

Research Advisor Committee Final Report 2012-2013

This has been a year of change for research at UAF, and the role of the Research Advisory Committee has tried to adapt to these changes. The committee was formed in response to the role of research management falling out of the primary effort of the Statewide Academic Council. Though UAF is the primary research university in the system, this caused the research effort to fall out of the spotlight of Statewide and Board of Regents. By providing millions in recovered funds, research enables many of the other activities going on at UA and UAF such as education, outreach, maintenance and staffing. The role of the RAC at UAF was to provide a sounding board for the Vice Chancellor of Research from the perspective of the faculty.

In 2012-2013 the RAC had few meetings, but much happened behind the scenes that RAC members played roles in.

The first achievement was the long term effort to create a research FAQ, the final version is attached to this report. RAC member Orion Lawlor was the driving force here, and he created a helpful document that should help enable faculty engaged in research to navigate the UAF system.

In the recent past many of UAF's larger research efforts have been driven by a "top-down" philosophy. Few of these have been successful. UAF's greatest research achievements have all been championed by a driven faculty member, who often succeeded in spite of administrative barriers. IARC, ASF, LARS, AEIC, GINA, SNAP to name a few, all of these driven by a faculty member or members who had to find a way to make it work. These were "bottom-up". It is the nature of the unique faculty here to go their own way, the role of the RAC is to link the faculty to the administration in research matters to make sure these efforts are coordinated and there is the best use of limited resources in the coming years.

In one of our meetings, Barbara Taylor of URSA, and John Eichelberger of the Graduate School joined a meeting of the RAC where we discussed several studies showing that undergraduates were more likely to become graduate students if they participate in the research efforts with graduate students. A system was proposed where graduate students, with a faculty mentor, could apply for funds to have an undergraduate research assistant. This program is now running and providing useful experience to our graduate students and energizing our undergraduates about research opportunities at UAF.

The Vice Chancellor for Research gave a compelling presentation to the Regents in the Fall, and there has been renewed interest at the statewide level. This culminated in two developments. The first is the approval for UAF to create start-up companies based on provisions of the Bayh-Dole, Patent and Trademark Law Amendments Act of 1980. This states that any intellectual property developed with public funds is the property of the university and faculty that created it and permits the university and faculty to market their intellectual property. Many universities in the United States have created start-ups, not all are successful, but enough to make it a viable way to support some research. UAF's first startup company is called V-ADAPT, and many others are waiting in the wings. Though this will not take over as the primary funding vehicle for research, for certain types of research, this may make up a serious portion of UAF's research funding.

The second development from the Regents was a request to perform a comprehensive research program evaluation. This is a daunting task, but with resources at UAF can be done and is a great opportunity for research to get the credit it deserves for helping to keep UAF and the whole UA system financially stable. In coordination with the office of the Vice Chancellor of Research, as well as the PAIR website (<http://www.uaf.edu/pair/>) much of the data can be gathered. As for a report, the plan is to create a draft over the summer, in a format that will resonate with the Board of Regents. A rough draft of 5 main points is: (1) How research is the basis for students and the educational mission (2) What value research brings to the rest of UAF (3) How is the research message getting out (4) What does research provide for the State of Alaska, and (5) Recommendations for the future to keep the research program vibrant in these economic times.

Much of this will revolve around well established metrics, however a few approaches will be taken that differ. The RAC is preparing a questionnaire for departments and colleges that will include suggestions for peer departments and colleges, rather than entire institutions. UAF is unique, and although we have a few good peer institutions, none are truly equivalent across the entire campus. We'll also look for intangible benefits, not just an accounting of funds. We'll look into and highlight research that may not have been of high dollar value, but was essential for the state by preserving and enabling Alaskan culture, and protecting Alaskan infrastructure.

Next year promises to be busy as the fruits of these labors are presented to the Administration and Regents.

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