells S, Dahiya S, Anna

**Absent with apologies:** Scott M

1. **Approval of Minutes:** The September 2023 meeting minutes were approved.

2. **New policy committee** –Emily Dauria was acknowledged for volunteering as the SRC faculty representative for the Research and Clinical Training with Human Cadaveric Material Policy Committee

3. **Research update** – SVC for Research, Rob Rutenbar

- Rob Rutenbar discussed various policy matters during the meeting. He mentioned ongoing policy developments, specifically highlighting a new one initiated over the summer involving centers and institutes. It will supplant an existing, outdated policy dating back to 1988, focused on governance for launching a center or institute. He further explained that the existing policy references positions that no longer exist, such as the president, and emphasized the need for an updated approach.

  Additionally, Rutenbar addressed the cost committee, emphasizing representation from various campuses, including upper and lower campuses, health, science, STEM, social science centers, and medical centers.

  Lastly, Rutenbar stated that nothing significant or new has occurred in the regulatory domain.

- Bill Yates noted that the Interim Data Management Policy has been approved by the Chancellor anis officially posted on the website as RI. 14.

  The practical aspects of implementing the policy were discussed, as well as plans to socialize the policy and ensure everyone is aware of it. The importance of the policy was emphasized, particularly given anticipated regulations on research security. There is an obligation to investigate data integrity challenges, which requires a framework that the policy now provides.

There are ongoing efforts to develop messaging for archiving data in preparation for individuals terminating employment/studies with the University. The cost of implementing data archiving services using new tools was briefly discussed, as well as destruction timelines for files. The need for a strategic approach to handling old outputs and the challenge of cost considerations, especially for retiring individuals, were acknowledged.

The discussion shifted to the evolving landscape of data sharing and the need to adapt to new expectations, including an emphasis on quickly sharing results. The potential conflict with existing research practices was recognized.

Concerns were raised about operationalizing the policy, especially given the varied nature of research across different disciplines. Collaboration with libraries and the Research Navigator program was suggested as ways to provide support and guidance to researchers in navigating these changes.

The conversation concluded with discussions about responsibilities, the role of the principal investigator (PI), and potential challenges in ensuring compliance with the policy. The need for training, checklists, and collaboration with relevant departments, including the libraries, was highlighted to facilitate effective implementation.

4. **Update on previous items**

- Graduate student health policy – increase in copays

Dr. Godley's email response regarding concerns expressed by M Scott (attached to the October SRC agenda) were reviewed and discussed in the meeting. In her email response, Dr. Godley expressed willingness to address questions about the graduate student health plan and disagreed with the notion that insufficient information was disseminated about the copay increase. She cited the presence of information in the September graduate professional student newsletter, social media messages, and discussions with the graduate professional student government advisory. The issue raised by SRC members was whether these channels effectively communicated the information to the students.

Anna in Psychology noted a perceived disconnect between Dr. Godley's response and confusion she encountered among graduate students; some students were unaware of the copay increase and its potential impact on mental health services (an increase in the number of psychotherapy sessions occurred during the pandemic). Anna expressed skepticism about the necessity of the increase and whether the "hardship fund" would reimburse (up to $4200, according to the website) for some types of appointments.

Would the difference in copay amounts be reinvested in graduate students, particularly for mental health appointments?

It was acknowledged that the topic would likely resurface in the next month's meeting, with lingering questions to be addressed, including the decision-making process and why it did not involve the Senate.

- Report on the 10/06/23 Expanded Executive Meeting – K Wood

  Various topics were discussed at the Expanded Executive Meeting.  Robin Kear emphasized understanding what the larger community is interested in, along with discussions about research, admissions, and compensation upgrades for research personnel.

  A substantial part of the meeting involved a robust and lengthy discussion among attendees about freedom of speech on campus. The debate revolved around whether all matters of freedom of speech should be allowed or if there should be limitations. Despite the extensive discussion, no conclusive decision was reached. The university's stance, as expressed by Dr. Gable, is to prioritize honoring first amendment protections for freedom of speech.

  The discussion then shifted to Dr. Gable and Joe McCarthy's shared message that faculty development, community engagement, and interdisciplinary collaborations outweigh financial solutions to Pitt's problems with faculty retention. There was dismay and disappointment expressed by some SRC members over this messaging, especially its lack of attention to faculty members of color, and the challenges faced by younger faculty that include parking issues and access to childcare. There was concern that the university might be prioritizing a good story over retaining experienced faculty.

  Follow-up discussions should include concerns about access to childcare, especially considering the impact of union negotiations on related committees.

- Updates about the **REDcap** clinical research app– Bill Yates

  The use of the Redcap data infrastructure system was discussed, highlighting its value as a tool for data management. There was discussion on the considerations and challenges associated with using Redcap for FDA-related studies, balancing the benefits of the system with the regulatory requirements.

It was clarified that if it's being utilized for an FDA-related study, there are stringent certification requirements. The FDA requires a thorough examination of the system, including its code and standard operating procedures (SOPs), by an external party to ensure security and safety measures are in place. There is considerable expense involved in obtaining FDA certification for Redcap.

There are two versions of Redcap– one that has undergone the FDA certification process and another that hasn't. While both versions are available for use, Yates advised against using the FDA-compliant version unless necessary due to the additional steps and costs involved. The FDA-compliant version will not be updated as frequently as the non-compliant one, given the expense and effort required for recertification with each major upgrade. Users are encouraged to use the non-compliant version unless their study specifically requires FDA compliance.

The discussion also touched on the consolidation of systems for health sciences and the challenges associated with maintaining and certifying the Redcap system for FDA compliance.

The process is complex and one needs to follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) when implementing studies in the FDA-compliant version. Questions from meeting participants about the versions were addressed; they were reassured that existing projects would not be impacted.

- New Associate Dean for AI in SOM - Dr. Hooman Rashidi

  It was acknowledged that Dr. Hooman Rashidi's extensive background in bioinformatics and machine learning make him a good resource for the SRC; he should be invited to present at one of its future meetings.

- Follow-up on R3 and other clinical research/EMR streamlining – who to invite to speak to the SRC?

During the meeting, there was a discussion about electronic medical records streamlining for inclusion of real-world data, and centralization of clinical trials management, particularly for larger, externally funded trials with complex logistics.

It was suggested that key individuals be invited to provide updates on the topic: 1) Dr. Patricia Corby, the Vice Chancellor for Clinical Trials Development and Operations in Health Sciences, and 2) Uduak Ngoh.

4. **New business**

   Doug Reed introduced the issue of Global Protect potentially being a significant concern regarding data integrity on networked computers collecting data on scientific

equipment.  His lab detected a problem -  incorrect pressure readings that were resolved when users plugged into the VPN. A proposed solution was to either disable Wi-Fi or directly connect to mitigate future issues, recognizing that there might be community interference to using such a solution.

The discussion extended into challenges with file transfers through One Drive, permission errors, and difficulties syncing files, particularly on Macs. A member shared their experience with COVID-19-related issues, such as ownership problems and errors when accessing or saving files.

- Emily Daurio brought up the high cost of reliance agreements for small projects engaging community partners, especially for new faculty or smaller-scale initiatives. Rob Rutenbar offered to set up a meeting with Emily for detailed conversations on the matter.

The meeting concluded with a reminder about the need for representation on the University Senate Council (USC) from members of the SRC.

5. **The meeting was adjourned at 2:44 pm.**

6. **Next Research Committee meeting:** Nov 17, 2023 (unless issues arise in the meantime)

7. **Minutes submitted by:**  K Wood and M Scott