

**University Research Council**  
**Approved Minutes**  
**February 18, 2015**

**Present:** Jeffrey Arterburn, Susan Beck, Jamie Bronstein, Vimal Chaitanya, Joanne Esparza, Maria Gurrola, Kathryn Hanley, Stephen Hanson, Cathy Kinzer, Hongmei Luo, Mary O'Connell, Steve Stochaj,

**Absent:** Matthias Burkardt, Sam Fernald, Clint Loest, Jill McDonald, Mihai Niculescu, Hari Sankaran, Mingjun Wei, Karin Wiburg

**Guest:** Brad Shuster

1. Approval of Minutes

December 8, 2014 minutes were reviewed and require some changes prior to being approved.

2. Research Support on Campus

At a recent Molecular Biology faculty meeting a broad discussion brought up concerns about declining support for the VPR office and the dwindling research support that has come about because of that. MOLB Director Brad Shuster was invited to visit with URC about this. He said it was realized in the Biology department that the Interdisciplinary Research Grants (IRGs) and the Graduate Research Enhancement Grant (GREGs) were not being offered annually as they were in the past. They were also surprised when the sequencing facility was shut down. Some of the questions they had was is the money being reabsorbed through the VPR office or was there some other reason for this loss. Dr. Shuster said while the IRGs are small, they have a big impact on building new partnerships and providing seed money for research. He asked what can be done to help if it is a budget cut situation.

Chair Stochaj said another area of concern is for NMSU to be competitive, tuition waivers or RA salaries should be a top priority. It was brought to URC's attention that Finance and Administration are counting in-state tuition for anyone who employes an RA or TA. They are looking at it as though it is real money and because of that, NMSU is losing the best students. There are a certain number of tuition waivers you can apply for and give to students. If you have a list of 10 applicants, you pick one or two you want to give it to and if they don't come here, the funds get lost somewhere.

VPR Chaitanya responded to the subject saying he wanted to correct some of the perceptions. First he said he has \$500K in discretionary funds to use for match commitments, or run IRG type programs. While this has not been cut, his budget has been - but only in employee lines. Having said that, he said Provost Howard has asked him not to make any commitments to the \$500K for this year because the Provost's office doesn't have enough money for faculty start-up packages. So the assumption is that the VPR will be using that for start-up.

A member said that URC has talked to the provost on at least three different occasions in the past two years and tuition remission and competitive recruitment of students have been

stressed as highly important. He suggested that the provost's long term plan would be interesting to know and perhaps Provost Howard should be invited to return to URC.

A question came up that if the money is not spent by June 30<sup>th</sup>, will there be a perception that the VPR doesn't need the money because most of campus has to drive the budget to zero by the end of the fiscal year. VPR Chaitanya said he believes that most of the funds are already committed. He also said concern for the start-up packages isn't just one year. It may continue to next year as well.

More comments included Provost Howard should be convinced of the value of the IRGs and GREGs; and the success of these awards needs to be documented to demonstrate their potential for future funding. VPR Chaitanya said he would get that information to Provost Howard as soon as possible. MOLB Director Shuster suggested that he also get information about the grants that come out of the microscopy facility to document the importance of this core facility.

Chair Stochaj said that when giving an argument, it is clear that it has to be data driven and he is willing to help anyone who wants to make that argument. A suggestion was made that perhaps if the data comes from URC it might have more impact.

Tuition remission was brought back with a member's impression from potential graduate students that NMSU is one of only a few universities that does not offer tuition remission. Also that the grad students look at how much money is in the stipend, how long it is guaranteed for, the tuition, and medical benefits which when added up, leave NMSU sadly lacking. It was suggested that this data be provided to the Provost at same time.

Discussion commenced and different ways of funding grad students were mentioned including that one of the graduate dean candidates recently on campus said Texas Tech calls them scholarships instead of waivers or stipends and that they were able to get it passed that way. Apparently UNM funds grad students by using money they receive from leasing land. In the UNM health sciences center the faculty have come up with money from their grants. A question was posed as to whether tuition waivers are a state statute. It was lastly decided that it has to be approved by the Board of Regents.

### 3. URC Award – Requesting Review Panel Volunteers

A description of the process for the URC Award for Creative Scholarly Activity was given and Chair Stochaj, Hongmei Luo and Jeff Arterburn volunteered to review the packets. The deadline is March 30<sup>th</sup>. The packets will be provided to the review panel and they will meet mid-April to determine who will be awarded.

### 4. University Priorities Regarding Grants & Research in the Humanities

Jamie Bronstein asked where humanities and social sciences fit in with larger grants that generate more funding and how the smaller grants or works might be recognized. Chair Stochaj said grant opportunities for the humanities are increasing and the Vision 2020 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include publications and creative works.

VPR Chaitanya said the URC started the Rising Star award which is similar to the IRG award, but is funded at \$5K. This award targets the humanities and social sciences. The Research Rallies have also been opened up to include scholarly activity and the criteria to nominate is on the VPR website which is accessible using the research tab on the NMSU home page. VPR Chaitanya also said there is a need for science researchers to include humanities in with their proposals because it makes it stronger. He feels there is a real need for these faculty to collaborate and work together. Chair Stochaj suggested that the colleges are under the same financial burden that the rest of campus is undergoing so he would encourage faculty in the social sciences and humanities to talk to their dean and have them nominated for their creative activities.