The University of Tennessee

Faculty Senate Research Council

Minutes of the Meeting

December 9, 2020

**Elected Members present:**

Yuri Efremenko, David Icove, Julia Jaekel (Chair), Xueping Li, Brian Long, Vasileios Maroulas, Tore Olsson, Sean Schaeffer, and Soren Sorensen

**Ex-Officio Members present:**

Suzie Allard, David Anderson, Ernest Brothers, Bill Dunne, Victor Hazlewood, Michael Kilbey, Bruce LaMattina, Jamie McGowan, Larry McKay, Holly Mercer, Charles Noble, Josh Price, Joel Reeves, Jennifer Webster, David White, and Tami Wyatt

**ORE Members present:**

Marc Gibson, Jean Mercer, Jon Phipps, Sarah Pruett, and Renee Thomas

**Call to order:**

A regular meeting of the Faculty Senate Research Council was held via Zoom and Julia Jaekel called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm.

**Minutes:** November minutes approved electronically

**Welcome**

**Julia Jaekel, Chair**

This has been a highly anticipated discussion on how to facilitate research collaborations between graduate students and faculty. Some questions to ask: What are the models for success? How can we learn from students and faculty at UT who are working in collaborative multidisciplinary group? How do we facilitate team science?

**New Business**

**Dixie Thompson, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate School**

Chancellor Cheek during his term was very focused on increasing our research productivity and recognize that recruiting great PhD students was one way we could impact our research. Recognizing that our stipends varied dramatically across different units, he held the funds centrally and distributed to colleges to recruit really great students. These fellowships combined with graduate stipends offered competitive packages.

This year and subsequent years a budget of $4M is dedicated to achieve that goal. Colleges receive $3.5M to support continuing students and $500K for Tennessee Fellowships. There is also $150K available to recruit historically underrepresented students to the campus. Tuition support for fellowship recipients whether in-state of out-of-state is fully covered during the time in that fellowship. This budget is typically $400K. Fellowships from endowed accounts varies year to year but ~$350K and $26M in tuition covered from the central fee waiver. The Graduate School invests over $30M a year to bring really great graduate students to campus.

The Fall 2021 class was the first to use the new admissions platform Slate. It will provide data and analysis as well as development of sophisticated communication plans. The Graduate School have recruitment grants available for departments to be proactive in the recruitment of students more so than in the past. These have been offered for several years. And, Access and Diversity funds are new this year and available to pay for application fees for historically underrepresented applicants. Contact Ernest Brothers for more information. Also, piloting training for departments on holistic admissions because it is important that we bring in students whose background training skill set with what they want to accomplish with their degree. Dr. Brothers and Yvonne Kilpatrick, Director of Graduate Admissions launched this pilot with five to six departments this year. It will be offered to the larger community next year.

The Graduate School has offered professional development for graduate student though not coordinated. Two years ago a person was hired work with several offices across campus to create a framework: Professional Socialization & Professionalism, Networking & Relationship Building, Communication & Presentation Skills, Career Development and Management and Well-Being and Personal Development. The training is offered virtually so both online students as well as on campus students can take advantage of these opportunities.

Graduate students were surveyed in October on how well they are handling the stress of the semester and sources of the stress. Of the 6,305 graduate students, 1,098 opened the survey and 760 (12%) completed the survey. 61% responded they are ‘managing but stressful’, 18% is struggling and 21% answer ‘I am fine’. The top three stressors ranked in order: Inability to interact with professors and/or peers, feelings of social isolation, and family and/or personal issues.

Some departments had delayed graduation due to COVID: 6 colleges had no delay, 4 colleges had minimal delays, Arts & Science reported delays in concentrated areas and students with research at ORNL are facing challenges. Currently preparing the November 2020 report for the Provost.

**Graduate Student Panel: Amanda Capannola, Sujana Chandrasekar, Erica Grant, and Lucia Reyes**

**Introduction by Russell Zaretzk, Data Science and Engineering Program, Bredesen Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Graduate Education**

The Bredesen Center programs have faculty from UT Knoxville, Chattanooga and Health Sciences. The goal is to bring together students to work on interdisciplinary projects that involve engineering and science in an integrated context with an engineering or societal outcome as well as a scientific research component.

Takeaways:

* Having mentors and meeting regularly is extremely important to success.
* Mentors introductions to both faculty in different departments across UT as well as staff scientists at ORNL. It is the student’s responsibility to cultivate those relationships and have conversations about research.
* Common workspaces, open office hours and virtual water cooler meetings.
* Important to seek out people with different backgrounds.
* Avoid falling into a trap of thinking interdisciplinary research means becoming an expert in multiple fields.
* Finding and creating a strong relationship with advisor.
* Working in interdisciplinary groups prepares students for various paths: the traditional professor track and/or entrepreneurship.
* Encourage graduate school have poster sessions or seminars to see other people’s research which could impact your own research which will help facilitate interdisciplinary connections.
* Opportunity to attend industry conferences to broaden network.
* Encourage students to take a business class if interested in starting a business.
* Build relationships and communities of people outside of own department and connect to UT as a larger community has open many doors.
* Important faculty look for and share different opportunities with students especially outside of the department.
* A proactive advisor that understood student’s limitations and help build confidence to seek out opportunities on their own.

Adjournment: The Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:05 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Paula Brown

Next Meeting: January 13, 2021