The Advisory Committee to the Vice President for Research (AC/VPR)

Summary of the

General AC/VPR

Meeting

February 27, 2012 from 3-5 pm

University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus

Members Present: Michael Ashby, Rena Cook, David Craig, Chitru Fernando, Pat Hardre, Karen Hayes-Thummam, James Patterson, George Richter-Addo, Ed Sankowski, David Stensrud, Musharraf Zaman

VPR Office Staff Present: Kelvin Droegemeier, Morris Foster, Alicia Knoedler, Cathi Parker

Distributed Documents:

1. Charts of Norman Campus proposals/grants (hardcopy)
2. Sequestration Document (hardcopy)
3. President’s FY2013 Budget Request (hardcopy)
4. Thematic Mapping Document (hardcopy)
5. Recommended Guidelines For Faculty Workload Policies (hardcopy)

VPR Update: Dr. Droegemeier welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with an overview of topics impacting the VPR Office.

- State and Federal budgets + charts of Norman Campus proposal/grants
  - Handouts were provided with charts of Norman campus proposals/grants. Among the charts provided was a Comparison of Proposal Submissions (Amount Requested). In 2012 we have the third highest amount of funding. This goes in cycles and overall we’re doing well. The Comparison of New Business (Number of Awards) chart indicates we’re quite healthy. The Comparison of Amount of Research Expenditures chart indicates the trend is moving towards larger requests. At other colleges, expenditures are flattening out and diversifying into the Department of Defense, etc. On the Comparison of Proposal Submissions (Number of Submissions) chart, it’s the lowest in the last five years and shows interesting trends. Ernest Abrogar, Director, Research Statistics Analysis, is updating metrics for the VPR website and we plan to create dashboards to show how we rank with other universities.
  - Discussion ensued. We need to reevaluate what proposals are submitted to be more competitive. Are new faculty stepping up? Is the population changing as faculty retire? What is our success rate? Any trends?
  - A couple of years ago, RSA created the so-called “baseball stats” i.e. how many proposals submitted, how many are funded over a decade period for all faculty? Who has gone “quiet, who might need assistance, etc”?
  - President Boren is working aggressively to avoid budget cuts. Sooner Jump Start looks to bring in additional revenue. A handout was presented regarding the federal science budget. $542 million in non-defense discretionary funds are what we depend on. With regard to sequestration, Office of Management and Budget will divide the total spending cuts evenly over nine years and evenly between defense and non-defense accounts. OMB will then allocate the cuts to
discretionary and mandatory spending accounts, exempting several programs. What happens to Medicare and Social Security? Research agencies potentially face cuts of 10% a year for some time. A diverse portfolio is key to OU’s success.

- President’s FY2013 Budget Request handout: This will change once Congress is involved.
- There are four bills in the legislature of concern. There is a push from the legislature to take back the authority to set tuition with the exception of fees. Among the bills, there is one that seeks to allow concealed carry-ons on campus, and another to eliminate tenure and switch to contracts. We have received numerous Freedom of Information requests. President Boren and Danny Hilliard work the Capitol well in support of higher education.

- A-21 Task Force
  - The A-21 Task Force is an Office of Management and Budget circular. There is speculation that time and effort reporting will be eliminated. Universities leave $10-15 million on the table every year due to unrecovered IDC and cost sharing.

- NRC Study
  - The study is expected to be finalized in late spring/early summer.

- Thematic Mapping
  - Every department provided key themes and topics which will allow us to type in key words and find faculty with those themes/specifies quickly.
  - Discussion ensued. Believe thematic mapping demo will prove helpful and applaud the effort on this project. Graphical portrayal is better. We’re making progress on the project and the College of Education has been the guinea pig. The final product may not look the same when completed as is currently shown. We hope to have the demo done by the end of the spring semester.

- Faculty Connections Event
  - The inaugural event was successful and the next event is scheduled for April 13th. We had 150 attendees who provided positive feedback. Contact our office with any further comments or suggestions.

- Research Campus
  - The 1st floor will house the Data Center, the 2nd floor will house PCI, and the 3rd floor will house Climate Science Center, Water Survey, USGS Water Center, and May Yuan’s shop. 5 Partners Place will be four stories with 100,000 square feet with potential wet lab space.

- Leadership Academy
  - The inaugural academy will be held in 2013 and questions should be directed to Kelvin Droegemeier.

- Undergraduate Research
  - An overview was given of Joy Pendley’s role. The PCAST STEM Education Report has been released.

- OSCER Visiting Team
  - A Blue Ribbon Panel is coming to OU in early August to review all of IT that supports research and includes national leaders.

- DSI Director Search
  - The DSI director search continues.

- Other topics
The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association will be on campus March 5-7. The VPR Office is included in several 50-minute sessions.

Dr. Droegemeier serves on the Governor’s Science & Technology Council which will meet again on March 1. One idea put forth by his subcommittee is an idea for “One Oklahoma”. If we take all state University resources, put them together, we could have a “virtual” university functioning as one major state university. He hopes to share a draft of the plan with the committee after it’s sent to Governor Fallin.

We need research facilities such as in New Mexico. We need to land facilities like Sandia National Labs.

Update on 2nd pillar: Had discussions with the Deans. This needs serious emphasis based on the recommendations of the site visit team in 2009. Energy will be the focus.

CRPDE Update: Alicia Knoedler gave an overview of several subjects impacting CRPDE.

- Research Council changeover
  - The Research Council portfolio was consolidated on January 1 into the Faculty Investment Program. An email went out to all department chairs offering to provide 10-minute presentations regarding the changes. The first deadline for new proposals was December and two were submitted. Two followed in February, and six were submitted in March. CRPRDE will play a bigger role in developing proposals. If a proposal is denied the first time, the faculty member will be required to work with CRPDE on refining it before resubmitting. The current Research Council budget is $130,000 and we hope to increase this to as much as $500,000 in the future through a series of incremental increases.

- Staff Changes
  - Due to increasing demands, another staff member will be hired in the office. Cindy Clark’s role will be redefined to a manager position and a new center administrator will oversee scheduling and various other duties. Interviews are scheduled to start soon.

- New role for Dr. Knoedler in EPSCoR
  - A new theme has been selected for the EPSCoR Track I (Research Infrastructure Improvement) program and with 10 pre-proposals submitted, one was selected. The winning theme is Enhancing the Resilience of Socio-Ecological Systems to Climate Variability in Oklahoma. The lead PI is Yiqi Luo and his proposal had the greatest breadth of all of the proposals submitted. The OK NSF EPSCoR program is located in Stillwater, but Alicia will become this project’s Co-PI with Jim Wicksted (PI; OSU), which should provide for consistent communication about NSF EPSCoR activities to the OU community. Any questions regarding OK NSF EPSCoR should be directed to Dr. Knoedler.

- Arts and Humanities Working Group
  - Todd Fuller is leading discussions within this group as a follow on to the Arts and Humanities Action Team as part of Aspire 2020. They have met five times, starting in November 2011, to discuss a broad-range of arts, fine arts, and humanities-related issues as they pertain to the VPR, specifically, and OU, in general. The membership of the group includes faculty members who represent
arts, fine arts, and humanities disciplines at OU (18 departments/programs in all). Many of the initial discussion points have centered on past and current concerns that continue to concern faculty members, including: lack of funding for graduate students, lack of leadership alignment regarding faculty performance expectations, as well as a lack of internal and external funding opportunities for arts, fine arts, and humanities faculty. More recently, the group has started to focus on other issues, including: developing strategies to increase internal funding opportunities; discussing potential projects that have a humanities and/or arts focus (and that are multi- or interdisciplinary); and determining how OU arts and humanities departments compare – from a funding level perspective – to other Carnegie I institutions (U. of Arkansas, U. of Nebraska, U. of Iowa, UNC-Chapel Hill, UW-Madison, etc.). The group continues to move forward in its efforts to create a positive environment for humanities, arts, and fine arts at OU.

- Minority Serving Institutions Symposium
  - In late February, Dr. Knoedler traveled with eight OU faculty members to McAllen, Texas, to attend the Minority Serving Institutions – Other Institutions of Higher Education (MSI-OIHE) Symposium. Twenty-one universities were in attendance although OU had the most faculty in attendance. The goal of the symposium was to build real research relationships among faculty at MSIs and OIHEs. Follow up to this symposium will be organized out of CRPDE and it is likely that OU will host a similar symposium in February, 2013. OU will also become a member of the Minority Serving Institutions Research Partnership Consortium (msirpc.org).

- Other Comments
  - The Department of Defense is funding Georgia Tech to create a “Research Partnership Network”, profiling research expertise at MSIs. At this time, this information will not be publically available. This is another example of efforts to develop means of sharing information about research expertise, not unlike OU’s Thematic Mapping project with the Research Liaisons.

**CARD Update:** CARD is open for business. Check the website for the latest news.

**Faculty Workload Policy:** Dr. Droegemeier provided a handout of the recommended guidelines.

- Dr. Droegemeier talked to the Deans at Deans’ Council regarding the policy.
- Discussion ensued. Teaching and research aren’t strange bedfellows. What can we do to make policy more clear? Terms within the policy are intentionally vague to allow flexibility at the college and departmental level. Questions asked: What does OU research do? Why does this cost so much? We have a good story to tell. We need to be honest, incentivize, and need to get back to the “merit” rule. What is the role of faculty? What do you do with the rest of your time? Everybody doesn’t do the same thing. Misconception that good teachers can’t do research and good researchers can’t teach. How is graduate teaching viewed? Concern was voiced regarding the guideline that every professor should teach at least 75 students “in-load” per year. If you do the math, in graduate classes you can’t teach 75. Will it harm faculty with high specializations? Very difficult to make 75 with only graduate classes. Needs exceptions in both categories and should be subject to departmental judgment. There was a fear voiced that this was a mandate not a guideline.
It’s a strong document with useful structure. Takes a lot of time to revamp a course. The Faculty Investment Program is available to be a source of funding, to balance overloads, and provide needed resources. Dr. Knoedler stated that the FIP will help you focus on doing what you need to do in Research. Funding course releases is now available and it doesn’t have to relate to an external funding program. Announcements were done and details are available on our website.

**Roundtable Discussion:** Discussion ensued regarding changes to the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Drs. Droegemeier and Knoedler have met with Bobby Mason to discuss concerns and faculty is encouraged to meet with him as well. Regarding CARD, some faculty voiced a lack of enthusiasm to go into CARD because of how SRI is used. Unless M&O is solved, this is a concern. How are they going to charge things? What was the emphasis and motivation for CARD? Dr. Knoedler stated that the culture has to change and motivations need to be in place. How do you devote your attention to basic research because the methodology is so different? Lots of overload and faculty are already running at capacity.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled for May 9 at 3-5 p.m. in the Charlie Conference Room.