

Faculty Senate Research Committee; AY 2019-20

April 10, 2020 Minutes and Final Report

On April 10, 2020, FSRC met over Zoom to discuss, review, and approve our draft final report. In addition, VC Atkinson updated FSRC on the impact of the Covid-19 shutdown on KU research. Only essential on-campus research is continuing. This involves maintain laboratory animals and research into the nature and treatment of Covid-19. The Office of Research is maintaining payroll and working with faculty to submit grants.

Attending: Steven Maynard-Moody (chair), Chris Elles, Lea Currie, Peter Bobkowski, Paulette Spencer, Abel Chikanda, Celka Straughn, Barbara Kerr, Simon Atkinson, and Belinda Sturm

FSRC met six times over AY 2019-20:

- Sept 27, 2019
- Oct 11, 2019
- Nov 22, 2019
- Jan 31, 2020
- Feb 28, 2020
- Apr 10, 2020

FY2019 Standing charges:

1. Monitor the administration of the General Research Fund (GRF) and make recommendations, as needed, to ensure its effectiveness and appropriate utilization.
 - FSRC had several internal discussions of the GRF. Members noted the wide variation across Schools and the College. For example, the Pharmacy Dean added school resources to increase the size of the GRF awards. The School of Pharmacy provided fewer larger awards to their faculty. The Dean of Research in the School of Engineering is encouraging GRF proposals to take the form of external grant proposals, like those to NSF, to encourage faculty to see the GRF as pilot studies for external submissions. GRF funding comes to CLAS divided in four funding categories each with different rules for proposals and review: humanities, natural science, social science, and behavioral science. Faculty in some departments can apply to different categories, for example humanities and social science. In the natural science, some CLAS departments use the GRF to supplement graduate student fellowships.
 - At the request of CLAS, FSRC focused most of our attention on the College's efforts to reform their GRF allocation. CLAS has solicited external donations for their new Research Excellence Initiative (REI). REI support is available to all faculty within CLAS. It requires a detailed proposal with budget but is flexible and can support a wide range of scholarly work. Joy Ward and Tamara Falicov, the CLAS Research Associate Deans, presented a proposal to merge the review process and grant accounting of the GRF and REI. This proposal would not change the allocations to the four divisions—natural science, humanities, behavioral science, and social science—nor would it combine the funding. The goals of this proposal are (1) to create greater transparency and equity in the allocation of the GRF in CLAS, (2) encourage more multidisciplinary research, and (3), when appropriate, to augment GRF funding with REI funds. FSRC felt that the draft proposal had promise. In March 2020, Assoc. Dean Falicov discussed a revised proposal with Steven Maynard-Moody, FSRC chair, and Shawn

Alexander, FacEx chair. To expedite review, Assoc Dean Falicov presented the CLAS proposal to FacEx for consideration during an early April meeting.

2. FY2022 Committee: Conduct three-year review of the GRF in spring 2022. The FSRC should pay particular attention to the entities' different eligibility requirements for the competition (some entities accept applications from tenured or tenure-track faculty only while at least one other entity accepts applications from lecturers) in determining the degree to which entities are making effective use of the GRF. Reevaluate the allocation method for the GRF (see analysis in FSRC FY19 Final Report).
 - FSRC took no action on this charge this academic year, other than to double check that the appropriate material was being kept on Blackboard.
3. Monitor the implementation of policies and procedures for determining which proposals will go forward in cases where the number of grant applications that may be submitted from the University is limited. Identify problems or concerns, and report issues and recommendations to FacEx. Policy located in Policy Library, Institutional Endorsement of Proposals when Submissions are Limited by External Funding Agency: <http://policy.ku.edu/research/institutional-endorsement>
 - Associate Vice Chancellor for Research Belinda Sturm reviewed the KU policy and Office of Research practice with regard to grant proposals when the external funding agency limits the number of submissions from KU. After broadcasting the announcement, the OR ascertains if more faculty intend to submit proposals than permitted by the funding agency. In such circumstances OR establishes a quick turn-around review of faculty brief proposals. They use a rubric for the review which is then shared with faculty who are invited or not invited to submit their full proposal.
 - The process is generally transparent and fair, but there are several issues going forward.
 - The time frames are tight with approximately eight weeks from announcement to decision about who to invite to submit.
 - In some cases, these announcements can be anticipated and tentative review processes begun early.
 - The Office of Research has difficulty getting faculty to agree to review these LOIs. AVC Sturm notes that she gets a 70 percent rejection rate for reviewer requests.
 - FSRC asked if there are better ways of forming strong teams among the faculty either before the LOI process or after the selection of those encouraged to go forward.
4. Evaluate the execution of the University's Restricted Research Policy (Faculty Senate Rules and Regulations, Article IX) in handling requests for exceptions.
 - Gene Rankey, chair of the FSRRRC, reports that the process for reviewing exceptions to the Restricted Research Policy work well. He reported no problems or issues.

FY2020 Specific charges:

1. Research the intramural funding available (amount, source, level) throughout all university departments and schools, report on the sources and amounts.
 - FSRC sent out e-letters to Deans and Directors asking about the amount, source, and uses of "intramural" funding. The responses varied widely and FSRC was unable to ascertain any patterns or useful information to report.
 - If, in the future, FacEx is interested in exploring 'intramural funding,' FSRC suggests a survey of department chairs that focus less on sources and amounts but the uses of 'intramural funds,' such as faculty travel, research start-up, grant seed money, and support for grad students.

- If the university wants to publicize how endowment supports faculty research, this could be done at the university level.
2. Document the perceptions of the necessity of intramural funding between departments.
 - See above, #1.
 3. Explore ways to increase the GRF and research alternative ways to distribute GRF funds.
 - See response to Standing Charge #1.
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 4. Contact the current Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Research to clarify our current standings within the AAU. Also, what are their specific plans to secure KU's standing within AAU going forward.
 - Vice Chancellor for Research Simon Atkinson reported twice on this issue. In the Fall, he reported on our best understanding of KU's standing with AAU. While we are in the bottom 10 percent of the membership in federal research expenditures, KU is not at the bottom. Like many other universities our federal grant expenditures have increased over the last few years, largely following increases in NIH funding. With regard to citations, another key AAU indicator, KU does not have access to the Thompson-Reuters index used by AAU. Based on Academic Analytics citation data, KU is 'above average' among Carnegie I universities. FSRC agreed with VC Atkinson that we should focus on building KU's research infrastructure and engagement and focus less on AAU. Improving our research enterprise and faculty productivity will help secure our place in AAU.
 - In the Spring, VC Atkinson reported the new Provost has "reset" the strategic planning process. The strategic initiatives from the Office of Research will focus on improving KU's research enterprise while also paying attention to the primary AAU metrics, which are federal research expenditures, citations, and honorific awards, such as memberships in National Academies. VC Atkinson stressed the importance of recruiting and retaining faculty who help KU score well on the AAU metrics. He also emphasized the need to support faculty professional development and skills in grant submission and skills in preparing competitive grant applications success. For example, becoming competitive for large complex awards may require more support in the development process and training in leadership in large complex projects. VC Atkinson also noted the essential role KU Research Centers play in promoting inter-disciplinary research. The office of Research recently hired Carol Burdsal as Director of Research Development. She will take the lead in many of these initiatives.
 - FSRC members stressed the importance of diversity and the need to identify productive and creative scholars that are often overlooked. VC Atkinson mentioned that Academic Analytics can help identify these faculty.
 5. Consider ways to assess the importance of AAU membership to the faculty and gather faculty suggestions and concerns regarding university plans and approaches to secure our AAU membership.
 - Since the specific plans to enhance KU's research enterprise are not yet clear, it is premature to assess faculty views.

Recommendations for Future Specific Charges

1. Ask Vice Chancellor for Research Atkinson to update FSRC on plans and actions to enhance KU's research infrastructure and engagement and how these plans and actions help secure our standing within AAU.
2. Ask VC Atkinson to report to FSRC on how KU research is responding to the Covid-19 shut-down and its aftershocks.