

University Senate Research Committee Meeting

(online)

19 January 2024

1:00 PM

In attendance: Scott M, Wood K, Yates B, Stitt-Fischer M, Luyster F, Marsland A, Arlet M, Reed D, Xia Z, Hay C, Hauck H, Jones S, Cadlwell A, Dahiya S, Manley A.

1. **Approval of Minutes:** The November 2023 meeting minutes were approved without edits.
2. **Research update** – SVC for Research, Rob Rutenbar

Microsoft will be adding AI technology. Pitt has a relationship with Microsoft that will give it early access to some of the tools in the cognitive services portfolio. Tools can be used to help you find someone working on a similar area of interest here at Pitt, or leading a clinical study, which can be used to for partnering in response to funding announcements. Microsoft AI tools can also help with things we know about awards, protocols, offering some services to faculty. The world is moving very, very fast (Google, Bing, Microsoft, Pitt IT). The APLU meeting covered the ways different universities were embracing this and there are lots of conversations about where Pitt is and wants to be in this space.

Rob Rutenbar and Joe McCarthy (Interim Provost) chartered a small group to do a kind of an inventory of what people are doing across the campus last semester, for which there's an early draft. The Center for Teaching and Learning is offering some training opportunities on topics like "Why use chat GPT in the classroom?" There is ongoing conversation about being more centrally organized about some things - what's the most useful set of potential on-ramps for some introductory exposure, coaching and training. There is incredible disparity in levels of experience and levels of background. We're having conversations with our peers about the kinds of training stuff that they have on offer. One of the conversations is sort of an exposure level of training. The level of understanding you need to have to get into this depends radically on who you are, where you are, what your background is and what you think you might want to do with it.

Guardrails for Gen AI use are going to be an important aspect, required for things like data protection and attribution. How this affects you will depend on whether you are part of an ecosystem dependent on external research funding and whether you interact frequently with one of the major federal research agencies (NSF, NIH), which have laid down some rules, like ChatGPT cannot be listed as an author or used to read all of the proposals in your panel review. They want to know that the proposals have actually been read and someone's extremely confidential proprietary proposal is not at risk of theft/misuse. When using public or commercial tools, what is the landscape of privacy around the data that you allow it to interact with? Corporates are focusing on this

heavily right now. There is a difference between the Microsoft proprietary corporate versions of the Open AI technology and Chat GPT. We're not just using Gen AI for sequencing data but also for clinical data. It's a cool tool but the question is whether we can really understand it and use it appropriately. There will be more on Gen AI - stay tuned.

3. **Regulatory update** - Bill Yates

The NIH has been busy generating new proposed regulations, which have been out all over the place for comment. A significant one is **march-in rights**, which is a provision in the original Bay-Dole law for the government to come in and invalidate agreements if there is deemed a failure by the contractor to take "effective steps to achieve practical application of the subject invention" or a failure to satisfy "health and safety needs" of consumers.

Bayh-Dole is a federal law that gave universities the mandate to commercialize any promising findings coming from research from federally funded grants. The Biden administration has indicated that they are willing to take the march-in clause under consideration and use it to curb high prescription drug costs. They have proposed conditions for when the government can actually march in and invalidate our agreements with companies based on federally funded research; those proposed conditions are open for comments. This has never happened before; universities are very afraid about this because we don't know how far it would go and how that would affect their licensing.

New research security regulations, talked about in the past, are moving forward with draft proposed rules that came out middle of last year. Pitt gave commentary about those rules as did many other institutions. We are expecting the final regulations to come out soon. We got part of a grant, the prime one going to University of Pennsylvania, as co-investigators to develop research security training that would be required under these new regulations. The NSF is putting the training on their website. There are indications that they are getting the pieces ready for implementation of the regulations. We don't know what the regulations will be, only the initial version that we commented on.

We are expecting a lot of regulations to come out this year, including probably the open data regulations as well. It's been very frustrating and confusing because the government is putting out 2 conflicting mandates: you have to share your data but also keep it secure. Open data will be required but there's a question of when it will have to be released and what level of data it will be applied to, such as published data or not, and will others be able to do meta-analyses with the open data, possibly without giving proper attribution. A lot of these conversations are happening. In the data management policy that this committee approved last year, you should have an agreement with who is getting your data. But when you are especially sharing unpublished things, it can get very dangerous.

Regarding NIH proposals for changes to the Office of Research Integrity, we submitted a very long letter with point-by-point comments to all the issues. This may slightly delay implementation. We have to wait and see what the final rules are.

4. Potential IACUC renewal delays/EH&S issues – Doug Reed and Molly Stitt-Fischer

Doug Reed & Penny Morel outlined issues they were having with protocol renewals, especially long wait times for EH&S approvals, that were putting their ongoing research at risk of being shut down due to confiscation of animals.

Molly Stitt-Fischer from EH&S was present to address those issues with a slide presentation, followed by a discussion.

EH&S fell behind October/November in processing IACUC and IBC reviews. The problem arose from a staffing issue (personnel turnover), which increased review times. Triage measures turned out to be inadequate. All available resources were dedicated to catching up, which was accomplished beginning of January. There is an improved outlook for the end of January. We are learning some new, more efficient ways to work around some of the limitations in systems that support the review process. A new hire was brought on in December. Processes are being streamlined for efficiency and efforts are being made to improve communication with PIs. The goal is to collaborate with investigators. They will also build in more redundancy with the goal of preventing a repeat situation.

Protocol reviewers have, additional responsibilities, so there's a need to balance and triage. Regulatory changes, especially involving animals, are now resulting in more lengthy reviews in order to check off all the new things needed. A lack of intermittent updating that occurred with formerly required annual renewals is likely also contributing to lengthier review times. An implementation review is now being required for all new protocols.

5. New business (suggestions)

- **Faculty Assembly Committee** is looking for topics to focus on over the next year (per email from Robin Kear and Frank Jenkins) – suggestions can be made to Frank or Gosia.
- **What can be charged to directs versus indirects** on grants: lab coats, data storage, stationary, etc? Who makes these decisions and can address these issues (possibly Grants Admin?). Part of the data management plan allows for data storage as a direct cost, but it may have to be specifically budgeted for in the grant. This would be in line with requirements for data sharing. Clarity is needed on these questions.

- **Staff shortages**, personnel turnover, is a fundamental structural issue, where discussions need to be held at not just the departmental level, but at higher levels (CFO's office and the Dean's office).
- **Graduate student postdoc issues** with Amanda Godly .
- **Frustration with R3 continues.** Getting Uduak to come back, at least annually, and tell SRC what direction they are going.

6. Announcement by Penny Morel

The Senate January session this year (March 7th from noon until 2:00 pm, is going to be on multidisciplinary research, organized by Robin Kear and Christine. The plan is for Mike Holland or someone to talk about examples across campus of successful interdisciplinary, large group research. Groups will be able to present on what they're doing and how they got funding.

7. The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.

8. Next Research Committee meeting: Feb 16, 2024 (unless issues arise in the meantime)

9. Minutes submitted by: K Wood and M Scott