

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE
Research Policy and Advisory Committee

Minutes

October 1, 2021; 2:00 p.m.

Via Microsoft Teams

1. Call to order and approval of the agenda

Robin Mello called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. There were no changes to the agenda.

Members Present:

Paul Brodwin, Liam Callanan, Janis Eells, Jennifer Haas, Mark Harris (ex officio), Jennifer Jordan, Jay Kapellusch, Robin Mello (chair), Kate Mollen (ex officio); Michael Pauers, Jason Puskar (ex officio); Kristin Roosevelt

Members Absent:

Alan Wiseman

Guests:

Kathleen Koch, Kristian O'Connor, Michelle Schoenecker, Kari Whittenberger-Keith (Office of Research); Peter Schwander (ITPC liaison)

2. Approval of the minutes

The minutes of the September 10, 2021 meeting were approved as distributed.

3. Diversity in research – what we're seeing from external sponsors

Kate Mollen, Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, spoke about DEI in sponsored programs. Federal and state sponsors have had diversity policies for some time. We are starting to some policies from non-federal sponsors and also in contracts – some have specific language, some just require that you just have a policy. Some awards are specifically for the purpose of increasing DEI (e.g., McNair).

Michelle Schoenecker, Senior Proposal Development Manager, Research Development Services spoke about some ways to include DEI in general, such as NSF broader impact statements and watching for "Dear Colleague" letters that encourage broadening projects to diverse participants.

Kari Whittenberger-Keith, Senior Proposal Development Manager, Research Development Services, spoke about recent discussions at professional conferences. Our competitor institutions are taking this very seriously – many focus on diversity in research (vs. education). Proposal writers should not expect sponsors to assume that diversity is inherent in their proposals because Milwaukee has a diverse population. They need to overtly address the topic in proposals.

Discussion centered on how to shift the culture, including

- We can be prepared to respond more quickly as targeted programs are announced.

- Working on specificity in goals. Language is often vague; what is diversity – in-scope, out-of-scope - for a particular program.
- DEI is its own division now. This should help focus campus initiatives.
- The SURF program is effective – suggest bringing in Nigel Rothfels (Director, Office of Undergraduate Research) again. Also, invite Chia Vang, Interim Chief DEI Officer, to a future meeting to speak on this topic.

4. Charging for IRB review

Jay Kapellusch, 2021 Institutional Review Board chair, brought concerns to the RPAC about the IRB workload and how to ensure that requests will receive timely review. The professional staff has been reduced by 0.5 FTE. The work is cyclical – slow times have been used for training, but with higher volumes, administrators will not be able to keep training and accreditation in place and still keep up with the workload. An eight-week lead time may be needed soon. This will be problem for just-in-time award processing. In looking at the composition of the workload, there are more small studies vs. large NIH. Differences in time needed for review are less influenced by whether the study is funded vs. non-funded, and more by the type of study or population being studied (e.g., a randomized clinical trial or a study involving prisoners would require more time to review).

He raised the possibility of charging fees to grants. Questions to consider: What would be the parameters and consequences? Would there be a sliding scale depending on the type of requester (faculty vs. graduate student)? If not fees, then what?

There are currently 3,000 active protocols. Using a single IRB has helped with multi-institution approvals. Documentation for best practices and flowcharts has improved consistency and efficiency somewhat.

Kate Mollen reminded the group that the IRB is part of the indirect cost rate (IDC) calculation. If fees were charged, we would have to account for this in determining the IDC rate. It is less common for federally funded projects to be charged, and more common for industry sponsored projects to be charged. She can conduct a search to see what other universities are doing.

Members asked if fees were charged, would that bring in enough income to cover a position (no, but it would cover students for routine administrative work). What about just charging departments that are the heaviest users? (Department budgets have been cut more than school/college budgets, so departments are unlikely to be able to cover fees if charged.) Could a model IRB proposal be posted that might help users reduce errors? How much would the necessary position cost? (100K/yr with fringe for a permanent position; 25K/yr for student help). Could the volunteer committee members take on more? (Professional staff are much more likely to catch issues, have consistency in reviewing/auditing.)

There was concern that, under a fee structure, graduate students may receive lower priority and that they should not have to bear the cost of the review. There was consensus that an R1

university should have well-functioning regulatory committees. Several members mentioned recent improvements in interactions with the IRB.

5. Results of the “What do you need?” survey

Kathleen Koch, Director, Research Initiatives and Support, presented summary results from a survey conducted in May to gauge how smaller amounts of support that was not necessarily project-based could help advance someone’s research. Three levels of funding were given as choices: \$2,000, \$5,000 and \$10,000. Most frequent responses by funding level were:

\$2,000 - conference attendance, hiring student hourly help, supply purchases, travel to conduct research, and publication fees. Several people also responded that this level of support would have minimal effect on their research.

\$5,000 - hiring student hourly help, travel to conduct research, purchase of services, conference attendance (themselves), and sending a student to a conference.

\$10,000 - hiring student hourly help, equipment purchase or repair/maintenance, pilot studies, travel to conduct research, and summer salary support.

The results informed discussions about the internal funding programs and a one-time allocation was made to redirect budget for the Research Assistance Fund, which was designed to provide small grants (up to \$5,000) for conducting and disseminating research and creative work. The Office of Research anticipates that approximately 100 awards will be made.

6. RPAC Advocacy

This item was postponed until the next meeting.

7. Updates from the Office of Research

This item was postponed until the next meeting.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 3:33 p.m.