

RAC Meeting Minutes

2014-09-22

Present: Orion Lawlor, Kris Hundermark, Andrew McDonnell, Georgina Gibson, Anna Berge, and Andrew Mahoney

Actions:

Orion Lawlor was elected as chair.

The committee discussed the recent UAF Research Review effort, led by Dan White. One unexpected observation from the review was the wide variability in grant proposal submission rates at various units across campus. This has many possible causes, for example some unit peer and university-wide faculty review committees might not even consider “research” to include grant writing, and not all deans encourage external funding.

Regarding the purpose of future research reviews, Andrew Mahoney suggested collecting some information on “what research means” in various departments, since there is quite a bit of variation. Andrew McDonnell suggested “What can we do to promote research in this unit?” Georgina suggested “Steer them away from places to cut,” since an explicit cost-saving goal would produce defensive reviews instead of productive improvements. One option is for RAC to interview faculty from various departments, and ask “How could we make you a more productive researcher?”

What does “research” mean in different units represented on the committee?

Kris Hundermark: IAB Wildlife. The institute is 100% research funded, and faculty evaluation depends on money in and publications out. Typically Kris teaches two courses per year, so 53% research, 37% teaching, 10% service. A few faculty focus on teaching, and give up their research appointment. Overhead-bearing grants are prized, and there is lower overhead available for cooperative research grants.

Andrew Mahoney: GI. 10% service isn't listed on any grant proposals. He hasn't gotten a substantive annual review yet, in 4.5 years (how often **do** research faculty get reviewed?), and can't imagine finding the time to fill out a promotion packet (nobody is demanding it, it's just “add-on” stuff). Teaching appointments in the GI are often 25% or less, sometimes with no teaching portion. There is still administrative push-back if fund 1 exceeds 10%, for things like writing proposals.

Orion Lawlor: CEM Computer Science. As a tripartite academic unit, a typical teaching load of four courses per year, and all faculty do some research including publication, but funding varies widely. A few superstars have research buyouts, and bring in million-dollar grants, but some do not even write proposals. INE returns a portion of ICR to the PI, in a real account.

Georgina Gibson: IARC. In some institutions, some faculty haven't had a substantive review in 10 years. The director is very busy, if they're even in town; and with 50+ FTE reporting the workload for robust reviews would be substantial. IARC is having a difficult time because the Japanese government funding went away last year.

Andrew McDonnell: SFOS. Working on a research initiation grant, for equipment. The classic SFOS grant is a big, interdisciplinary research project, and typical funding is from NSF, NOAA, Sea Grant, and some other agencies. An SFOS PI doesn't get any ICR recovery.

Anna Berge: Alaska Native Language Center within CLA. 75% research appointment, teaches two classes/year. Applies for grants with NSF, NIH, and some smaller agencies. ICR recovery is possible, if the PI knows to ask for it. School of Education grants with lower ICR have a difficult time getting back support. Some departments, such as foreign languages or history, have a difficult time finding large grant proposals.

Future topics for the committee to look at:

- Distribution of ICR back to the PI
- Type of support available while pursuing grants
- Post-award project management tools: business office support for hiring, budgeting
- The provost would like RAC to suggest a *process* for evaluation of research faculty, revising the blue book, since there are now many more research faculty.