

USF Research Council

Meeting Minutes

October 9, 2023

Present: John Adams (Past Chair), Ponrathi Athilingam, Feng Cheng, Elizabeth Hadley, Ganesh Halade, Richard Heller (Chair), James Leahy, Mark Luther, Kristian Lynch, Taryn Sabia, Emily Shaffer-Hudkins, Kersuze Simeon-Jones, David Simmons (Vice-Chair), Marilyn Stern, Jenny Qin

Absent: Kelli Barr, Kristina Schmidt

Also Attending: Eddie Aikins, Keith Anderson, Judi Dorn, Timothy Fawcett, Sandra Johnson Austin, Eric Kern, Tina Lucas, Mark McLaughlin, Rex Philpot, Omar Shaheen, Ben Shnitser, Steven Tauber, Sylvia Thomas, Deena Vanderbosch

Call to Order

Dr. Richard Heller (Chair), called the meeting of the USF Research Council to order at 12:30 p.m. on October 9, 2023, in-person at the VP of Research Multi-Purpose Room and via Microsoft Teams.

Approval of Minutes from Last Meeting

The September 11, 2023, minutes were approved as presented.

Research Computing

Dr. Sylvia Thomas, Interim VP of Research & Innovation opened the discussion and requested an update from Central IT, which was included in Research Council's proposal to the Provost this summer. USF's computing center will reach capacity soon. They could renovate or build new space on campus, or alternately, USF computing equipment could be hosted off-campus, temporarily or permanently. With our move toward the RCM model, we could look at how to encourage and provide guidance to PIs to incorporate some infrastructure funding into proposals. The main issue is not of space, but of a power concern, requiring significant planning and expense. We currently do not have the data infrastructure on campus. It would need to be a high priority, possibly requesting funding by the state.

Discussion of Fringe Mitigation Plan

On June 30, a communication was sent from the USF Senior Vice President and CFO Rich Sobieray outlining the Principal Investigator Mitigation Plan to assist with the change in fringe benefit method. Faculty have voiced concerns about the process and the RC has been asked to evaluate the concerns. Related links: <https://www.usf.edu/business-finance/resource-management-analysis/budget/benefit-pooling.aspx> and <https://www.usf.edu/research-innovation/sr/pooled-fringe-rates.aspx>

Dr. Rex Philpot noted that a MCOM faculty member was awarded a grant recently for five years, at which time no one was made aware of the change to fringe rates coming into effect. The first notification of the change was sent May 16, 2023, affecting grants from six months prior. PIs would have preferred a one-year notice. Dr. Thomas noted that when the mitigation plan was proposed, Research & Innovation included a process for those grants already in process. Dr. Thomas' team members will work with the Research Administrators to reply to PIs' requests.

Deena Vanderbosch stated that she is available to assist any PIs with their grant and mitigation plan. HR has already paid twenty PIs and is working through the payment process for many more. Steven Tauber, Vice Provost for Labor Relations and Space Planning, has also been working toward resolution.

Internal Awards Schedule

The Interdisciplinary Research Award (IDRA) guidelines have been finalized and announced via email and website posting after the meeting. The IDRA is set to open January 8, with the submission deadline on February 19, 2024. The Conference Planning Grant opened October 16, with the deadline of November 15, 2023. The CONF grant verbiage was revised to allow conferences to be held at a national or international location, with preference given to local conferences. The applicant must have an integral role in the conference planning process.

Other Business

Dr. Heller outlined the Research Council goals for the ensuing year. It was noted that the role of the RCM model is not entirely clear. Dr Heller will send these goals to the Faculty Senate and thereafter assign duties:

- Research infrastructure - identify areas needed improvement and those completely lacking;
- Revamp procedure for applying for and obtaining bridge funding;
- Initiate evaluation of research support processes - including purchasing, hiring, customer service, background checks for hiring foreign nationals during hiring;
- Enhance support for graduate students; and
- Request audit of all aspects of budget that impacts research

After the meeting, it was determined that Research Council will meet with Academic Analytics on Tuesday, November 28, from 1-2:00 p.m. in the Provost's Conference Room or via Microsoft Teams.

Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 23.