The Advisory Committee to the Vice President for Research

Summary of the
General AC/VPR Meeting
Thursday, May 23, 2013 from 3-5 p.m.
University of Oklahoma, Norman Research Campus

Members Present: Michael Ashby, Fred Carr, Rena Cook, David Craig, Chitru Fernando, Pat Hardre, George Richter-Addo, Ed Sankowski, Charles Warnken, Kim Winton, Musharraf Zaman

VPR Office Staff Present: Kelvin Droegemeier, Alicia Knoedler, Susan Dubbs

Brief Introduction: Dr. Droegemeier welcomed everyone, and mentioned a current research challenge, predicting tornadoes, as an important outcome of Monday’s devastating tornado in Moore. A meeting was held to discuss making plans to improve tornado predictions. It is a moral imperative to protect lives.

AC/VPR membership changes and recognition of outgoing members:

- **Outgoing Members:** Each of the outgoing members was provided with a memento and thanks for a job well done. They include Michael Ashby (Chemistry/Biochemistry), Eve Bannet (English), Fred Carr (Meteorology), James Grimsley (VPR), Pat Hardre (Educational Psychology), Hazem Refai (Electrical & Computer Engineering), George Richter-Addo (Chemistry/Biochemistry)

- **Incoming Members:** Kirsten de Beurs (Geography), Le Gruenwald (Computer Science), Randy Hewes (Biology), Diane Horm (Instructional Leadership & Academic Curriculum), J.T. Johnson (CTO, Private Industry), Hong Liu (Electrical & Computer Engineering)

VPR Updates:

- **State of Norman Campus research in FY13:** The Norman Campus is up $3 million on expenditures and $1 million on indirect costs.

- **Sequestration and the FY14 Federal and VPR budgets:** The Federal Agency sequestration plans are at OMB and thus we should have a better idea about sequestration impacts in the coming weeks. So far we have had limited impact. The Climate Science Center was able to stave off a one-time reduction of around $35,000, but funding for new projects will be deferred. An AFOSR program important to one of our faculty members was cut by 40%.

  The President’s Federal FY14 budget will be great for NSF and research, but the actual amounts approved by Congress no doubt will be less than the proposed amounts. NSF will most likely see at least some increase in funding. A copy of the President’s Federal ’14 budget has been posted to the VPR website: [http://vpr-norman.ou.edu/2014-budget-world-leading-commitment-science-and-research](http://vpr-norman.ou.edu/2014-budget-world-leading-commitment-science-and-research).

  VPR will not be able to provide as much start-up funds for FY14 as desired, so every effort will be made to strategically focus.

  State funding for Higher Education is expected to increase by $33 million.

- **STEM initiative:** A plan has been created for the STEM initiative. College Deans will be briefed on the plans. The plans will positively impact non-STEM fields as well.

- **Undergraduate Research:** Susan Walden has been appointed Coordinator of Undergraduate Research Programs and is making good progress.

- **Perspectives on the future of research:** With the entry of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs) into the higher education marketplace, traditional place-based higher education is having to rethink budget and funding models. Limited state funding has raised the cost of higher education,
student debt has increased, and the corporate world does not think students are learning enough. These factors have increased the appeal of MOOCs. On the research side, government agencies are having budget challenges and are less able to provide funds to higher education. The private sector has R&D funds, but industry-academic interactions are difficult due to intellectual property issues. Graduate students typically need assistance with financing their education. Undergraduates are one of the largest sources of revenue. Undergraduates are essential to the current economic model for traditional institutions of higher education. Georgia Tech has started offering a computer science degree program that is completely online for $7000. The advent of similar programs challenges the traditional economic model.

Group discussion included the following information and ideas:

- Partnering with venture capitalists. Successful projects would encourage reinvestment into R&D at institutes of higher education
- The intellectual property issue involves the private sector expecting at least partial ownership of intellectual property that results from their investment. Since public institutions of higher education are partially funded by taxpayers and have non-profit status, there are laws and IRS regulations that demand the intellectual property stay with the institute of higher education
- University of Texas at Austin commissioned a report about the ability to attract and to fund qualified graduate students. The report showed that the model is unable to continue as is. During the next 5-10 years, UT will try pilot programs to address the issue of graduate student funding, including the possibility of closer ties with industry.
- Building a relationship with industry partners can be quite difficult, but once the relationship has been built it can be rewarding. For example the possibility of 1-3 match for funding.

- **Research Campus update:** The Radar Lab is under construction and should be completed in late 2013. Ground has been broken for Five Partners Place, and 5PP should be completed in late 2014. The Water Innovations Lab is in the planning phase.
- **Research priorities for FY14:** This topic will be addressed in the Fall at a Town Hall meeting.

**GE International Oil & Gas Research Center:** The Governor made a huge effort to make sure Oklahoma won the bid for the GE Research Center. It is expected to start with 125 high level PhD positions, and eventually grow to 1000 employees. The physical locale for the building has not yet been established. OU Norman has not lost too many good faculty and has made good hires to replace those leaving. Counter offers have been given to faculty being recruited, and in most cases the faculty member has chosen to remain at OU. A salary program based on preemptive retention needs to be created.

**Transfer of the FTAP program funding to colleges:** The Faculty Travel Assistance Program is moving from VPR to the colleges as of August 1, 2013. The transfer has been discussed with the colleges to allow for a smooth transition. Funding is not being cut. It will be left to the colleges’ discretion on how the funds should be managed. The colleges will be required to produce a report at the end of the year to account for how the funds were used. The amounts given to each college was determined by reviewing historical data for what percentage of the FTAP funds were provided to faculty for each college. Group discussion followed.

**Other Internal Funding Programs update:** The Research Council has completed its work for the year. Paul Spicer has completed his term as chair. Sheena Murphy is the incoming chair. There are nine vacancies, and replacements have not yet been identified. The August meeting will be used as a training
session for research council members. September will be the first meeting for funding reviews. The Arts and Humanities Faculty Fellowship (AHFF) supplies funds to buy out of classes for one semester and includes some money for supplies and travel. The Publication Support Program (PSP) is still available. The guidelines are available online: [http://vpr-norman.ou.edu/funding/VPR-funding-opportunities/publication-support-program](http://vpr-norman.ou.edu/funding/VPR-funding-opportunities/publication-support-program). Faculty are encouraged to approach the VPR and the Provost for matching funds at the same time, and then go to their Dean for the final 1/3rd.

**Demonstration of the alpha test version of the OU Research Thematic Mapping System:** The thematic mapping system has been developed with input from Research Liaisons. The system would allow faculty to identify other faculty as potential collaborators. Starting with a search term, the system would generate a map linking the term to departments, thematic areas, and faculty. The system is still in the early stages of design. Discussion related to suggestions for improvement. The web site may be found at [http://catherder.rccc.ou.edu/ouasn](http://catherder.rccc.ou.edu/ouasn).

**NSF EPSCoR update:** The Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) for NSF supplies infrastructural grant funding to states that are underfunded. OU, OSU, University of Tulsa, and other smaller Oklahoma colleges submitted a project titled: “Adapting Socio-ecological Systems to Increased Climate Variability”. The project has been awarded $20 million in funding. Alicia Knoedler is Co-PI. The official announcement regarding the award will come from the Oklahoma State Regents of Higher Education (who provided matching funds). The project will officially begin on June 1st, and is a five-year program. An informational session will take place in the fall. As part of this new award, a position was created for the Director of Diversity and Research Initiatives, which will be partially funded by the EPSCoR grant. The position has been announced and is currently seeking candidates.

**Roundtable discussion:** The discussion included the following topics:

- The request for proposals related to the Climate Science Center are due on May 31st. These proposals should consider drought and fire, and includes a social science portion regarding how to deal with landowners and tribes.
- CRPDE is working on materials for Junior Faculty Development.
- Fine Arts would like to increase collaborations with science and technology.
- Members of the University of Utah are interested in collaborating with OU on sustainable development.
- Colleges and departments are hiring with expectations for multidisciplinary research and collaborations, but the tenure guidelines do not include expectations for multidisciplinary research or collaborations. A call for changes in the traditional mindset and culture was discussed.