UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COUNCIL
MINUTES
February 18, 2014
(Approved April 15, 2014)

Present: William Baker, Becki Battista, Joseph Cazier, Susan Doll (for Jeff Ramsdell), Pollyanne Frantz, Charna Howson, Christine Leist, Cynthia Liutkus-Pierce, Todd McElroy (for Gwen Robbins-Schug), Ged Moody, John Pine, Jeff Ramsdell, Amy Roberts, Karla Rusch, Susan Staub, Julie Taubman, Alan Utter

Excused: Les Bolt, Tracy Goodson-Espy, Kim Hall, Gwen Robbins-Schug, Betsy Williams, Chris Yang

Absent: Randy Gonzalez, Susan McCracken, Lisa Suggs

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Alan Utter, Interim Vice Provost for Research and URC Chair. All members introduced themselves and a welcome was extended to new members: Todd McElroy (for Gwen Robbins-Schug) and Susan Doll (for Jeff Ramsdell).

It was moved (Liutkus-Pierce), seconded (Rusch) and unanimously approved that the minutes of the November 19, 2013 be accepted as submitted. Following a brief discussion, the consensus is to continue keeping minutes of the URC meetings.

Updates
The new name for the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (Grants Resources & Services, Research Protections, Sponsored Programs) is the Office of Research. The Office of Research is going through the transition of separating from the Cratis D. Williams Graduate School.

Grants Resources & Services:
- Appalachian Women Scientists (AWS): Dr. Pollyanne Frantz and Ms. Amy Love now are serving as principal investigator and co-principal investigator, respectively, for the second year of the Elsevier Foundation grant. Year two activities will include more grant-funded support for women scientists, several events, and continued research on work-life balance areas that impact women scientists.
- In support of the Office of the Quality Enhancement Plan and its associated initiatives, Grants Resources & Services has developed a funding opportunities page containing information about internal and external support for international activities. See http://orsp.appstate.edu/find-funding/browse-funding-guides/international-activity
- Upcoming events include a grant proposal writing workshop for graduate students, including those participating in the Graduate Research Assistant Mentoring (GRAM) program, and the second part of the National Science Foundation workshop featuring Dr. Rahman Tashakkori, Lowe’s Company Inc. Distinguished Professor of Computer Science (see http://orsp.appstate.edu/events/developing-competitive-nsf-proposals).
- URC Spring 2014 competition timelines:
  - Complete applications are due by Noon, March 4, 2014
Applications will be ready for review by the week of March 17, 2014
Review panels will have their recommendations ready for discussion and voting at the April 15, 2014 URC meeting.

Sponsored Programs:
- Submissions and awards are lagging behind compared to last year at this time but the figures are starting to creep upward. FY 2014 activity to date includes 125 submissions requesting $13.9 million and 100 awards totaling $5.2 million. First time applicants have submitted 12 proposals
- Upcoming workshops include AGrants (Feb. 21), Grants.gov (Mar. 20), and Building a Budget for Grant Applications (April 10). See http://orsp.appstate.edu/events/orsp. A meeting with department chairs had to be rescheduled due to weather conditions
- Sponsored Programs will have reduced staffing during the week of March 3 due to attendance at the annual meeting of the Society of Research Administrators International, North Carolina Chapter. Charlotte Smith will provide limited assistance March 3-4. The office will be closed on March 5. Special Funds Accounting Director Amy Roberts will have SFA staff available to assist during this period.
- Charna Howson and Amy Roberts are collaborating with HRS on the pilot version of the APpropos training program for departmental administrative assistants. The 10-session series may be continued next year with another cohort of 12. Prospective applicants must complete an application and secure approval to participate from their department chairs.
- Allocation of credit functionality was added to the AGrants system last semester; this information will be reflected in the March 2014 monthly reports. The allocation of credit functionality applies only to collaborating PIs (single PIs are not affected), who have been notified. This functionality will support interdisciplinary projects.

Research Protections:
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has welcomed new members Dr. Larry Kortering (Reading Education and Special Education), Dr. Andy Shanely (Health, Leisure and Exercise Science), and Dr. Tiffany Selong, D.O. (Watauga Anesthesia Associates, PA).
- The Institutional Animal Care and Utilization Committee (IACUC) recently appointed a faculty member as a new non-scientist member.
- The number of applications for IRB review continues to increase, which is causing a lag in turnaround time for review of expedited studies. URC members questioned whether the higher numbers are due to increased awareness on the part of researchers. Julie Taubman said the IRB is seeing a lot of modifications, which may be due in part to educational initiatives conducted by Research Protections staff.
- Both Julie and Robin Tyndall are offering workshops on navigating the IRB and giving class talks on IRB and Responsible Conduct of Research.

New Business
Dr. Utter provided updates on his position and the office separation transition:
- Provost Lori Gonzalez approached him last semester about serving as the interim Vice Provost for Research for the next 18 months with the option of applying for the position on a permanent basis. There may be another national search. In part because the VPR position is an interim appointment, Dr. Utter is sustaining his other responsibilities as
Director of the Office of Student Research (OSR); Program Director for the Health Promotion Program in the Department of Health, Leisure, and Exercise Science; and, as an investigator on a National Institutes of Health-supported grant, for which clinical trials will be conducted in the summer and fall to test a device designed to assess dehydration in elderly subjects. The position of interim assistant director of OSR (beginning in Fall 2014) has been announced. Dr. Utter will assemble a screening committee (not a search committee) to review applications, conduct short interviews, and make a recommendation. Dr. Utter will confer with Dr. Michael Mayfield, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, on the appointment (the OSR is located within University College).

- Dr. Utter will work intensively with two committees during the next 18 months: the URC and the IRB. The URC is critical!!
- The Provost has charged Dr. Utter to specifically work on the following three areas:
  1. External funding is down. Appalachian State University is below the median value of its peer institutions. The Provost recognizes that we need to do better. This in and of itself is a daunting task because it’s complicated. How do we use the resources we have to make the process easier for faculty? Funds recouped through Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A – also known as indirect costs) may be reallocated to provide more support for faculty. Of the current F&A cost recovery budget, approximately $500,000 is allocated for pre- and post-award staff salaries and fringe benefits; an additional allocation is used for database subscriptions and licensing fees.
  2. Evaluate the F&A returns policy. Although the federally negotiated rate is 32% of Modified Total Direct Costs, only about 12% actually is being captured. Everyone on campus benefits through enhanced F&A cost recovery and increased external funding. Charna and Amy Roberts are preparing draft revisions for Dr. Utter to take to the Council of Chairs and the Deans Council for review and approval. He doesn’t expect a great deviation from the existing policy but he does want it to be transparent and clear to everyone.
  3. Conduct a GAP analysis. The Provost wants to know where we are and where we’re going in this area as an institution. The University Planning and Priorities Council’s Research Subcommittee may have done this GAP analysis as part of its work in support of the new strategic plan. The final version of the new strategic plan, depending on the length of the approval process, should be released later this year. URC members will be asked to look at recommendations and provide input about which ones to tackle.
- Dr. Utter has spent much of his time thus far talking with faculty and department chairs. Department chairs have a lot of influence over the process of securing external funding. He plans to launch new faculty support programs once the office separation transition is complete (one example is to develop a 18 month fellowship program for 15-20 new faculty members that would include summer salary support and focused access to resources and services). One goal is to make the process easier for faculty to seek and obtain external funding. To make the proposal submission process relatively painless for faculty, processes need to be assessed to determine where excess hurdles exist and then remove them.
- Dr. Utter is reviewing the URC Grants program’s pre- and post-award processes. This program is important because it supports faculty at all levels of their careers. The
program guidelines and application forms are being revised to make the proposal preparation and submission process easier and 100% online. Along those lines, Dr. Utter also wants to make the process easier for administrating grant awards. He is testing now with the 2013 award recipients the process of moving post-award activities from a central office to the award recipients’ academic departments.

- Dr. Utter asked URC members to share topics and issues that they think need to be addressed. Responses included:
  - Reassigned time for scholarly and creative activities and the expectation that faculty are expected to generate student credit hours even if they have reassigned time (course release). One related issue is the “discreteness” of the one course buyout. Is it possible to allow accumulated buyout time for future use (banking it)? Although state funds don’t roll over to subsequent fiscal years, F&A cost recovery funds could be used to support this concept. A second related issue is how best to accommodate faculty who are putting in 80 hour weeks without reassigned time supported by a grant. A third related issue is the procedure (which needs an official policy) related to faculty salaries for reassigned time as it relates to adjunct replacement salaries. Both policy and process need to be transparent and understandable.
  - Faculty members frequently identify a lack of time as a barrier toward seeking external funding. Dr. Utter is willing to work with department chairs to provide financial support from the Office of Research for reassigned time so that faculty members have more time to write grant proposals. These proposals in turn could request that the sponsor provide funds for future course releases as part of the funded project.
  - Karla Rusch shared the model used to develop the SAMSHA Campus Suicide Prevention Grant program application. The application development process was very involved and intense and a large group worked on it. Group members were assigned to work on different sections of the application. Would a similar model work for academic departments? The group consensus is that using this model successfully depends in large part on the individual leading the effort.
  - Dr. Todd McElroy suggested identifying faculty members whose research interests have potential for external funding and providing targeted support for them (big risks to achieve big outcomes = department chairs would have to be willing to gamble).
  - Dr. Jeff Ramsdell suggested reviewing the utilization of Off Campus Scholarly Assignments (OCSAs) and whether preparing grant proposals should be a required outcome of the OCSA.
  - Dr. Becki Battista asked about redefining the role of the URC Grants program in terms of being more specific about applicants’ plans to seek external funding and increasing the award amount for certain fields – STEM specifically. The URC historically has supported the seed grant concept as a way to support junior faculty but it also wants to support senior faculty too. And, the URC wants to support all disciplines. Suggested options include increasing the available allocation for the competitions (currently $50,000 each for spring and fall competitions) as well increasing the award amount for certain types of proposals (interdisciplinary).
Dr. Utter said that close to $200,000 is allocated to support student-based research through the OSR. Last year over 500 students were supported through OSR, which reflects faculty interest in supporting and mentoring students.

Dr. Joe Cazier mentioned that many Walker College of Business faculty conduct a fair amount of consulting on industry-sponsored projects. Most of this work is being done “outside the system” -- the work is not routed through the normal institutional review, approval and submission processes. However, WCOB faculty members doing this applied research are open to working within the system if the process can be more streamlined. They want a more reasonable F&A rate and access to liability protection and accounting support. Question: What is the biggest hurdle – the F&A rate or the system/process? Answer: Both. This could be a quick win for WCOB. It needs to be reasonable and relatively painless. Other schools in North Carolina have been able to facilitate these requests. There are ways to remain in compliance with the North Carolina General Statute 66-58 (informally known as the Umstead Act) while still allowing researchers some flexibility.

Dr. Frantz asked that the URC membership revisit the development of a rubric for conducting grant proposal reviews. The OSR uses a rubric to assess Undergraduate Research Assistant proposals (a 25-point scale for about four categories). Rubric possibilities will be vetted by the URC membership at a future meeting for incorporation into future competitions.

Special Funds Accounting. This office is administratively located under Business Affairs while the Office of Research is administratively located under Academic Affairs. SFA Director Amy Roberts and her staff have been providing extensive support through the office separation transition. This office is fully staffed right now and staff workload is down due to decreased awards, so SFA is able to provide better service now. Dr. Utter wants to hear URC members’ perspective about whether SFA should be brought under the Office of Research umbrella.

**Old Business**

None

**Brief Announcements (monthly reports)**

- Grants Resources and Services (download report)
- Sponsored Programs (download report)
- Research Protections (download report)

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made (Ramsdell), seconded (Baker) and unanimously approved.