

**University Research Council**  
**Approved Minutes**  
**April 11, 2014**

**Present:** Anup Amatya (for Jill McDonald), Jeffrey Arterburn, Susan Beck, Matthias Burkardt, Sudan Cardenas (for James Robinson), Vimal Chaitanya, Rebecca Creamer, Muhammad Dawood, Joanne Esparza, Richard Fortin, Stephen Hanson, Shanna Ivey, Hari Sankaran, Steve Stochaj

**Absent:** Rani Alexander, Sam Fernald, Cathy Kinzer, Mary O'Connell, Robert Smits, Mingjun Wei

**Guests:** Research Integrity: Luis Vazquez; CADRe: Steve Elias, Jonathan Schwartz,

1. OGC Director

VPR Vimal Chaitanya introduced the new director for the office of grants and contract, Alisha Giron. She told URC she appreciates the opportunity to work with URC and that it will be a new adventure with the shared services module. She plans to work collaboratively with the colleges.

2. Approval of Minutes for March 14, 2014

Minutes were approved as presented.

3. URC Chair Elect Vote

Chair Hanson informed URC that Steve Stochaj was running unopposed for URC Chair for the academic year 2014-2015. He suggested a vote take place to ensure the majority of members were in agreement. The vote was unanimous for Dr. Stochaj.

4. URC Award Update

Chair Hanson indicated that the URC Award Subcommittee needed to reconvene briefly before the announcement of who received an award can be made.

5. IRB Process

Chair Hanson welcomed Associate Vice President for Research Integrity Luis Vazquez and opened the conversation with information gleaned from a past CADRe meeting where it was discussed that NMSU has roughly 1100 IRB applications per year and only one-third to one-half of the IRB staff of other comparable universities. Dr. Vazquez gave a brief overview of the process saying that they have grown from between 400-450 applications to the current 1000+ in the years. He has been over the Compliance office and the IRB process has seen

major changes. Some of these changes include the creation and implementation of the IRB submission software system MAESTRO. The compliance office has one programmer and one IT project coordinator who put the system together. To purchase a similar system it would have cost the university a minimum of \$50K with \$10K for installation and \$5K for yearly maintenance costs. MAESTRO is a huge savings. Prior to MAESTRO, a software application system was not used.

Federal regulations have increased during this time which has created a need for education, workshops and training for students, faculty and IRB committee members. Dr. Vazquez has just returned from a conference on compliance at Texas Tech which covered regulations on everything from animal research to bioscience to human subjects. He noted that if one publishes an article from a federally funded project, once the article is published the author(s) will be required to make their data available through a repository. This would allow other researchers access to the data across the country in order to replicate the results of the study or explore other analysis for the data. NSF also passed a regulation that requires all students working on NSF projects to have documentation of their responsible conduct of research training. In addition, as online graduate programs are developed at NMSU, an infrastructure has to be developed to support research for these programs. Dr. Vasquez plans to meet with colleges regarding this along with the compilation and addition of a “help” website into the portal. However, due to funding cuts, Dr. Vazquez is not sure what the future holds for this area.

Another challenge is increasing the IRB committee membership. This membership tends to have more junior faculty members. The committee is a 12-month commitment which senior faculty members tend to avoid. Early career faculty are concerned about publishing, trying to get their career off the ground, and are in need of mentoring. IRB members go through training to increase reliability among evaluations and their overall purpose is to minimize harm. However the lack of senior faculty (which Dr. Vazquez continues to try and recruit) creates issues related to seniority, experience and power differentials in reviewing research projects.

Violations of non-compliance from a graduate student research project led to a large audit in 2007. This audit resulted in changes being implemented to meet necessary regulatory needs for human subjects’ research. The audit impacted the application process at all levels and changes were made by the Office of Research Compliance to meet these recommendations. Questions were asked regarding the streamlining of the exempt research application process. Many of NMSU’s sister universities IRB decides and does a follow up for exempt research projects, however it was pointed out that the University of Maine operates more on an honors system that allows faculty to make these decisions. Due to the 2007 audit and implementation of the recommendations from the audit, research that is designated as being exempt is under the jurisdiction of the IRB.

According to NIH, researchers should be very knowledgeable about the demographics and characteristics of the populations they wish to gather data from for research projects, in order to minimize harm to the participants. Participants should never have to receive further treatment at their expense from participating in a research project. The exempt status at

NMSU is decided by the IRB. Many people fill out a continuation form. Usually continuation and modification forms are handled in a short timeline. At times with the continuation form you are also urged to fill out a modification form if the researcher is proposing changes to their research project.

A URC member asked to be updated on the taskforce committee that was considering the IRB process and the findings to their review. Dr. Vazquez responded that there was an IRB taskforce formed by Dr. Chaitanya which had concerns about the overall process. However, the taskforce presented several issues related to the members' individual projects and not necessarily issues from all the researchers from their college. They also disagreed among themselves regarding how the process should progress when a Department Head is part of the review process. Some Department Heads want to be able to see what kind of research is being produced in their department; others do not feel a need to have this information. Still, others wish to have the responsibility of being part of the review process. Dr. Vazquez feels the solution would be to add a representative from each college to provide a broader view and not just individual issues related to one project.

Concern was mentioned regarding the amount of time, which is crucial, to receive feedback from the IRB as no one can write their grants six months in advance. Dr. Vazquez explained that the IRB board members have agreed to review a protocol within 10 days once it has been submitted to the IRB. For other universities this has taken up to a year. He said they have made remarkable progress recently in keeping to this timeline.

The scope of the IRB in making decisions on research projects is another concern. Some have said methodology is questioned. Dr. Vazquez responded that such issues are taken into account to assess whether or not the methodology may contribute to harm to the research participant and how it could be minimized for the research project. According to the URC chair, the task force was formed from the top down. A suggestion was made that maybe a committee made of faculty could brainstorm serving as a conduit to make the IRB aware of faculty concerns and inform the faculty of the challenges faced by the IRB. This option was briefly discussed but no decisions were made regarding this action.

Dr. Vazquez reported that the electronic IRB process now has a way to submit advice through the same website. Suggestions have been made all year long and many of them are being incorporated to better meet the researchers' needs. Applications for grant funding projects as well as researchers who apply for grants are afforded the privilege of having their applications immediately processed before non-funded applications. Grant funded applications may be completed between two days and a week.

The chair of the URC agreed that he thought the suggestion box is a good idea, he was not sure if the concerns were shared with faculty. This might fall under the broader research processes umbrella. He said they appreciate the volume of applications regardless of the limited number of staff, but many faculty members are willing to work with the process and have found it to be successful. The Chair further suggested that the URC can take the

concerns that the IRB is understaffed in terms of numbers and Seniority to the administration.

Dr. Vazquez reported that he reached out to Research Associate Deans as well as Department Heads and at this time it has resulted in two full professors, two associate professors, and several Assistant Professors volunteering to serve on the IRB.

Dr. Chaitanya said he has an open door policy. The task force was created is as an opportunity for faculty who came forward with concerns were offered the opportunity to provide suggestions. He said that Dr. Vazquez has said the major problem is that the applications are not filled out correctly. Dr. Vazquez has recommended that the form be made more self explanatory and the number of days after the correctly filled out application is received should be counted for an accurate estimation of the length of time it takes to process the request. Dr. Vazquez reported a major focus will be made to provide informational directions within the electronic application process for researchers.

Currently, little stars next to questions in the electronic application process have been developed that when clicked on provide information to guide the researcher in responding to the question. Dr. Vazquez reported that if they can continue to improve the website and make it a better integrative teaching tool for the applicant it would begin to resolve some of the issues for researchers. He also pointed out that unfortunately many approach interfacing with a new system by trial and error versus going through the training modules to understand and learn a new system.

Dr. Vazquez commented that in prior years there were fewer than four hundred applications, which amounted to about 6 to 8 applications being reviewed a week. With these few applications, the compliance office could call the researcher and they would email a pdf correction which would complete the application process. However with the increase of applications, researchers do not realize that the IRB application is reviewed by an IRB member to assess harm to participants and the consistency between the responses to the application versus the attachments used with participants in the study. Oftentimes information in the responses in the application are not consistent with the attachments used for participants. Such errors can extend the time for review and approval until corrections have been made to rectify the issues in the application. Overall, Dr. Vazquez said they are trying to make the system a teachable training system and make it conducive to meet the needs of researchers in a self-contained electronic system that both educates and facilitates the completion of successful research applications.

The Chair of the URC thanked Dr. Vazquez for attending the meeting. Dr. Vazquez summarized by stating that he wasn't sure what might happen with his position in the near future due to budgetary constraints. But, regardless of that the compliance office will always strive to maintain the highest standards and integrity in making sure all research meets the federal, state, and university regulations for compliance. He made a plea that URC and CADRe get together to maintain and increase compliance's abilities to meet NMSU researchers' needs through resources, maintaining current positions, and working collaboratively. Dr. Vazquez thanked the URC for the opportunity to share issues and concerns regarding the compliance research process.

## 6. CADRe Visit to URC

Chair Hanson asked CADRe if they would like to make introductory remarks and said that URC has always hoped that a closer interaction between the two councils would help to facilitate research.

The first topic discussed was IDC. There are hard feelings when hard working faculty members aren't getting funding back and don't know where the money is going.

A suggestion was made that CADRe work across the colleges with proposals to pursue more interdisciplinary funding. CADRe response was that this is a huge focus and discussion does take place on how to create more interdisciplinary forms of research. Dr. Chaitanya said his office tracks all opportunities daily and try to create teams across campus for each discipline to address these larger opportunities. Dr. Chaitanya hoped that CADRE can do something similar from their respective colleges and wanted to talk about that kind of process saying that even though VPR brings attention to potential opportunities that perhaps CADRE can do that as well. The College of Education and the College of Health and Social Services have started clubs to support proposal writing and submission.

A URC member mentioned being involved in proposal development with other universities and one of the things that doesn't appear to be happening at NMSU is collaboration with agencies such as USDA. CADRE was asked if they are involved with agencies, and if they participate in listening sessions. This URC member had just returned from Washington DC and had met with NIH and NSF.

A specific response to this URC question was that there are a number of reasons why this CADRe member is not involved, which includes faculty involvement. However he felt this is an important issue. We need to introduce NMSU as a viable option for research when we have such an excellent support infrastructure. Specifically we do not get ICAR funding for this reason. The more we interact with agencies the better off NMSU will be. Our federal relations firm Lewis Burke makes appointments and are very instrumental in assisting visits to agencies.

Another suggestion was while volunteering is a lot of work, being on panels and seeing the inner workings is an excellent way to help faculty. A relationship is built with the main panel and within ACES, these relationships are very beneficial.

In regards to incentivizing faculty, CADRe has a report which discusses supplemental compensation. CADRe response was they are very interested in ways to motivate and reward faculty who are bringing grants in. There are things which can provide incentive including a reward in a personal career and a summer salary. Also in terms of managing grants and staff

are associated with rewards. A researcher should be in charge of the funds associated with their staff so they can select who they want to work with on proposals. Those things would

help the research endeavor significantly, especially with grant funding becoming harder to get.

A council member suggested that every dollar of overhead should support research and that a system of accountability needs to be put in place so that faculty researchers are not “working their brains out” for IDC to see the money go elsewhere. They would like accountability and transparency. URC has gone over IDC issues quite frequently and this is a topic where the council is all in agreement which is for central administration to explain.

Dr. Chaitanya said that Provost Howard has requested meetings with each college separately that will include the Dean, Associate Dean of Research plus six faculty members to discuss research areas on campus. He feels this is a good beginning as they will identify areas of strength and potential for new faculty hires.

Chair Hanson thanked guests for coming and encouraged them to return to future meetings. URC is eager to get feedback and welcomes collaborative efforts.

Minutes by Frances Schumacher