



Research Policy Committee

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Research Policy Committee

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

Committee Members:

Dr. Lucy Ziurys, **CHAIR**, COS (6/22-5/24)
Dr. Suzann Duan, Post-Doc/MDTC (6/23-5/24)
Dr. Wolfgang Fink, ENGR (6/20-5/24)
Ms. Divya Jeyansingh, GPSC (6/23-5/24)
Dr. Stanley Pau, OSC (6/11-5/24)
Dr. Phyllis Taoua, HMNT (3/24-5/24)
Dr. Ramin Yadegari, AGSC (10/23-5/24)
Dr. Marlys Witte, COM-T (6/13-5/24)

The Research Policy Committee worked this year on several issues of importance to UA researchers:

1. Facilities & Administration distributions to principal investigators

The RPC this year continued to work to increase the IDC distribution to PIs, from 2% to 5%. The Faculty Senate had recommended the increase to 5%. There was also a question concerning whether the current 2% return came from the central administration funds or the colleges. The Senate had recommended the central administration as the source. A meeting with Interim Provost Ron Marx and Interim Senior Vice President for Research Elliot Cheu was arranged to request the increase to 5% IDC return and clarify the source of the current 2% return. Marx and Cheu concurred that the new budget crisis prohibited the increase to 5% at the current time. However, the 2% return would continue, despite the budget crisis. The origin of the IDC return remained ambiguous in the current confusion of RCM, AIB and the new centralization models.

2. Center Approval and Guidelines

The seemingly arbitrary way in which centers are created by RII has been a subject of discussion and debate with the RPC. The RPC was tasked by Senate President Leila Hudson to evaluate 18 new Center initiatives in Feb. 2024. Chair Hudson had spoken with Interim Associate Vice President, Research Centers & Institutes Dr.

Pete Reiners about centers being arbitrarily approved, and the RPC was identified to conduct evaluations of the currently proposed centers. The RPC evaluated the three of the proposals – those most pressing as indicated by Dr. Reiners. The RPC provisionally approved the Lovejoy Center and the WEST EJ Center. THE RPC made the recommendation that these center proposals should additionally provide a management/budget structure for the proposed 5 year duration, as well as a sunset clause. The COM-T Education Center was not approved because the RPC felt that there was insufficient justification of the proposed center, as the program was already established. The findings were communicated to the Senate and RII. In April Reiners told the RPC to postpone further evaluations, as all centers are on hold by ABOR until at least July 2024

The RPC found the RII guidelines for the formation and sustaining of such centers under RII vague and non-uniform. For example, the applications were different for each proposed center and many lacked important information, such as a sunset scheme, or plan for sustained funding. It was also unclear how the center success was tracked. These problems were discussed with both Cheu and Reiners. Cheu said there was an evaluation process after several years into the center duration. Reiners said that a new policy was being formulated with help from Interim CoS Associate Dean for Research Daniel Apai. Apai was contacted for a guideline draft but none was yet available. The RPC decided it was time to formulate its own center draft for RII to start the process.

3. IT Centralization

The effect of the IT centralization program was discussed in the RPC and was considered to be of grave concern for many research efforts. The PRC agreed unanimously to endorse the draft IT Centralization report written by a senate committee, entitled *A review of The University of Arizona's Information Technology Services strategy, security, centralization, cloud, research, and data management*. It was decided that the RPC should also request a vote for Senate endorsement of the report. A memo is being written to the senate president with that request,

4. PI Rights Issue

The situation concerning Prof. Pedro Andrade Sanchez, who was removed as the local PI of a federal grant by administrators, was discussed. The RPC discussion suggested this situation occurs more often at UA than previously thought, as other instances were revealed. Such action could be considered intellectual theft. Sanchez was asked to present his case to the RPC, which he did in Executive Session. Further action was considered necessary. The RPC is asking relevant administrators to meet for further discussion of the Sanchez situation. The RPC is planning to write policy to protect PIs in the future, as further investigation continues,

5. RII: Research Security Issues

RII is in the process of formulating a new Research Security Program. The RPC met with Taren Langford, RII's senior director of Research, Innovation & Impact's Office for Responsible Outside Interests, and Brian Hillemonds, Assistant Director, Research Security Office, in December 2023 to discuss the impact of the program on research. RPC had questions relating to how the research security mandate will affect individuals submitting grants. Langford felt things were in flux at that time but would keep RPC updated on the matter. In April 2024, Langford and Hillemonds asked to meet with RPC to discuss a new aspect of research security. According to Langford, faculty returning

from certain countries like China have had their laptops and even their cell phones confiscated at Customs. To prevent such incidents from occurring, RII wanted to initiate a “clean laptop program” where faculty and university researchers traveling to certain foreign countries (China, North Korea, Iran, Russia (when allowed)) are provided with a laptop. The laptop will have certain security protection software that blocks the port so that outside parties cannot put anything on the laptop or access information on it. Individuals would be given written documentation saying their travel has been approved by the University of Arizona and that they are allowed to take this equipment with them. The RPC arranged with RII to make this program optional to travelers to these countries, but available if wanted. The option would be recommended and indicated in the foreign travel registration paperwork. The RPC voted unanimously in favor of the new program as stated. The new laptop program will be launched soon by RII but will give RPC 30 days prior notice. RPC will help to notify faculty of the program through the Senate and department meetings.

6. New Members

The RPC nominated two new faculty members and one new postdoc member for RPC membership. All three were approved by the senate: post-doctoral fellow Dr. Suzann Duan, Prof. Prof. Ramin Yadegari, School of Plant Sciences, Prof. Dr. Phyllis Taoua, College of Humanities.

Here is a summary of the RPC's meetings for the year:

August 28, 2023

The first meeting of the FY2023-24. The group discussed the issue of increasing the F&A return from 2% to 5% for PIs and a follow-up on the Conflict of Interest (COI) policy of RII. Also discussed was the need to formulate a policy for PI changes on federal grants as an unfortunate situation has been brought to the attention of RPC. Possible new RPC members were also discussed.

September 18, 2023

The committee met in Executive Session with Pedro Andrade Sanchez concerning PI changes on federal grants. A new member for RPC was voted on and approved: Prof. Ramin Yadegari, School of Plant Sciences.

October 16, 2023

The committee continued its work on the Sanchez situation and PI changes. The committee discussed the F&A return issue and planned a meeting with Provost Marx about raising the percentage return for PIs from 2% to 5% There was further discussion of the COI issue as applied to training grants.

November 20, 2023

The committee discussed the new Research Security Program of RII, to be implemented in 2024, and the problems that it might create in writing research grants. A future meeting with RII was planned. The RPC then met with Interim Provost Ron Marx and Interim Senior Vice President for Research Elliot Cheu concerning the % overhead return to PIs.

December 18, 2023

The committee met with Interim Senior Vice President for Research Elliot Cheu to discuss the upcoming budget cuts and the possible impact on research, hiring, TRIP funding, and RII Center formation and continuation. The discussion indicated clear cuts to the colleges. The committee also met with Taren Langford, and Brian Hillegonds from RII to discuss the new Research Security Program. This program is in development, but RII would keep RPC informed. Dr. Phyllis Taoua discussed and approved as a new RPC member to represent the College of Humanities.

February 19, 2023

The RII center discussion continued. The RPC was tasked with reviewing 18 center proposals by Senate President Leila Hudson. Three proposals were evaluated, and recommendations made to the senate and RII.

March 27, 2023

The RPC met with Interim Associate Vice President, Research Centers & Institutes Dr. Pete Reiners concerning the Center issue. More formal guidelines were suggested by the RPC. Reiners said these were in progress: contact Daniel Apai. RPC also discussed the negative impact of the IT centralization on research. Dr. Phyllis Taoua formally joined RPC.

April 19, 2024

The RPC met with Taren Langford and Brian Hillegonds from RII about a current research security issue. Recommendations were made by RPC to RII. The IT centralization impact was further discussed, as well as the issue of PI changes on federal grants.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Lucy Ziurys
Chair, RPC