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

Summary of the

General AC/VPR

Meeting

May 2, 2011 from 3-5 pm

University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus

Members Present: Fred Carr, Noel Brady, Jim Patterson, Ed Sankowski, Michael Ashby, Patricia Hardré, James Grimsley, Heather Basara, Marlys Lipe, Mary Margaret Holt, David Craig, Musharraf Zaman, Emily Meazell, Dave Stensrud

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

Distributed Documents:

1. VPR awards, expenditures, submissions overview (hardcopy)
2. Slides from presentation to Deans about Conflict of Interest (hardcopy)
3. Working Budget for Discussion (xls)

VPR Update and Overview: Dr. Droegemeier welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief overview of topics of interest.

- The new artwork displayed around the Charlie conference room, and the VPR Offices of 3PP have been provided by OU faculty and researchers. Rachel Tucker, Melany Dickens and Gabe Wingfield have printed, framed and hung all of the artwork with supplies from the VPR Office.
- The state and federal budgets have been passed.
  - OU will hopefully benefit from a state-level stimulus package.
  - NIH, NSF and other federal granting agencies received budget cuts to their programs, but those cuts are not as large as originally projected.
  - Similar budget cuts will impact NEH and NEA.
- The National Research Council is currently working to make recommendations to Congress about reforming federal and state research funding policies. An important aspect of these recommendations will concern IDC recovery and university support for externally funded research.
- The search for the Defense, Security, and Intelligence (DSI) program director is ongoing.
- Dr. Foster led an ad hoc task force that considered the current Conflict of Interest policy.
  - A policy regarding financial conflicts of interest is in place, but OU-Norman does not currently have a comprehensive conflict of interest policy to govern the variety of conflicts that exist beyond monetary concerns.
  - The policy should be comprehensive and easily accessible to faculty and researchers.
  - A draft of the policy will eventually be presented to the AC for feedback.
- Dr. Droegemeier is considering implementing a leadership academy, which will provide an opportunity for select faculty to enhance their leadership skills for a variety of purposes and interests.
**Budget Discussion:** Dr. Droegemeier reviewed the supplemental "working budget for discussion" document.

- Some programs listed on the document are funded from the VPR budget and others from the central budget.
  - CRPDE is funded by the central university budget.
  - CRPDE is expanding and the VPR Office is considering supplementing the centrally funded budget to provide Dr. Knoedler with discretionary funds.

**Faculty Travel Assistance Program:** The Faculty Travel Assistance Program (also known as the "1/3 travel program") is a source of international and national conference travel funding, provided in equal parts by the VPR Office, the applicant's college, and the applicant's department. The maximum contribution from the VPR office is $1,200 ($3,600 from all sources).

- This year, the VPR budgeted $150,000 for the program and that amount was exhausted by March. The Research Council contributed another $10K and the VPR added another $19.5K in order to fund additional awards.
- Dr. Droegemeier asked for feedback about this program and how it operates.
- Ms. Marsh noted that changes to the VPR policy may affect college policies. College faculty and Associate Deans provided the following information.
  - The College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) allots the better portion of $140K for travel expenses. Smaller colleges may not have the same resources to supplement changes to the VPR policy.
  - Departments cannot always afford their 1/3 portion. Or in the case of the College of Journalism and Mass Communication, they do not have separate departments, so the college is responsible for 2/3s of the awarded funds.
  - Dr. Ashby noted that he has used the Travel Assistance program in the past for international travel and it is useful. However, the 1/3 portion for departments can quickly exhaust a department's budget when many faculty travel abroad for the same conference.
  - The College of Architecture supports travel for faculty, but they require that the funds go toward international travel to a conference to present a paper.
  - Departments within the College of Education have, in the past, funded their portion of the travel program from the revenue of a sponsored program. Now that they no longer have funds coming in from that specific program, the departments are unable to provide their portion of the award. As a result of tightening department budgets, faculty may seek more funds from the VPR.
- In the past, the VPR Office has not checked that departments and colleges are funding their 1/3 portions.
- Dr. Droegemeier explained that he changed the time frame for returning receipts (from unspecified to 60 days) so that awards do not impact the budget for the following year. He wondered if anyone foresaw a problem with this change.
  - Dr. Sankowski noted that the CAS allows a 6 month window for faculty to provide receipts for reimbursement.
- One AC member encouraged Dr. Droegemeier to implement a priority system for funding awards.
  - Suggested criteria were that the faculty member should present a paper at a conference and the conference should be national or international in scope.
Another AC member asked about whether travel to conferences to meet with collaborators or program directors should also be allowed.

On this topic, Dr. Droegemeier noted that Dr. Knoedler and the CRPDE staff may be better suited to determine whether or not criteria or purpose for travel should be funded.

Another member said that more front-end bureaucracy is not the solution. However, tracking or following-up with faculty who travel, to see that the meetings are useful and productive may be worthwhile.

- If departments and faculty are to encourage students to attend national and international conferences, then they need to provide those students with appropriate resources to do so.
  - Departments have a difficult time funding graduate students.
  - Students are able to receive support from the Graduate College and sometimes from their academic colleges to support travel. However, no funds are available from the VPR Office.
  - Dr. Sankowski explained that the student travel funds from CAS come from student fees.
- Any potential policy changes will be presented to the AC for further consideration.

**CRPDE:** Dr. Knoedler provided a few quick updates about the CRPDE.

- The Research Liaisons (RLs) have met a few times. Dr. Knoedler hopes that the communication process among and between the VPR office, CRPDE, the RLs, departments and colleges will continue to improve. AC members were encouraged to help support the RLs in their service to the University.
- CRPDE received 92 notices of intent for the Challenge Grant Program. Full proposals are due on May 16. Dr. Knoedler will not provide feedback for those proposals after May 12, so any faculty who would like feedback should meet with her soon or send her drafts of proposals.
- External reviews for the USO re-competition have been extended to June and award announcements will soon follow. From 18 letters of intent, 8 full proposals are being considered for USO status.

**Faculty Lunch Recurring Themes:** Dr. Droegemeier and Dr. Knoedler have been enjoying regular lunches with different groups of 8-12 faculty members. Faculty from all disciplines have signed-up for these lunches, during which they discuss research and issues important to research. Recurring themes from the discussions are as follows:

- Support for the Arts and Humanities disciplines
  - Dr. Droegemeier has reiterated that the Research Council funds Arts and Humanities proposals with equal regard to the hard sciences and engineering.
  - However, perceptions of differential treatment continue to exist.
  - Faculty opinions about an Arts and Humanities Center remain varied.
- Research Open House
  - From the faculty lunches, it is clear that a venue for regular interdisciplinary exchange among faculty would be valuable.
  - The idea of a Research Open House has come up as a useful tool for recruiting graduate students, though intended audiences for the Open House vary depending on the faculty member making the suggestion.
- Dr. Droegemeier is interested in developing a regularly scheduled event (perhaps a wine reception) for faculty to get together and discuss research.

- **Human Subjects Research and the Institutional Review Board (IRB)**
  - For faculty who conduct research using human subjects, their biggest issue with the IRB is consistency. Changes in the board membership and director position have created inconsistencies regarding the annual protocol renewal process.
  - Dr. Knoedler wants to help faculty better address challenges with the IRB and encourages faculty to make use of the resources available from the IRB. For instance, the IRB has open office hours every Friday afternoon, during which time faculty can talk with IRB staff about their protocols.
  - Dr. Knoedler asked that faculty not give up if their protocol is initially rejected. They should continue to work with IRB to make appropriate adjustments.

- **Linkages between the VPR and the Office of Development**
  - Dr. Knoedler has been developing a relationship with Tripp Hall and development officers to help identify projects that may be appropriately matched to donor interests in OU research capabilities.
  - Not all donors are interested in football, scholarships and buildings, and research ideas can often be an attractive alternative to those areas of investment.
  - Anyone who is interested in private funding for research should of course go through the appropriate channels within their college, but should also discuss their interests with Dr. Knoedler. Dr. Knoedler will then approach the Office of Development with the idea and will serve as liaison between the faculty member and the Office of Development when needed.

**Equipment and Facilities Portfolio:** Ms. Dickens, Director of Planning and Research Facilities, explained that she has been conducting an inventory of research and creative activities facilities and equipment.

- The purpose of this inventory is not to take away research space or equipment, but to better evaluate existing needs and capabilities. Ms. Dickens is not inventorying office space or classrooms.
- If faculty need space, renovations, or equipment, they should speak with Ms. Dickens.
- The inventory includes all equipment on campus that can be shared, so that as an institution, OU avoids unnecessary duplications of equipment and associated costs.
- Ms. Dickens also gathers information from all sponsored program proposals that include equipment, so that she and the facilities team can be prepared for the space and additional needs associated with purchasing and installing new equipment.
- Ms. Dickens also prepares long-term business plans to keep equipment maintained and operational once the grant for the equipment expires.
- Faculty need to consult with Dr. Knoedler if they are interested in proposing large equipment purchases from federal programs. Many federal programs now require that equipment purchased from their awards be shared by multiple faculty and researchers. Dr. Knoedler can help identify faculty with shared interests and develop a proposal that provides a plan for sharing equipment.
- The equipment list will not be posted publicly, in order to protect faculty confidentiality and interests. However, Ms. Dickens can provide that information when approached by faculty with equipment needs.
**Research Council Portfolio Evaluation:** Dr. Brady explained that an *ad hoc* task force of Research Council members have met and will continue to meet to discuss changes to the Research Council portfolio.

- They will consider the number of programs and the kinds of opportunities provided by those programs.
- If AC members have any comments about this task, please share those with Dr. Brady.
- Proposed changes to the Research Council portfolio will be brought to the AC for comment and consideration.

**Final Thoughts:** Dr. Droegemeier asked each member present if they had any comments before concluding the meeting.

- Dr. Lipe has joined the IRB and agrees that faculty have opportunities to adjust and negotiate protocol issues of their proposals. She encouraged everyone to not give up if their initial proposals are rejected, noting that there is often room for negotiation.
- Dr. Foster said that the OU Cancer Center will have new seed grant opportunities for research on the Norman campus.
- Ms. Marsh asked everyone to keep checking out the VPR website. She and Gabe Wingfield continue to update and make adjustments to it.
- Dr. Carr asked if the VPR could send out a monthly or weekly news letter to provide updates and share information about OU Research policies and other related factoids (like those they learn about during the AC meetings).
- Dr. Patterson happily announced that the College of Architecture is moving back to campus and into their new building after the end of this semester.
- Prof. Holt suggested that an IRB workshop may be helpful for faculty looking to refresh their memories on issues of human subject research.
- Dr. Hardré supported Dr. Carr’s idea of communicating some of this information to all faculty. From her experience as a co-lead of the Aspire 2020 Education Research and Creative Activities Action Team, she realizes that faculty from all disciplines really do face similar problems and that they are in this together.

**Presentation of Awards to Members:** Dr. Droegemeier expressed his gratitude for the five members rotating off of the AC at the end of the semester and their service over the past 2-3 years. Inscribed glass awards were presented to the following members.

- Dr. Khosrow Bozorgi from Architecture. Dr. James Patterson will officially fill the Architecture seat on the AC beginning in the fall.
- Dr. Marlys Lipe from the College of Business, who will be succeeded by Dr. Chitru Fernando.
- Prof. Mary Margaret Holt, who will vacate the College of Fine Arts seat.
- Dr. Emily Meazell, who will continue to work with the VPR as a Research Liaison and as Associate Dean of the Law College. She will be followed by Dr. Joe Thai.
- Dr. Joe Rodgers who will relinquish the position of Immediate Past Chair of the Research Council to Dr. Noel Brady. The Research Council will elect a new chair in early May.

**Next Meeting:** Ms. Snidow will contact all AC members to identify dates for the fall semester meetings.