

University Research Council
Approved Minutes
February 8, 2013

Present: Rani Alexander, Jeffrey Arterburn, Susan Beck, Miriam Chaiken (Rani Alexander), Vimal Chaitanya, Rebecca Creamer, Muhammad Dawood, Joanne Esparza, Richard Fortin, O.D. Hadfield, Stephen Hanson, Kathleen Huttlinger, Shanna Ivey, Cathy Kinzer, Collin Payne, James Robinson, Steve Stochaj, Laura Thompson

Absent: Salim Bawazir, Sam Fernald, Robert Smits

1. Approval of Minutes for December 14, 2012

Minutes were approved as presented.

2. URC Award for Creative Scholarly Activity

After reviewing the call/criteria for the URC Award for Creative Scholarly Activity, suggestions were made to note that in some years past, the two awards for early career and two awards for distinguished were changed according to the application strengths such as last year when three early career and one distinguished career were selected for award. The call for nominations will be updated with this information prior to its being sent out. The review panel will be made up of volunteers from URC at the March 2013 meeting.

3. VPR Budget and Strategic Use

Vice President Chaitanya told URC that the university's overhead recovery has gone down by \$2M from last year and central overhead recovery has gone down by more than \$1M. VPR Chaitanya has presented a budget that cuts his budget by \$0.5M. He suggested that URC could look at the VPR budget and provide input in terms of whether they think he is using the budget appropriately or perhaps other suggestions on where he should focus.

VPR Chaitanya provided a handout and explained that in principal, he gets \$4.8M from central overhead every year. Unlike other peer universities, he doesn't actually receive a percentage of overhead but rather a budget. Whether the overhead goes up or down, the VPR budget remained more or less the same.

Out of the \$4.8M budget, a transfer or flow-through money in the amount of \$640K, that he has no control of, goes through the VPR office. The majority of the budget goes to salary, some of the budget for operating expenses and some for discretionary (which pays for match commitments, internal funding such as URIGs, GREGs, IRGs and possibly lab renovation cost-share support if direly needed). VPR Chaitanya does not want to compromise on the discretionary funding and he asked for suggestions from the council if they feel there is a better way to spend this portion of the budget.

A question was asked if "other" on the handout included the start-up packages for new faculty. VPR Chaitanya said the start-up package is an additional 2.5% of the overhead which translates to about \$400K per year. In a bad year it would translate to about \$350K. The startup packages in

hard sciences such as biology, physics or computer science, takes about \$400K with the VPR providing 50% match of \$200K. For Engineers, it runs about \$200K with the VPR providing \$100K. Literally speaking, only two engineers and one science hire can be supported. The VPR budget has been used to support startups as what has been provided isn't enough. Last year President Couture provided an extra \$500K for startups which helped. This year and next year, without additional funds for start-up packages, it will be impossible to support new hires.

A question was posed as to whether this means that the VPR has already committed funds to the faculty candidates that are on campus being interviewed? VPR Chaitanya said if the requests were made a year ago, the VPR budget has assumed what would be needed and administration has been informed that the budget will be short. This information was also provided at Academic Deans Council so that the Deans would be aware of it too. He believes that a reoccurring source of funding to devote specifically to start-up packages needs to be found.

The handout also noted \$715K for operating expense which is for all the units under the VPR. Of that, \$200K goes to pay for the federal relations firm in Washington DC. VPR Chaitanya said there is some question as to whether NMSU needs their services. He mentioned other universities either having a firm represent them or an actual employee in DC. He suggests it is better to have the consultants working as a group, performing multiple functions instead of a single employee and the cost is about the same. Currently, out of the nine functions NMSU's firm is tasked with, he is hoping to reduce their scope of work so that this cost can be lowered to half, or \$100K. Their contract ends this year and a new RFP will come up in November.

A question was posed regarding central overhead funds, and not knowing where they come from and where they go, and the percentage that is provided to research. VPR Chaitanya responded that IDC gets divided between central administration and the deans by 55% and 45% respectively with the VPR getting 26.5% of that. But that is not a fixed percentage as the VPR budget is a set amount.

Discussion commenced and some comments included: lack of transparency as a problem at NMSU, IDC not coming back to P.I., concern that the VPR budget is shrinking because there isn't enough research and yet there is no model to incentivize faculty to bring the research in, and faculty members are more interested in teaching than doing funded research and that these issues don't bode well for NMSU.

VPR Chaitanya continued with the VPR budget topic saying he has several offices under his jurisdiction where he spends overhead dollars including the Research Support Services, which handles the budget; Research IT, which a suggestion has been made to merge them with NMSU's ICT, however the Physical Science Lab uses Research IT firewalls for their classified work so this might not be an option. The office of Research Integrity has increased in size mainly because of requirements by the federal government regarding IRB, IACUC, etc. The office of Grants and Contracts which supports contract administration and proposal submission has volunteered to try and cut their budget by some, the Research Development office which supports faculty members writing proposals and making them more competitive, and the last unit falling under VPR is the Core University Research Resources Laboratory (CURRL) which houses precision microscopes for university-wide use.

VPR Chaitanya hopes he can reduce the budget without adversely affecting the services faculty researchers are used to. If a bigger cut is requested by central, then he believes that services will probably be affected. He asked for URC's input, whether it be sitting with him one-on-one, or forming a committee. He only hopes that the funds cut will be put towards research.

4. President Pacheco Visit URC Monday, April 8th

Chair Ivey told URC she would provide them with a draft presentation at the next meeting for their review and suggestions in preparation for President Pacheco's visit to URC on Monday, April 8, 2013 at 3:00 p.m.

5. URC Meeting on Friday, May 10th (optional)

Not covered at this meeting.

6. Other

Presidential Search – Chair Ivey told members that she would like them to consider research questions to ask the presidential candidates when they come to campus during the week of April 22nd through 26th.

Minutes by Frances Schumacher