

University Senate Research Committee Meeting  
7 February, 2018  
1:00 PM  
156 CL

In Attendance: K. Fike, T. Hitting, M. Goodhart, G. Huber, R. Melhem, P. Morel, R. Rutenbar, D. Salcido, S. Sant, P. Smolinski, N. Spice, M. Spring, T. Songer, C. Wilcox

The minutes were of the January meeting were approved.

**COI Policy**

Prior to the meeting the new COI policy draft was circulated to the committee along with a summary of the proposed changes.

R. Rutenbar gave a brief overview of the history of the new policy and the changes to the policy. In essence the policy is more enabling and allows faculty to participate more fully in companies that they may start or be involved with.

The committee discussed various aspects of the policy at some length.  
Specific issues raised:

Section II definitions

The definitions of Conflict of Commitment and COI were deemed to be very vague by several members of the committee since they include words such as “possibility” or “in appearance”. It was suggested that the definitions should be made more clear and concise. All faculty are required to disclose an activity that has the potential to raise a COI, and whether it does or not will be determined by the appropriate University unit.

Suggestions for new working for definitions A and B

- A. Conflict of Commitment exists when a faculty or staff member’s external relationships or activities interfere or compete with the University’s educational, research, or service mission or with that individual’s ability to perform the full range of responsibilities associated with his or her position.
- B. Conflict of Interest (COI) exists whenever personal, professional, commercial, or financial interests or activities outside of the University (1) compromise a University Member’s judgment; and/or (2) bias the nature or direction of scholarly research; and/or (3) influence a faculty or staff member’s decision or behavior with respect to teaching and student affairs, appointments and promotions, uses of University resources, interactions with human subjects, or other matters of interest to the University; or (4) result in personal or immediate family member’s gain or advancement at the expense of the University.

There was further discussion on item 4 in the COI definition since this seemed vague. It was agreed that this would be clarified.

### Section III Policy Overview

#### Paragraph 1

P. Smolinski was suggested that, in the first paragraph, second sentence the term “allows” suggest that other activity is not allowed. C. Wilcox suggested that “allows” should be changed to “encourages”.

#### Paragraph 3.

It is stated that “Faculty members and staff members with 50% or more appointments owe their primary professional commitment to the University” A question was raised as to whether this refers to the calendar year or University contract. Many faculty are on 8 or 9 month salaries and it was stated that anything they do during their summer months would not constitute a conflict. On the other hand, it is possible to imagine scenarios when this might result in a perceived conflict.

This merits more discussion and clarification.

#### D. Personal Gain or Advancement

M. Spring asked for clarification on this section and requested that it be removed. It is not clear what is considered “unfair” or what ways are “prohibited by the University” There was some discussion on this topic and G. Huber raised the instance of physicians being paid by drug companies to give talks at meetings where they might favorably discuss the drug company’s therapy.

It was agreed that this section should be reexamined and clarified.

### Section IV Disclosures and Approvals

M Spring raised a concern about the requirement to disclose a new SFI within 30 days of acquiring it by inheritance for example. He suggested that, in some cases one may not become aware of such SFI until later.

It was agreed that the 30 days should apply to once an individual becomes aware of a new SFI

### Section V. Research Gifts

R Melhem raised the questions to whether research gifts can be used to pay personnel and it was stated that they can.

The policy will be changed to reflect this.

P. Morel asked whether the draft policy could be circulated to additional faculty to obtain feedback. This was agreed to and the discussion of the issues raised at this meeting and others will continue at the March meeting.

### **Visitor Agreement**

A revised Visitor Agreement was previously circulated to the Committee. The policy had been revised according to the previous suggestions of the committee. The committee felt the changes made addressed the concerns that had been raised.

Two minor corrections were requested:

In item 5. The word “copyright” to be changed to “copyrightable”

In Footnote 1 to make the following deletion: An Academic Visitor is an individual who receives an official invitation from a University of Pittsburgh.

G. Huber agreed to these changes and the committee voted unanimously to approve the Visitor Agreement as amended.

Follow up: These changes were submitted to Alan DiPalma, who has implemented them and the final Visitor Agreement is appended to these minutes

A request has been made to Frank Wilson to present this to Faculty Assembly

### **New Business**

M. Goodhart raised the point that the next meeting, March 7, falls in spring break which could affect attendance. It was decided that a poll would be taken to see whether March 7 or 14 was preferred.

The results suggest that more people can come March 7

**The next meeting will be March 7 – 1-3 PM in CL 156**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.

Minutes submitted by Patrick Smolinski and Penny Morel.