

Bloomington Faculty Council Research Affairs Committee

October 13, 2023 -- Minutes

Present: Jillian Kinzie, Halina Goldberg, Karen Rogers, Dan Tracey, Kaylie Hash, Brea Perry, Cindy Hmelo-Silver, Ashley Clark, Lana Spendl (rep), Judah Cohen (guest)

The meeting began with a welcome from co-chair Jillian, committee member introductions, and a presentation of the agenda: review and approval of September minutes, updates from Brea, discussion about the Research Ranks Task Force with invited guest Judah Cohen, and updates from anyone else.

September meeting minutes motioned approval by Ashley, seconded by Dan. Approved.

Jillian reiterated the message from Ben that there is a university-level working group that is being assembled to review proposals for a new faculty reporting system (the next DMAI). BFC would like one member of the RAC on that working group. If anyone on RAC is interested in the reporting system, we would be grateful for you to volunteer. Names must go to Colin Johnson by Monday Oct 16.

Brea provided the committee important updates related to IU research including an update on the Faculty 100 initiative intended to amplify our success in core research areas. Phase Two - to get to 100 - is about to be announced. These hires will expand capacity to pursue research priorities defined through 2030 planning, and to develop new academic programs or grow existing areas projected to see greater student interest and aligned with workforce demands. A big component of this is recruiting faculty members in microelectronics and nanotechnology.

The investment in research and development in defense with NSWC Crane is moving forward and will further expand faculty hiring and investment in labs and other facilities to support key research areas with defense applications and expand federal grants and contracts. Brea mentioned expanded federal pass through for billions of dollars through the CHIPS and Science Act. IU will continue to build up areas of mutual interest with Crane. There will also be some top-down hiring, and other hiring will come through Strategic Plan priorities, including a cluster on Healthy Aging and the Environment.

The requirement that the Faculty 100 are full professors with significant funding has been lifted. In addition, there will not likely be a call to programs regarding hires, rather initiatives will be guided by the Strategic plan. Also, the Faculty 100 are intended as additional hires, not to replace.

The committee inquired about the need to ensure faculty for the Language Programs with Title VI grants. There is some concern that departments with Title VI have not been able to get hires authorized. Brea recommends sending her an email to help elevate this and any other concerns about hiring.

Space planning is also a research priority. IU has hired ECG to consult on space and to help us determine how can space be allocated more efficiently, what should be renovated, and if space is sufficient, among other issues. This work is underway. At this point, space planning consultants are doing 1 focus group with faculty across 8 or 9 buildings impacted (MSB2, Geology, Simon, Psych, Luddy, Chemistry, etc.), mainly where wet labs are located. Focus groups were added by theme, including Animal Research, Makers and Measurers. The aim is to think of scientists and their needs. The space committee is at the Provost level, and is still being populated with faculty. The committee expressed that this is a critical area for faculty input.

Brea then shared updates on internal funding. Earlier it was announced that Fellowship and Supplementary Faculty Funding was dropped by VP office. However, has since been picked up by the VPFAA and the money has been returned at the same level. The decision making will now be in VPFAA office. There may be changes in other internal funding programs. Internal funding now accessible to ALL campuses, not just Bloomington. Some might be consolidated, and new funds started. For example, Russ started a modified Research Equipment Fund and new Conference travel fund. There might be an opportunity to weigh in on how to improve the process for assessing the influence of funds awarded.

There is now an organizational chart for IU VP for Research (on research main page, Leadership). <https://research.iu.edu/about/leadership/index.html>. However, more changes in Research Development are coming. Plans are to add someone in the bench science as Asst Vice President for Center and Core Facilities. And to add an Assistant Vice President for Arts and Humanities. In addition, there might be an opportunity to reconstruct some of the structure that worked well in Vice Provost for Research Office. Also, Kaylie Hash is reporting to Brea, not centrally.

Indirect Cost Recovery is still a concern for committee members. Brea has asked that we provide feedback that she can take up to the administration. Dan Tracey has taken the lead on this and is gathering info. Brea will review this topic with Kaylie and we will likely hear more about it soon.

Judah Cohen joined us to discuss the Research Ranks Task Force. Ben shared a document in advance of our meeting that detailed the progress of the task force.

Judah appreciates the invitation to present on this project. In recognition that IUB 2030 includes significant beefing up of our research agenda, this review of how the research ranks have been recognized is vital. We're currently working through an out-of-date policy from 1981. Over the course of the summer, with Carrie Docherty's support, the Research Rank working group convened. Research Scientists (RS) and those with significant Research Associates (RA) and Postdocs have participated in larger conversations on the topic.

The work outlined includes three phases. The first phase involves revising RS and Postdocs appointment guidance to comply with ACA-20. The key components of these guidelines are to reserve Research Associate positions mainly for scholars without a terminal degree; especially avoid moving Postdocs into Research Associate positions; and to move the process of appointing Research Associates/Postdocs to Assistant Research Scientist ranks to the units (that is, treat it as a unit-internal process rather than a campus-level "promotion" process, as had been the case). This phase involves communicating these guidelines and ensuring that appointments are compliant with ACA-20. These guidelines were variously interpreted in policy and will now be consistently applied. Starting now, no longer requiring outside letters to appointment to a post-doc to research scientist. If person has doctorate, units will determine appointment on their own and consistent with campus and university policy. No dossier or external letters are needed. This phase is fundamentally a reinterpretation of policy. Academic Associate Deans have been informed of clarification of policy.

The use of this policy should help address concerns about how external funders like NIH view qualified PIs, and researchers; titles like Visiting Research Assistant might make it difficult to apply for funds.

The next two Phases speak directly to policy. This will fall to RAC and BFC to determine what next steps look like. Phase II is a consideration to add "Research Professor" title to Research Scientist track.

Campuses can add titles to their ranks by action of units (happened at IU Medicine to add Research Professor). We haven't done this at IUB. The goal is to increase the prestige of these ranks.

Phase III is a revision and update to BL-ACA-A5. Looking to others in the Big 10 for consultation on policy.

The committee discussed what the new titles might permit. For example, in Indy, Research Professor is added to all three ranks. Research Professor could be used if we make it parallel to IU Indy policy. IU School of Medicine added the RP title for prestige to help with grant funding. RS is the Appointment Category, and Research Professor is a veneer, an appointment title.

Judah explained that this policy will be made by BFC. At the VPFAA level, the top priority is adding Research Professor. This action is aligned with the Strategic Plan. Judah is interested in what our committee thinks about this topic. BFC will undertake the work and it needs thorough discussion and legislative time.

We generally are favorable to the Research Professor title, but more clear differentiation between Research Scientist and Research Professor is needed.

Lana explained possible timelines for action with the BFC. Legislation would require two readings, and materials must be received 4 weeks ahead of vote.

Judah will be in touch with RAC about a timeline and next steps.

The meeting adjourned at 12:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Jillian Kinzie