The Advisory Committee to the Vice President for Research (AC/VPR)
Summary of the
General AC/VPR
Meeting
September 27, 2010 from 3-5 pm
University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus

Members Present: Musharraf Zaman, David Craig, James Patterson, George Richter-Addo, Heather Basara, Noel Brady, Emily Meazell, Fred Carr, David Stensrud, Michael Ashby, Eve Bannet, Ed Sankowski, Marlys Lipe, Mary Margaret Holt, Pat Hardre, Hazem Refai

VPR Office Present: Kelvin Droegemeier, Morris Foster, Alicia Knoedler, Deborah Marsh, Shawn Snidow

Guest Present: Dave Hambright (Research Council)

Distributed Documents:
1. VPR Overview (hardcopy)
2. Challenge Grant Program Handout (hardcopy)
3. Research Liaisons White Paper (.doc)
4. Research Awards Recommendation (.doc)
5. Transformative Research, Scholarship, & Creative Activity Program (hardcopy)
6. Update for CRPDE (hardcopy & .doc)

Welcome and Thanks: Vice President for Research, Dr. Droegemeier welcomed the AC members and thanked them for their flexibility and for accommodating the changed meeting time. He expressed gratitude for all of those who were able to attend the President’s Reception for Research, mentioning that the attendance for that event was impressive.

Brief Overview and Update on the VPR Office: Dr. Droegemeier noted that the VPR Office expects continued growth, despite the bleak economic climate.

- The new VPR website will be operable beginning January 1, 2011. The new site is intended to provide more functionality and information for faculty and administrators.
- Regarding the State of Oklahoma and the University of Oklahoma budgets, Dr. Droegemeier indicated that despite difficult economic times, the VPR office has the greatest flexibility and opportunity for continued growth.
- The budgets of state agencies that provide funding for research for OU seem to be holding steady. OU and OU faculty should continue to pursue funding opportunities with those agencies.
- Data for the “awards graphs” in the VPR overview handout are aggregate counts of awards by month, rather than the success rates of those proposals indicated on the “proposal graphs” for the same month. In other words, the awards graphs list the awards made during a given month regardless of the date the proposal was submitted.
Faculty Challenge Grant: Dr. Droegemeier referenced a handout of power point slides for his discussion of the Faculty Challenge Grant Program. Many of the slides were presented during the State of OU Research Townhall meeting on August 8. (Videos of the town hall meeting are available on the Aspire 2020 website.)

- The Faculty Challenge Grant was proposed as a result of the Aspire 2020 action teams and hearing that faculty and colleges need more seed funding.
- The purpose of this internal grant is to provide significant funding for a 2 years. As proposed, two competitions would provide funding for FY12-13 and FY 13-14. If the program is successful, it may be extended.
- The total proposed budget for 3 years (FY12-14) is $1.2 million.
- Criteria and a process for award selection are still being determined. Expectations and accountability will be high.
- CRPDE will be a key component to the proposal process, as the purpose of the Challenge Grant Program is to provide seed funding for innovative and important projects that will be able to garner additional external funding.
- A variety of awards have been proposed (see the second of the slides provided). And the funds may be used for a variety of activities and related project needs, including a Research Assistant or teaching release.
- Dr. Droegemeier was most interested in feedback regarding the proposed designation of 10 awards of up to $5K for the Arts and Humanities (A&H).
  - Dr. Knoedler suggested that the category be expanded to include A&H-like activities, as opposed to the PI having an Arts or Humanities appointment. This would make those funds available to faculty in any college working on projects with A&H orientations and goals.
  - Dr. Bannet noted that $5k was not enough to buy a teaching release nor to travel to and use various libraries or archives. She suggested that $7,500 would be a more worthwhile amount.
  - In response to Dr. Bannet, Dr. Droegemeier asked about potentially combining the $5-10K award categories to create a category of funding for 15 awards from $5-15K per project.
  - Dr. Holt agreed that $5K was too low to be truly useful for the large projects the program is intended to fund. She also expressed concern that by combining the two groups that the A&H designation would be lost.
  - Dr. Bannet also suggested that the ability to use both years of funding in one year would be useful. So a $5K award over 2 years may better serve faculty projects if the award were paid out as $10K for 1 year. Dr. Ashby concurred, noting that in his area of research (Chemistry/Biochemistry), increased funding for one year would be allow for the money to be better used for gathering data.
- After a number of questions regarding expectations, accountability, and funds distribution, Dr. Droegemeier compared the Challenge Grant Program with the current Research Council portfolio:
  - Use of the funds will be left to the discretion of the PI, but that they would be held accountable. He wants to allow faculty the flexibility to use the funds to move their research/scholarship/creative programs forward in meaningful ways.
PIs would provide a report to the VPR office about their use of funds and the status of the project, but as proposed, 2nd year funding would *not* be tied to such reports.

- PIs would be required to work with CRPDE to further develop projects and increase opportunities stemming from this program.
- Dr. Droegemeier does not want the program call and purpose to be too prescriptive that it hinders creativity and risk-taking.
- Ms. Marsh said that funds would be paid out by the VPR Office to the Colleges in yearly lump sums.

- Finally, the discussion of the Challenge Grant Program turned to the review process:
  - The current proposal indicates that VPR personnel and non-conflicting faculty will serve on the panel of reviewers.
  - Dr. Knoedler noted that CRPDE, in conjunction with the VPR Office has distributed a survey to identify faculty who have external funding review experience. Please respond to the survey or let her know if you have experience serving on review panels for external funding.
  - Dr. Droegemeier said that he appreciated the productive conversation and would take their recommendations under consideration. He will distribute information concerning the final structure for the Challenge Grant Program, later.

**Research Liaisons:** For the original Research Liaison Program proposal, see the attachment by the same name. Dr. Droegemeier took this opportunity to emphasize the purpose of this program and answer questions about it.

- Research Liaisons (RLs) will be faculty who serve a communicative function between and among individual departments and the VPR Office. RLs will be a quick link for departments to query of the VPR Office and alternatively will be able to provide information to the VPR Office when requested. Dr. Zaman suggested that RLs may also help with college and department level strategic planning, like that conducted in the College of Engineering.
- Dr. Droegemeier agreed that while the primary and initial function of the RLs is to be the communication link between the VPR Office and Departments, he does expect their role to evolve as opportunities and needs are identified.
- The proposal has been distributed to all of the deans, chairs, and directors. A RL may not be assigned from every center, since the centers are housed primarily in certain colleges. Instead, academic department RLs should suffice. The purpose of this decision is to keep the RL program from becoming too cumbersome to be effective.
- The VPR Office will request that departments nominate 2-3 people for RL and then members of the office will select the RLs from those nominated.
- RLs will *not* be Associate Deans for Research. They will be faculty members.
- Dr. Droegemeier hopes that this program will also help strengthen ties with OU Norman Programs at Tulsa.

**Faculty Research Awards:** Dave Hambright provided an overview of the proposal for Research Awards as developed by the joint *ad hoc* task force of Research Council and Advisory Committee members.
- Members of the task force were: Mary Margaret Holt (Dance), Dave Hambright (Biological Station), Deborah Marsh (VPR Office), Joanna Rapf (English), Paul Spicer (Anthropology), Musharraf Zaman (Engineering)

- Dr. Hambright explained that the criteria used for decision making were that the awards be few and meaningful, that the awards align with the Aspire 2020 goal of transformation, that all departments, fields, and perspectives have equal opportunity to compete for each award, and that they operate within the budgetary constraints provided by Dr. Droegemeier.

- Dr. Hambright highlighted other concerns and considerations of the task force members not addressed in the distributed document.
  - The purpose of having more than one award in two of the award categories will allow faculty members from multiple disciplines to stand together and be recognized for their important achievements. The task force was concerned about and emphasized that they did not want the awards to show patterns of favoring work in the STEM fields (in particular) over that in the Humanities and the Arts.
  - “Vision” may not be the best word for the title of the “Vision” Award. The intent of the task force members was to recognize individuals who had achieved grand vision and goals regarding their research, scholarship, and creative activities.
  - “Engagement” was also not an ideal word as it is too ambiguous, but they intended this award to recognize transformative, bold, and innovative research, scholarship, and creative activities. This award could potentially be shared by multiple members of a team.
  - In considering names for the awards, it was important to the Task Force that the award be titled in a manner befitting its desirability and prestige. After discussion in this AC meeting, a general consensus was reached that identifying “OU Norman Campus Vice President for Research” in the title of the awards was appropriate and useful.
  - Additionally, the Task Force was curious about the intended prestige of the proposed awards compared to the Regents Award. The Regents Award currently comes with a $2,000 prize. The task force proposed one award with a $5,000 prize and 6 awards, each with a $2,500 prize. It was their hope that the Regents award prize amount would be increased, rather than reduce the prize amount for newly proposed awards. Dr. Droegemeier confirmed that the Regent’s prize was $2,000 and stated that he would discuss raising the prize amount with appropriate parties.

- Dr. Droegemeier asked that AC members please send additional thoughts on the awards to him by mid-October.

Research Council Awards for Potentially Transformative Research (PTR): Dr. Brady briefed the AC on the new Research Council pilot funding program for bold research, scholarship and creative activities.
- The awards will range from $10k to $50k.
- The selection will be carried out using a two-stage process.
  - For the first stage faculty will submit a 5-page description of the project.
  - PIs of selected proposals will then be invited to provide a full proposal and oral presentation during the second stage of this process.
• The Research Council has a budget of $50K to distribute for these awards this year, plus potential carry over from their regular budget surplus.
• Dr. Knoedler mentioned that faculty are welcome to consult with her regarding what is transformative about proposed projects.
• The Research Council may invite non-conflicting external reviewers to help inform award selection, if needed.
• Concern was expressed that the term “major” is relative to the field of research, scholarship or creative activity, and that the requirement that the proposed project “lead to major new external funding opportunities” would disadvantage faculty in the Arts and Humanities. It was suggested that the language of the CFP say “The Research Council will consider proposals that do one or any of the following” criteria.
• Dr. Richter-Addo asked about potential opportunities for bridge funding, to which Dr. Droegemeier suggested that the Challenge Grant may be viable and appropriate option for satisfying those needs.

**Strategic Initiative in Defense/Intelligence/Security Research:** Dr. Droegemeier said that he would send out the white paper proposal for this strategic initiative, primarily for members to stay up-to-date and informed about this program, but that he’d be happy to hear AC member’s thoughts on this.

**CRPDE Update:** Dr. Knoedler updated the AC on the activities and progress of the Center for Proposal Development and Enrichment. She has been tracking the time she spends on various activities for the center and had at the time of the meeting assisted with 13 completed proposals, 7 upcoming proposals, and had suggested that 5 proposals be postponed for additional preparation. Please check the crpde.ou.edu website for upcoming workshops and opportunities for professional development.

**Closing Remarks:** Dr. Droegemeier thanked Dr. Knoedler for her hard work and for getting CRPDE up and running, thanked the VPR staff for their work in the office, and thanked the AC for all of their comments, questions, and feedback. He mentioned that Spring faculty lunch appointments will be opening for registration in the coming weeks, saying that he’s been very impressed with the turnout and the conversations he is having during these meetings.

**Next Meeting:** The next general AC/VPR Meeting will be Tuesday, December 14 from 3-5pm, in the Charlie Conference Room of 3PP.