

## USF Research Council

Meeting Minutes

February 5, 2024

**Present:** Ponrathi Athilingam, Kelli Barr, Ganesh Halade, Richard Heller (Chair), Matthew Johnson, James Leahy, Mark Luther, Kristian Lynch, David Simmons (Vice-Chair), Marilyn Stern,

**Absent:** John Adams (Past Chair), Feng Cheng, Elizabeth Hadley, Emily Shaffer-Hudkins, Kersuze Simeon-Jones, Kristina Schmidt, Taryn Sabia, Jenny Qin

**Also Attending:** Eddie Aikins, George Cotter, John Johnson, Sandra Justice (Research Council Liaison), Daniel Kanouff, Eric Kern, Tina Lucas, Allison Madden, Mark McLaughlin, Cerise Mullins, Ben Shnitser, Stephanie Rios, Sylvia Thomas

### Call to Order

Dr. Richard Heller (Chair), called the meeting of the USF Research Council to order at 10:48 a.m. on February 5, 2024, in-person at the VP of Research Multi-Purpose Room and via Microsoft Teams.

### Procurement and Payment Services Follow-Up Discussion

George Cotter, Assistant Vice President, Procurement and Payment Services; and Daniel Kanouff, Associate Vice President, Business & Finance Embedded Services visited the group for a follow-up discussion.

George Cotter opened the discussion and introduced Daniel. Embedded Services are centralized and are unique to each college. Overview of how embedded services work. Embedded Services are transactional, anyone that handles the actual expense transactions (travel, PCard, etc.). Financial management stays in the college. Daniel suggests it will create career ladders for employee advancement which should lead to higher employee retention. Richard Heller discusses the importance of updated expenditures in research and the need for collaboration between departments. Daniel discusses university personnel roles, with a focus on job titles and responsibilities. Also, explains how the timing of transactions varies for different users in the marketplace.

The goal for Embedded Services is to make a cohesive service center and through efficiency over time, eliminate redundancy. The average turnover time for purchasing in Bulls Marketplace is less than four hours. David Simmons addresses struggles with Bulls Marketplace and Amazon's user-unfriendly interface, wishing for a more intuitive solution. Faculty express frustration with complex administrative systems, they desire user-friendly solutions. Contracts established pricing for Bulls Marketplace, but it's possible to find lower prices elsewhere. Daniel will be meeting with David Simmons and Richard Heller to review challenges with Bulls Marketplace and would like to hear from faculty's perspective on challenges working with Bulls Marketplace.

David Simmons raises concerns about ethics and responsible spending. We should not be paying higher prices for convenience. The fixed pricing is with Office Depot, not the retail amount. Are we required to use the contract price if there is a cheaper price? The direction of the university is to make Bulls Marketplace the main purchase place and will be expanding the vendors. Kelly Barr argues that university policy forcing researchers to purchase supplies through central receiving is inefficient.

Kelly Barr mentions challenges with timely delivery of items once received at USF central receiving. The Bulls marketplace is not a good avenue for frozen or cold items. By the time they reach the correct campus address the items are spoiled. Some places that faculty need to order from are not on Bulls Marketplace. Ordering through central receiving takes too long to get to faculty.

David Simmons expressed frustration with the IT department's restrictive policies and lack of qualified personnel, which hinder their research productivity. He advocates for decentralization of decision-making and a more streamlined process for purchasing research materials. Suggests creating a button to distinguish if the purchase is for a research faculty. George will get with IT to discuss streamlining purchasing processes. Create a small group of RC and faculty researchers to help identify challenges and streamline the purchasing process. The Research Council will get feedback from different colleges and departments.

If there is a disclosure process, email to E Procurement help, [eprohelp@usf.edu](mailto:eprohelp@usf.edu) to report pricing discrepancies. Holding weekly MS Teams open forums to address issues and challenges with Bulls Marketplace, on Thursdays at 1pm. Striving to make Bulls Marketplace more efficient for faculty and staff. Daniel's team is the first touchpoint. Continued discussion in a future meeting. USF Health will be set up separately and run slightly differently.

Richard requested to email him which members want to be on the committee.

### **Other Business**

Foreign Influence, what is the best way to proceed. Richard Heller and David Simmons will be meeting with the General Council on February 6, 2024, and will update the Research Council. Will also share an update with the Senate executive committee.

Invite IT to a future meeting to discuss the purchase process.

### **Adjournment**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 19, 2024.  
Approval of January 22 and February 5 minutes