The Advisory Committee to the Vice President for Research

Summary of the General AC/VPR Meeting

Monday, March 24 from 3-5 p.m.

University of Oklahoma, Norman Research Campus

Members Present: Rena Cook, David Craig, Le Gruenwald, Karen Hayes-Thumann, Randy Hewes, Diane Horm, Marguerite Keesee, Hong Liu, Sheena Murphy, Pakize (Simin) Pulat, Ed Sankowski, Paul Spicer, Kim Winton

VPR Office Staff Present: Andrea Deaton, Kelvin Droegemeier, Alicia Knoedler, Cathi Parker

Update on Federal and State budgets (K. Droegemeier): Federal research budgets run the gamut from trending up 13% to flat at the National Science Foundation and are expected to be problematic in Congress this year relative to deep cuts. There is a 5% cut in higher education for state budgets. There is hope for a salary program at OU but there are no updates at this time.

VPR FY15 budget (K. Droegemeier): The budget is especially constrained within the VPR office as we lost several big projects and $500,000 in indirect cost. At the end of June we will have lost $300,000-400,000 in addition to losses due to sequestration. The VPR office has only $300,000 to spend in start-up funds for the entire Norman campus. There is no cut to Research Council funding at this time and we don’t expect to have to touch SRI funding. Dr. Droegemeier will present a budget overview at a future Research Council meeting.

Strategic planning in water and energy (K. Droegemeier): The VPR office plans to work with Deans on a water agenda and topics to be discussed are: future hires in water and energy and building a synergy with other departments. A handout was presented and discussion ensued.

- Will departments/colleges still have autonomy? Yes, tough questions will be asked but there are no plans to encroach on departments
- How was decision made to focus on water? Some factors in the decision-making: what is OU good at; water is one of the world’s great problems, energy is in Oklahoma’s DNA and right in our own backyard, we’re missing opportunities.
- How will it impact existing programs? Is there redundancy?

Update on Research Campus activities (K. Droegemeier): There are multiple activities happening on the Research Campus. Five Partners Place is under construction with an expected move in late Fall/early Winter. The VPR Office, the Office of Research Services, and CRPDE will occupy the entire 3rd floor of 5PP; plans are being discussed for a “re-do” of Three Partners Place possibly in Summer 2015; the Radar Innovations Lab (RIL) is now open and a grand opening is planned for the Fall semester; Six Partners Place plans are also underway.

Keck Foundation site visit, update about recent Foundation activity (K. Droegemeier/A. Knoedler): Albert Marino has submitted a $1 million dollar proposal to the Keck Foundation and visitors from Keck Foundation visited our campus. There was good feedback from the group and results are expected in June with 20 site visits to various campuses expected for this round of funding. The last two awards from Keck to OU were in 1988 and 1998. Sam Huskey is pursuing funding from the Mellon Foundation and a site visit was held in January/February and went well. The proposal was submitted March 14.

OMB Circular update (A. Deaton): Efforts were made to consolidate eight circulars into one and the new guide has been released. There had been no major changes in circulars since the 1980s. The new guidance contains changes related to equipment purchases, personal compensation, utility cost adjustments, and other areas. Further information will be disseminated as it becomes available.
Faculty Leadership Academy (K. Droegemeier): Plans are underway to establish a Leadership Academy for Academic Scholars coordinated by the VPR Office and discussion ensued regarding particulars the potential academy.

- What should the academy “look like”? Should Deans nominate potential candidates with the VPR office making the final selections? Should Committee A be involved? Will self-nominations be allowed? Should the selections be made only by the VPR, Graduate Dean, and Provost? Deans/Chairs/Research Liaisons should serve to get the word out to faculty.
- Who will provide the content? Internal/external content is expected. Messaging needs to be handled carefully.
- Should portions of the Academy be open to the general faculty, not only selected candidates?

General Discussion:
A general discussion followed with questions by various committee members.

- How many state agencies are interested in Biology graduates? What are we missing and who can they talk to? Concerns were expressed about the future of graduate education
- The Red Book which was prepared for the Oklahoma delegation was shared with the committee members.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14 and will be held from 3-5 p.m. in the Charlie Conference Room.