

Bloomington Faculty Council Research Affairs Committee

September 1, 2023 -- Minutes

Present: Jillian Kinzie, Halina Goldberg, Karen Rogers, Ben Kravitz, Cindy Hmelo-Silver, Seth Freedman, Ashley Clark, Wen Qi, Lana Spendl (rep)

The meeting began with a welcome from co-chairs Ben and Jillian and then committee member introductions. We have a healthy mix of new and experienced members.

Ben offered an overview of the Research Affairs Committee (RAC). Its mission is diverse with many interests, particularly for the next 7 years as the IU 2030 Strategic Plan is implemented. Committee members should bring forward concerns and topics for committee consideration.

Ben described some of RAC policy initiatives. First, is a policy started last year by Sally Letsinger. She led a charge for research transparency, for example, being more transparent about where IU money is coming from (e.g., tobacco, oil companies). There is a draft policy with some feedback from Steve Martin. The committee can work on this further. This is a University Faculty Council policy, not just Bloomington, but it is wise for us to take a crack at it first.

Another item is the Indirect Cost Recovery (ICR) formula. It is a memo and is complicated and perhaps not as much of a policy as would be helpful. What should ICR look like as a policy? Again, this is a UFC issue to pass, but we can work on this first.

Disclosure and Conflict of Interest (COI) is another issue. We are all asked to review and sign the COI form annually. There is some concern about whether the current form allows us to represent our conflicts or concerns completely. Could we help update this form and ensure it accurately reflects current issues including for example, international collaborations?

The committee asked for clarification on the ICR policy. The VP office will take 30% - this is set. Some questions include: How is cost-matching handled? How are core facilities funded? Where does the cost recovery go for Centers – is it to the home department or the Center? These issues have implications, for example Center funding could be strongly affected if funds are reduced 15% or more.

Parental Leave for NTT is an issue RAC raised last year. How is this paid for? Does this money come from a grant, or a home department? What happens to the grant funds during this period, does the grant work not get done? Or should the funds come from a central pool? The Committee circulated a memo describing this concern and sent it to Brea Perry and Carrie Docherty. Cornell has a pilot program on this topic that we could use as a model. There is more to figure out here including possible demand and cost.

Research restructuring is also a major issue. Changes will start this year, but the biggest changes will likely be in years three and four. We should do our best to figure out what's coming, and to communicate with people doing research and creative activities to solicit their input on policies. There will be a task force for implementation, and Ben hopes at least one member from RAC will be on such a task force. We should funnel information up to the implementation committee.

Emergence of AI as an everyday tool is an issue for all committees. If issues come up around AI and research that we need to pay attention to, we need to have this on our radar.

Another issue to have on our radar, is the impending financial crisis. IU will soon spend more than it's bringing in, which is not sustainable. In the absence of information people will resort to telling stories. What are the plans? What about this will affect IUBs research mission?

Last item for the RAC agenda this year, which came out last year, is the Nelson memo. Office of Science Technology office produced the Nelson memo, simply stated it requires that all data must be publicly available for purposes of reproducibility. How are we going to do this? Who pays for these storage and access requirements? Should we bring in someone from Libraries to advise?

According to VP Mumper, we will hear about the new Associate Vice President & Vice Provost for Research next week.

The committee then discussed additional items for the RAC agenda. Karen asked about animal space and orientation for core facilities. She wants to ensure issues are fair and safe for all researchers and animals. The lack of a check-off sheet for new faculty and researchers is concerning. Key pieces of information are not being addressed. One thought that has been raised before to improve animal research is a centralized animal facility (which has been discussed for at least 20 years, blueprints were drawn up and then dropped). Karen shared some recent infractions to animal safety during the heat wave that put facility temperatures outside acceptable ranges. Facility conditions are a concern.

Wen mentioned the responsibility RAC has for reviewing faculty scholarly systems, such as DMAI. RAC purview is reviewing the systems used to collect data on faculty activities. This committee is supposed to review the system (or practice) every 8 years, last reviewed in 2016, tweaked in 2018, but we are approaching routine review. The provost has this on his mind. If there is a decision to change systems, we ought to ensure faculty are represented in this decision-making process.

Ashely asked for an update on the Research ranks working group. VPFAA has convened meetings about the research ranks and various issues including roles, what to call scholars in this role, how to evaluate in promotion and tenure. Inconsistencies exist, for example going from post-doc to assistant research scientist is in some cases is a simple move, others have to go through promotion complete with external letters and a committee etc. Some scientists are expected to do research work that would not lend itself to external letters. Judah Cohen is in charge of this working group and he has promised that he will keep us apprised.

*Action: Invite Judah Cohen to join us for our next meeting. Ben will follow-up.

Ben is on the UFC RAC. He shared a few UFC priorities. The ICR policy will be discussed. Other topics include, what qualifies as research and creative activities? What this is on a regional campus is different than at IUB.

Ordinarily we would have an update from Brea, but she is not here today, nor did she send an update.

We then moved to open conversation, inviting comments from committee members.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.

Respectfully submitted by Jillian Kinzie