

**Research Council Minutes**  
**January 13, 2016**  
**3:30 – 5:00 p.m.**  
**Blount Hall, Room A004**

**Attendees**

Ramki Kalyanaraman (chair)	Shellen Wu
George Siopsis	Rebecca Klenk
Chris Boake	Janet Nelson
Matthew Cooper	Christian Parigger
Terry Hazen	Tina Shepardson
Qiang He	Micheline Van Riemsdijk
Chris Boake	Agricola Odoi
Robert Nobles	Jean Mercer
Kelly Steele	Takesha Warner
Charles Noble	

**Welcome by Chair – Ramki Kalyanaraman**

Ramki Kalyanaraman opened the meeting at 3:35 and thanked all for coming. A quorum of faculty senators was not initially present.

**Business**

**Research Council Chair’s Report**

Ramki Kalyanaraman reported on Senate Executive Council meeting with Chancellor Cheek on January 4, 2016.

The Executive Council expressed concern that when the Chancellor decides to release information, he does not know when it will be released. The Chancellor indicated that this semester will be one of the most challenging in UT’s history, with several items scheduled to be considered by the legislature. Senators are urged to gather as much information as possible in order to be informed about relevant issues, and to be ready to communicate effectively with Ramki, the UT Administration, and the Tennessee Legislature about UT issues. Senators should be ready to help the Administration respond to the Legislature. Members of the Faculty Senate are preparing to write a letter to the Administration saying that the Senate can help with responses to the Legislature.

Major issues that are anticipated to arise during the coming semester include: cuts in funding to UT; the funding of diversity programs; guns on campus; the new student code of conduct and the new student meal plan; the Lady Vols name change; outsourcing/ privatization of contracts for facility maintenance at UT; higher education governance. The Chancellor is worried about signs that the governance of UT is becoming more political, shaped by the state and politicians rather than by the Administration and Board of Trustees.

The Chancellor will address these issues at the next Faculty Senate meeting.

### **Approval of Minutes from November 11, 2015 and December 9, 2015 meetings**

At 3:45, a quorum of faculty senators was established and voted to approve the minutes of two previous meetings (moved, seconded, passed unanimously)

### **ORE Update**

Janet Nelson re-announced Jane Taylor's retirement as Administrative Coordinator, and introduced new staff at the ORE. Rita Gray is the new Administrative Coordinator. Other new staff members at the ORE include: Jean Mercer, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research and Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, and Tokesha Warner, Director, Research Development Team.

Ramki Kalyanaraman welcomed the new ORE staff members.

### **Follow-up on action item from December 9, 2015 Research Council meeting: Should the forms for "forming Centers/Institutes/Bureaus" be modified/updated?**

Ramki Kalyanaraman introduced this topic and invited Tina Shepardson to lead discussion. Lack of clarity is an issue with the current forms.

Ramki Kalyanaraman requested that 3-4 volunteers from the Research Council form a subcommittee to consider modifying/ updating the forms.

Matthew Cooper, Co-chair (with Rebecca Klenk), Centers Review Committee, volunteered and asked if this project will dovetail with the review process in the Centers Review Committee and help them determine who to review.

Janet Nelson commented that it would be desirable to have participation by Centers Review Committee members to help evaluate review criteria, as part of the charge of the new subcommittee.

### **Centers Review Committee Update**

Matthew Cooper reported on the activities of the Centers Review Committee during the last semester.

The Centers Review Committee received a list of five centers to be reviewed last semester:

1. The Marco Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies will undergo an external review process next year and was taken off the Centers Review Committee agenda last semester.
2. The Center for Educational Leadership was also removed from the agenda. The new director asked Janet Nelson to consider the substitution of recent previous review materials for the Research Council's 5-year review. Based on her review of those

materials, Janet notified the CEL and the Centers Review Committee that the ORE has approved the 5-year review.

3. The Centers Review Committee reviewed and endorsed the maintenance of the Bredesen Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Education.
4. The Centers Review Committee reviewed and endorsed the maintenance of the James L. Clayton Center for Entrepreneurial Law.
5. The Centers Review Committee was hesitant to endorse the Institute for Assessment and Evaluation. The director plans to step down from Institute leadership at the end of the fiscal year 2015-2016, and there is no evidence of plans for his replacement. The future of the Institute after the director's departure is uncertain.

This list includes two "institutes" as "centers."

The Centers Review Committee has received a list of three centers to be reviewed this semester:

1. The College Access and Persistence Services Outreach Center
2. The Global Supply Chain Institute
3. The Marco Institute for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. The review of the Macro Institute will likely be delayed once again.

This list also includes two "institutes" as "centers."

### **Open Discussion 1: Format for and merits of the centralized centers review process undertaken by the Centers Review Committee**

Key points and questions raised included the following:

- It is vital to communicate clear guidelines for acceptable formatting of review materials to the directors of centers under review. Some center directors do not adhere to an acceptable format when they submit materials for review. Irrelevant materials may be included for review, while relevant materials may be missing.
- Does the format for review materials allow centers to clearly convey their strengths?
- A centralized review process is valuable to confirm that centers are actually doing something, and are not just one-person operations that can go on a CV, and to determine potential funding through F & A policy.
- The Centers Review Committee is supposed to review financial stability, but appropriate documents for this aspect of the review are frequently not submitted. If the Centers Review Committee wants to evaluate F & A flow, a central review process will help, but appropriate documents are necessary.
- Webpages regarding centers need to be cleaned up and organized.
- Perhaps it is important to hear from Taylor Eighmy about what he'd like to see happening with centers. Only a small number of centers report to Taylor Eighmy.
- There are many different types of "centers," including centers for excellence, joint institutes, and so on. The Centers Review Committee does not review all centers that are affiliated with UTK. This situation can create confusion; centers are often confused about the Centers Review Committee review, and don't know about it.
- Perhaps the material concerning the review needs to be organized on a website.

**Formation of new subcommittee to address the Centers Review Committee review process and modification/ updating of forms for “forming Centers/Institutes/ Bureaus”**

Ramki Kalyanaraman invited volunteers to join the subcommittee with Matthew Cooper, and Matthew indicated that Kenton Yeager, previous chair of the Centers Review Committee, is willing to participate. Chris Parigger and Terry Hazen volunteered to participate. Ramki Kalyanaraman said that he would be happy to participate, and he suggested that Ben Auerbach could participate.

**Open Discussion 2: *The Chronicle of Higher Education* article sent to the Research Council by Chris Boake, “For Researchers, Risk a Vanishing Luxury” by Paul Voosen (12/03/15)**

Chris Boake introduced the article and opened discussion. Key points and questions raised included the following:

- At the national level and at UT, research conservatism is rewarded, which pressures junior faculty not to innovate or take risks. This state of affairs is contrary to the central mission of the NSF and other major funders of research.
- Research conservatism is a trend not only in the submission of research proposals for major funding, but also in the disciplines themselves. An example of research conservatism in Physics at UT was offered as evidence of this trend.
- New discoveries and “the first part of the story” are not accepted for publication by high profile scientific journals. Researchers must have the complete story for their work to be accepted by high profile journals, and this promotes conservatism.
- The article stated that some universities provide seed grants for high-risk research; that could be a good idea for UT.
- Because major federally funded projects are also used to support graduate students, high-risk research cannot be undertaken because graduate students in some STEM fields must finish in three years. Perhaps UT should follow the example of some top schools, and decouple federal funding from graduate student funding.
- In some STEM fields, if students take longer than three years to complete doctorates, they will not be able to find placement in good postdoctoral positions. But the three year framework only applies to a few science fields; in other fields, the average time to complete the doctorate is longer. In Engineering departments, four years is closer to the norm. In most humanities and social science fields, it takes more time to complete doctorates.
- A number of comments expressed concern about the strong emphasis placed upon metrics-driven assessment of research at UT. However, a contrasting point was made that in Arts and Sciences, the tenure and promotion process places emphasis upon broadly evaluating the quality of research, not narrowly upon metrics-driven assessment. Placement of research in high profile journals matters, along with metrics.
- There is a new initiative underway to evaluate scholarship and creativity in a broader way, such that factors beyond funding and metrics are taken into consideration at UT.
- In Microbial Ecology there is a new focus on “high risk but also high return” research, for which a number of early career awards have been given.

- However, UT Psychology has just discussed the need to place more emphasis upon metrics in evaluating research.
- The best way to meet metrics driven goals is to submit safe research, but this promotes research conservatism.
- The Top 25 initiative will encourage department-level creation of measurements appropriate to the unit. Funding as the primary indicator of research creativity is not appropriate for all units. The Top 25 initiative is being expanded to a continuous striving for excellence that goes beyond metrics.
- The recent scandal at Rutgers University holds a lesson for UT. The new metrics system at Rutgers was unrolled secretly, and faculty pointed out mistakes. It is important that UT faculty take part in conversations about evaluating research and creativity.
- Typically, metrics are not explicitly stated, but faculty handbooks and relevant documents contain hints. Each department has its own criteria, which is important. However, when trying to make decisions about promotion at the College level, there can be confusion because of different criteria used by different disciplines at the departmental level. The reality is that metrics are everywhere, although they are not stated explicitly in the faculty handbook.

#### **New Business: Awards**

Ramki Kalyanaraman introduced new business concerning awards. Janet Nelson would like to discuss how the Research Council makes certain faculty eligible or ineligible for certain awards.

Rita Gray is digging through Research Council minutes to try to find out when the Research Council made the decision about which faculty members are eligible for certain awards, and what the rationale was. The language expressing eligibility may or may not be changed. The point would be to make eligibility criteria broader, so that more people can participate.

#### **Suggestions: Guest speakers for future Research Council meetings**

Ramki Kalyanaraman asked for suggestions for future speakers at Research Council meetings.

Stacey Patterson, Associate Vice President for Research and Vice President of the UT Research Foundation was mentioned as a possible speaker. Commercialization and lab safety were proposed as possible presentation topics. Robert Nobles and Terry Hazen agreed to discuss lab safety in April.

Other suggestions included inviting Louise Nuttle

Lou Gross will speak at the next meeting.

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 PM.