

Research Council 2001-2002 Annual Report

DATE: 26 June 2002
TO: Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate
FROM: Jim Coakley, Research Council Chair
SUBJECT: Research Council Annual Report - Academic Year 2001-2002

The purpose of the Research Council is to promote, stimulate, and facilitate research activity at Oregon State University. The Council does this by advising the Vice Provost for Research concerning the dissemination of information, by providing advice on research policies, by reviewing and ranking requests for funds from various OSU funds, and by reviewing pre-proposals as required for external research funding opportunities to which the university can submit only a limited number of proposals.

During the period covered by this report, the Research Council met seven times and reviewed 120 requests for support from the General Research Fund (GRF) and the Research Equipment Reserves Fund (RERF) and 1 request for support of a Major Research Initiative (MRI). Of GRF and RERF requests, 50 were approved for funding: 10 GRF awards totaling \$84,492 and 50 RERF awards totaling \$774,376, for a total of \$858,868. The request for the MRI was not approved.

The Council also reviewed 8 requests for support from the Kelley Family Fund Equipment Grants for Materials Science, administered by the OSU Foundation. Of these requests, 1 was approved for funding at a total of \$100,000.

The Council did not review or make recommendations to the Research Office on any external solicitations to which OSU could submit only a limited number of proposals.

During the year the council met on three occasions to review proposals for the Institute of Natural Resources (NRI) and the Center for Microtechnology-Based Energy and Chemical Systems (MECS). The proposal for MECS was ultimately revised to include the proposal for the Oregon State University (OSU) and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) Joint Microproducts Breakthrough Institute. The Council prepared reviews of these proposals for the Research Office and the Senate Executive Committee. The Council suggested that the NRI proposal undergo major revisions. The Council's suggestions were forwarded to the NRI. The Council also suggested revisions to the proposals for MECS and the OSU-PNNL Joint Institute and these revisions were made. The Council recommended that the Center for MECS and the Joint Institute be established.

The Council also met informally with President Risser to discuss the status of research at OSU.

In its quest to facilitate research, the Council created a list of formal suggestions on how to advance the research enterprise at OSU. The list was first submitted to the Research Office in June (2001). The Senate Executive Committee charged the Council to follow up and determine what progress is being made towards implementing the suggested changes. While word-of-mouth reports indicate that some of the requested actions are being considered, owing to the upheaval created by OSU's budget crisis and the reorganization activities, a formal update was not obtained.

In January (2002), the Council reviewed and revised its list of formal suggestions to the Research Office. The suggestions are as follows:

1. Continue its service of expediting budgets and proposals being prepared for submission. Maintain the 1-day signature/approval turnaround.
2. Establish a system that will address the problem of balloon payment of vacation pay and sick leave for soft money employees at the end of their term. Vacation should accumulate, as for other OSU

employees, in an account that the individual can move from position to position within OSU and from which an individual can draw upon leaving OSU.

3. Establish a university-level fund to help P.I.s bridge personnel and critical operating expenses for relatively short periods between grants.
4. Establish a university-level fund for purchasing and repairing research equipment that costs less than the \$5,000 minimum required of capital expenditures and through this fund allow for purchases of computers, workstations, and software disallowed by federal rules for capital equipment.
5. Existing rules limit the money that a research facility can retain through the collection of fees for performing expert tests and analyses. As this money is sought to help maintain equipment routinely used in research, the rules should be altered so that the money retained by facilities in service center accounts is not limited.
6. Routinely support some of the costs of producing large proposals prepared by investigators in several departments/colleges. Production costs on some large proposals: copying, photography, etc., depending on the subject, can become sizable, ~\$1,000, and multi-department/college involvement leads to headaches as far as who pays for what. Clearly, mechanisms for making these funds available need to be streamlined. Requests must be met in short order. Proposal preparation invariably involves 200% efforts and down-to-the-wire timing.
7. Increase opportunities for faculty release time. Faculty, particularly in the College of Liberal Arts, want more opportunities for release time to do research and prepare proposals. Currently, the release time program is viewed as being largely restricted to young faculty. GRF does not currently support release time.
8. Develop a system which provides faculty with up-to-date management information that enables accountability and future spending projections on grants. The lack of an accurate and timely financial management system continues to be a major inefficiency, especially with faculty time. The disconnect between FIS and HRIS seriously challenges timely management of grants, contracts, and other research funds that are salary-intensive. Helpful and informative reports are often not available, or the information is several months out of date. A critical need is for management (not accounting) information that enables accountability and future spending projections.
9. Since Graduate Students are crucial to the research endeavor at OSU, the Research Office should work to secure graduate fellowships.
10. Support common-use research facilities. University-level infrastructure for research at OSU is in dismal shape. Specific examples noted by faculty are the marginal collection and resources available through the Valley Library, the lack of campus computing, the primitive state of campus networking, and IT support, and the lack of common-use facilities supported by OSU, rather than by P.I.s on their grants, and the lack of OSU support for staffing these facilities.
11. The Research Office and VP for Research should be the "spokesman" for research within the administration. We do not see that the University has put research as a priority for the future, even though research is crucial to the success of the institution, especially with achieving top-tier status. So, as thrusts are being mounted to improve athletics, increase undergraduate enrollment and retention, open the Bend Campus, etc., comparable thrusts should be mounted to increase graduate enrollment, and improve facilities, services, and infrastructure for research. Some faculty have become frustrated. With the increase in undergraduate enrollment and no tangible additional support for faculty, they see research as being killed.
12. The Research Office is encouraged to engage in fund raising, possibly through the OSU Foundation, aimed at building the research infrastructure on campus.

Research Council members and year of termination are as follows:

Jim Coakley, Chair '02
Valerian Dolja '02
Goran Jovanovic '02
Patricia Wheeler '02
Thomas McLain '03
Machteld Mok '03

John Bolte '04
Mary Jo Nye '04
Dan Rockey '04

Ex-Officio: Jack Higginbotham

Research Council alternate members and year of termination are as follows:

Deanna Kingston '02
Mario Magana '02
Roger Nielsen '02
Janet Tate '02
Virginia Weis '02

The Council greatly appreciates the superb support provided by the Research Office staff: Dawn Marie Gaid and Jack Higginbotham.