

Research Council 2004-2005 Annual Report

Annual Report to Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate from the Research Council, 2005
Prepared by Roger Nielsen, Chair

Membership

Roger Nielsen, Chair '05	Geosciences
Deanna Kingston '05	Anthropology
Janet Tate '05	Physics
Alan Bakalinsky '06	Food Science & Technology
Mark Leid '06	Pharmacy
Jeff Morrell '06	Wood Science & Engineering
Bill Husband '07	History
Lew Semprini '07	Civil, Construction & Environmental Engineering
Staci Simonich '07	Environmental & Molecular Toxicology

Ex-Officio: Jack Higginbotham

Alternates:

Becky Donatelle '05	Public Health
Stephen Lawson '05	Linus Pauling Institute
David Sillars '05	Civil, Construction & Environmental Engineering
Mark Zabriskie '05	Pharmaceutical Science
Yan Yun Zhao '05	Food Science & Technology

This past year has been a particularly busy one for the Research Council. The core duties of the council have traditionally been the evaluation of RERF and GRF proposals, and providing advice to the VP for Research on new Centers and Institutes. This past year, we evaluated 41 General Research Fund (GRF) and (60) Research Equipment Reserve Fund (RERF) proposals. Each program was evaluated in two panels this year, with a total of 13 successful GRF proposals (\$121,219) and 22 successful RERF proposals (\$524,823). The total number of GRF proposals was down this year. This was attributed to some problems with communication with the university community, and the smaller amount of funds available for RERF in the spring panel compared to last year.

The council was asked to hear discussions on the establishment or change in status in two centers related to the Provost's Initiatives - Center for Water and Environmental Sustainability (CWESt) to become the Institute for Water and Watersheds IWW and to establish the Center for Healthy Aging Research (CHAR). Both the Institute for Water and Watersheds and the Center for Healthy Aging Research promise to be excellent opportunities for our faculty and, in the opinion of Research Council, they should be pursued. However, neither has fully outlined their long-term funding mechanism. In addition, the council had significant reservations with respect to the organizational structure proposed for CHAR, and felt that a review of its reporting structure should be made after year three (see full recommendations in minutes of RC). The Research Council re-iterated its long-term position that Centers and Institutes should be subject to regular rigorous review by both external and internal committees, and closed if their function is no longer critical.

During the Fall term, the Research Council also evaluated letters of intent, and pre-proposals for the NSF Major Research Instrumentation program. This year there were an unprecedented number of excellent letters of intent. The council made recommendations to approve three pre-proposals to move forward to full proposals.

During the Winter quarter, the Research Council evaluated letters of intent and pre-proposals for the NSF Partnerships for International Research and Education (NSF-PIRE). Only one NSF-PIRE proposal is allowed

to be forwarded from OSU. Since six pre-proposals were submitted, a selection process was carried out by the RC, and a recommendation passed on to the VP for Research.

General Issues

The Research Council has been under increasing pressure over the past few years with respect to both the number of issues/programs it has dealt with, and the timelines under which it has been placed.

The mission of the Council is to provide a faculty voice to the research enterprise at OSU (see standing rules document - <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/senate/committees/research/sr/index.html>). Historically this has taken the form of:

- a) setting priorities on RERF and GRF proposals
- b) evaluating the viability and value of investments in centers and institutes,
- c) helping to develop selection criteria and priorities for special initiatives that come to OSU from outside, and, of course,
- d) any issues brought to us from the faculty or the VP for Research that are pertinent to the research enterprise.

There were a number of cases this past year where scheduling and the number of issues or number of letters of intent/pre-proposals brought before us created a situation where it was difficult to bring the full attention of the Research Council to bear in a timely fashion. To better structure our activities, the Council made the following recommendations for the formulation and management of the RC next year:

1. Set regular meeting times so that the RC does not get caught in a situation where they cannot make a decision in time to meet a deadline.
2. Assign subcommittees to do specific tasks rather than have the entire RC deal with each issue. This is both a scheduling issue and an expertise issue.
3. The RC needs more feedback on the success or lack thereof of process and previous funding – e.g. are the funds we allocate making a difference? What is the most effective use of our resources?
4. Use the alternates more, perhaps as members of the subcommittees.
5. The RC needs more “hardware” people, capable of evaluating RERF and MRI type proposals. A reviewer pool with a mixture of backgrounds is best – the feeling was that we were not as technically oriented as we should be, given the nature of some of the proposals.

Other policy issues discussed

- The outcome of the ICR task Force report, which met in 2003-04 (R. Nielsen was RC representative) was discussed at length at the November meeting. The members of the RC expressed their support for transparency in the allocation and use of ICR and for the support of multi-user facilities, with the provision that a system of accountability is set up.
- Modification of RFPs (requests for proposals) for RERF (Research Equipment Reserve Fund), and GRFs (General Research Fund) to include results from prior awards. The RC also worked with the Research Office staff on the processes for setting up the requests for letters of intent and RFPs for all the initiatives.
- The RC requested increased information on success rate on programs such as MRI, PIRE and others. How is the RC doing in its pre-selection process?
- Support from RC to initiate central support for analytical facilities, and potential for additional workload for RC. R. Nielsen set up a meeting with the new VP for Research to discuss this issue in May, 2005 (with Holdren, Batten – Mech Eng, Arp – Botany, Keszler – Chemistry)