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

Summary of the

General AC/VPR

Meeting

September 6, 2011 from 3-5 pm

University of Oklahoma, Norman Campus

Members Present: James Patterson, George Richter-Addo, Fred Carr, Chitru Fernando, Barry Weaver, Musharraf Zaman, Karen Hayes-Thumann, Joe Thai, David Stensrud, Michael Ashby, Heather Basara, Hazem Refai, Rena Cook, David Boeck

VPR Office Present: Kelvin Droegemeier, Andrea Deaton, Alicia Knoedler, Melany Dickens, James Grimsley, Todd Fuller, Nancy Devino, Cathi Parker

Distributed Documents:
1. FY11 Financial Support from VPR Office (hardcopy)
2. Proposed Changes to the Norman Campus Research Council Programs (hardcopy)
3. Recommendations for a Research Incentives and Rewards Program on the Norman Campus (hardcopy)

VPR Update and Overview: Dr. Droegemeier welcomed everyone to the meeting and began with a brief explanation of the role of the AC/VPR Committee and an overview of a few topics impacting the VPR Office.

- Introduction of James Grimsley, Assistant VPR and Director of CARD
  - Mr. Grimsley brings tremendous experience as the founding director of CARD, plans to work across disciplines, visit with different colleges, and bring a positive impact to the University.

- State & Federal budgets
  - Dr. Droegemeier explained that state budgets look healthy at the State Capitol and it’s fair to say that Presidents Boren and Hargis are working budget issues well. No draconian measures, such as TX “7 Transformative Solutions”, are expected in Oklahoma.
  - Federal budgets are not good with 5-10% cuts possible at research agencies. CARD and DSI are expected to broaden our portfolio, expand our horizons, and work well for us.
  - A $10 million proposal was won in the Communications department and we’re fortunate to have CRPDE to assist with more opportunities in the future.

- NRC Study
  - Compliance requirements and export control issues are hurting us and NRC/others are looking at various reforms. During FY7/8/9, OU left $30 million on the table from unrecovered indirect costs (partly shared intentionally, partly unrecovered because of capricious agency practices). These costs are suffocating higher education.

- DSI Initiative

- VPR awards program
VPR awards for Engagement and Impact were implemented and we were able to get the Regents to increase the prize for its flagship research award to $10,000. There were only three nominees for the VPR Engagement Award. Plans are underway to more aggressively advertise the program and seek nominations this year.

- Non-financial conflict of interest policy
- CSC grant
  - More to follow.
- Policy development for strategic research initiatives and non-USO centers
  - Trying to get new centers (federal/non-federal). Recently went head-to-head with Texas A&M and won.
- Annual State of the Research Enterprise Presentation and Discussion
  - Reminder of 9/22 event.

VPR Budget for FY12: The VPR office is paying down previous financial commitments, such as the Phased Array radar on the Research Campus, and the FY12 budget is lean. We have the challenge of paying down the debt while continuing to grow the research enterprise.

- 11 major start-ups and renovations were partially funded by the VPR office.
- Unable to pay out full FY11 SRI and held back $500,000.

Faculty Challenge Grant Program: Dr. Knoedler began by introducing the new Associate Directors for CRPDE: Nancy Devino (Tulsa) and Todd Fuller (Norman).

- CRPDE received 92 letters of intent with 62 proposals submitted. These were reviewed and 14 awards were made: 1 Archaeology, 2 AG&S, 1 Education, 1 Journalism, 4 A&S, 1 Fine Arts, and 4 Engineering.
  - Ms. Dickens requested a distribution breakdown. 23 of the 62 proposals were from the College of Arts & Sciences with an even breakdown between Engineering and the Humanities.
- Dr. Knoedler gave a breakdown of the reviewer ratings along with what worked and what didn’t: it was difficult to obtain an adequate number of reviewers and avoid conflicts of interest; some proposals were read by outside reviewers but Dr. Knoedler did not have external reviewers for all proposals – only for those proposals where she could ensure that research ideas would not be “stolen”
  - Dr. Zaman asked if there is a history of successful internal proposals from the same faculty over and over. How can we take good ideas and expand on them even if they’re not successful proposals? CRPDE is now available for that follow up after internal funding.
  - Dr. Basara suggested being responsive to the folks who submitted to the CGP so as to encourage faculty to continue to challenge themselves.
- Dr. Knoedler indicated that 24 proposals requested $100,000 and the available program funding wouldn’t allow for the funding of several programs at $100,000. She will be seeking feedback on the program.
  - Dr. Droegemeier said there is a limited amount of funding available and questioned how best to divide it up? The challenge is whether to fund more proposals at a lower rate or fewer proposals at a higher rate.
Dr. Ashby questioned whether faculty were asked to submit revised budgets and Dr. Knoedler explained that some did and some did not. Dr. Basara suggested trying to connect folks who might not know they can “be” connected. It would be beneficial to let “young, green” faculty know where the proposal wasn’t “perfect” even if it was ultimately funded.

Dr. Boeck questioned whether CRPDE added comments to the reviews and Dr. Knoedler answered not unless they were requested.

Dr. Knoedler polled the group as to whether there is an interest in the return of “Alpha Time”. Is it time well-spent? Currently, CRPDE is holding sustainability meetings with 63 members in the group. Notices were sent out to the Research Liaisons and she will send out information to the AC/VPR committee.

Dr. Basara: decide on a theme; keep it small, continuity is needed.

Dr. Carr: NSF has an RFP out on sustainability and the School of Meteorology is planning its own group.

Dr. Refai: Have focus groups for specific programs. Not highly competitive, not doing what needs to be done.

Dr. Knoedler: We need leaders, CRPDE doesn’t have the manpower to lead all things and Dr. Droegemeier encouraged faculty to look ahead and take ownership.

Changes to the Research Council Portfolio: Dr. Droegemeier provided a handout for explanation. The changes will consolidate six programs into one. The new portfolio will consist of three components: Faculty Investment Program (FIP), Junior Faculty Fellowship Program, Book Publication and Open Access Subvention Program.

Dr. Droegemeier: What do other universities do? Weaknesses? CRPDE will help prepare proposals and the Research Council administrative support will transfer to them which aligns with their purpose. Make sure Research Council members are not conflicted, proposers will have to disclose conflicts and the reviewers will be excused. Make better use of the Research Council’s time and be genuine in helping faculty get funding.

Dr. Carr commented that the old programs are still on the website. When will new programs be in place? He was concerned about wasting faculty’s time in applying if policies are changing. Dr. Droegemeier indicated that the plan is to launch the new portfolio in January 2012 with an announcement no later than October 2011.

Dr. Basara: What about investments in non-faculty researchers? Dr. Droegemeier is conferring with Provost Mergler on this topic. There are good arguments for both sides. CARD may be able to assist with funding in the future.

Dr. Ashby: What about buyouts and teacher loads? How far will $15,000 go?

Faculty Incentives and Rewards Program: Dr. Droegemeier provided a handout of Recommendations for a Research Incentives and Rewards Program and a menu of proposed incentives.

Dr. Droegemeier: Why are we talking about it? How do faculty get a plus-up? Examples were given of the XYZ program at OUHSC. Comments regarding a one-time bonus of $10,000. Is $10,000 enough? Are these the right numbers? He will send out the University of Texas “9 Planks” to the committee. Incentivize, raise salaries, create an
anomaly, support is there in Evans Hall administration, Radar Cluster hire compression issues were dealt with upfront.
  o Dr. Fernando: Great idea, when it comes to spending what do you want to do? Give back additional SRI.
  o Dr. Carr: Interesting thing to do, supports the plan. Issues get discussed at faculty meetings with lots of feedback received. Rewards incentive for helping write a center proposal. Be careful of opening Pandora’s box. One particular problem would be faculty on sabbatical as they might request more.
  o Dr. Basara: What about younger generation of researchers? What about Co-PIs? Think about all collaborators. How do you assign credit?
  o Dr. Stensrud: Are rewards retroactive? What about career rewardees? Feds receive bonuses with a bonus pool assigned and each individual is ranked on a scale of 100, in addition to standard raises.

Possible change to fixed price contract residuals policy: Dr. Droegemeier questioned whether there should be three years to spend or one year to spend residuals. Discussion ensued and the consensus was three years.

Roundtable discussion: Dr. Droegemeier asked if there were any comments before concluding the meeting.
  • Dr. Fernando asked about non-faculty researchers, non-tenured? Is this feasible at OU? Dr. Droegemeier created CARD to get more folks here.
  • Dr. Basara: Need more opportunities for post-docs. Does the post-doc program that Dr. Droegemeier started still exist?
  • Dr. Refai requested more comments from Mr. Grimsley regarding CARD and Mr. Grimsley responded that he’s still defining CARD regarding staff needed and image. The plan is for it to eventually be entirely self-sustaining.
  • Dr. Carr: Does CIVO still exist? Dr. Droegemeier explained that CIVO had been replaced by the Corporate Engagement Office and OWPP will be absorbed into CARD.

Next Meeting: The October 31 meeting has been postponed and a new date is pending.