

University Senate Research Committee Meeting
31 May 2019

1:00 PM

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In Attendance: J. Barone, E. Chasens, D. DeAlmieda, K. Dornim Koss, D. Harall, R. Guido, M. Holland, G. Huber, R. Melhem, M. Miklos, P. Morel, D. Salcido, S. Sant, P. Smolinski

No comments or corrections were received for the minutes of the May 3 meeting, so the minutes were approved as posted.

Research Update

M. Holland provided a report the SVC of Research's office Since SVC Rutenbar was unable to attend this meeting.

Review of COI Policy requested by Chancellor

G. Huber stated that the Chancellor has asked for a review of Pitt's COI policy in light of recent events at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). Investigators found that MSK faculty, administrators and board members had significant breaches of the COI policy at MSK, including inappropriate interactions with companies. MSK has now rewritten their COI policy and made it more restrictive for faculty to engage in financial relationships with companies. G. Huber has formed a committee to review Pitt's COI policy in light of these changes made to the COI policy at MSK. He stated the infractions may have been the result not of flaws in the previous COI policy, but due to the fact that the policies were not followed. At MSK, there will now be a COI policy for research personnel and a COI policy for the Board of Trustees. The new COI policy at MSK is more restrictive than the previous policy. This change is in contrast to the recent changes to Pitt's COI policy which has become less restrictive. However, at Pitt there are robust procedures in place to deal with potential COI and these are being followed. He also mentioned that Rob Rutenbar and Chris Bonneau will be forming a committee to look at COI issues related to Pitts Board of trustees

G. Huber mentioned that the committee charged with developing the new web-based COI forms is almost complete and that Craig Wilcox will be chairing this committee

P Morel noted that a new committee was been formed to revise the Pitt IP policy and that the first meeting will take place the first week of June.

New Opportunities for Research Funding at Pitt

M. Holland reported that there is an effort to create seed funding directed at cross-school research efforts. This will be run jointly by the SVC of Research and Provost areas, and will include all Schools on campus. The aim of this effort will be to provide medium-sized grants to

investigators engaged in multidisciplinary research. The focus will be on research, rather than commercial development and cross school participation will be encouraged. It is thought that initial funding would be for one year with a possibility to extend for a second year of funding. This could include both 1-year planning grants and 2-year larger scale grants. The grants will be milestone driven. The goal of this effort is to develop interdisciplinary research that could be applied to large external grants. Some of the details, such as grant size, are still being worked out and an announcement will be coming out shortly.

New AVC for Research in the Humanities

M. Holland stated that there is a search underway for the position of Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Research in the Humanities. The role of this position will be to promote collaborative research in the humanities and the development of external funding. Nine candidates have applied for this position and these are being reviewed to determine who will be asked for interview.

Discussion of PittPRO

D. Salcido stated that several of his colleagues have expressed concern with the new PittPRO system that has replaced OSIRIS for IRB applications and review. These have included a longer than expected turn-around time for JIT review, reviews being delayed for up to a month, a lack of timely response to emails and a lack of email alerts from the system when certain milestones had been achieved.

J. Barone, the Director of the Human Research Protection Office (HRPO), provided an overview of the new PittPRO system and shared that they were aware of the difficulties and increased turn-around time. R Guido explained that the reason for this change was to allow for better integration with PERIS and also to better comply with the new NIH rule for a single IRB in cases where multiple institutions are collaborating on a project. The new system has less flexibility than OSIRIS but is better able to integrate with newer systems. New IRB protocols have been using PittPRO since January 2019 and renewals have been required to use the system as of March 2019. This change over has put strain on the HRPO staff, who are having to spend more time on protocols that are transitioning from OSIRIS to PittPRO. Some of the reasons for the increased response time include: learning the new system, the implementation of the revised Common Rule, the need for new staff members to learn both the PittPRO and OSIRIS systems and the moving forward of the PittPRO to OSIRIS transition date brought about by the need to interface with the PERIS system. She also stated that there is a concern with the system that too many notifications could be sent.

The HRPO is aware of these problems and has implemented several initiatives to address them including, providing supplemental payments to staff to work extended hours and to reassign duties to take care of the backlog. Additional training sessions for PittPRO users are being provided. J Barone stated that if PIs are not receiving a timely response to their emails they should contact her directly. Each PI is assigned one staff member and thus communications can also be between these two individuals – rather than using the system emails, which sometimes get lost as there are potentially too many notifications coming from the system.

D. Salcido stated that his own experience with the PittPRO system has been positive with a quick response on a just-in-time submission.

E. Chasens stated that she did not receive an immediate response following submission of her protocol, which led her to question if the submission had been done correctly and received. She was working on converting a project from OSIRIS to PittPRO and was concerned that the conversion would not happen prior to the expiration date. J Barone stated that the HRPO places a high priority on converting studies prior to their expiration date and asked that PIs adhere to the request to send these in at least 5 weeks prior to expiration, due to the increased time each application takes. She said it is possible to see on the PittPRO website if the application has been successfully transmitted, and they are a little reluctant to institute too many notifications for fear that these may be ignored.

E. Chasens said that current the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Pitt require separate IRB approvals. G. Huber stated efforts are underway to have a single IRB for the VA and Pitt and for CMU and Pitt, which is something Pitt has long pushed for.

J. Barone thanked the committee for the opportunity to discuss the PittPRO system and stated that she and her office would be willing to come to individual Departments or Divisions to talk about the system if needed.

The Committee thanked E. Chasens for her service, as she rotates off the committee this year.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Minutes submitted by P. Morel and P. Smolinski