



**University Research Council  
Minutes  
December 6, 2012**

Attendees:

Mo Elbestawi, Chair  
Fiona McNeill  
Peter Mascher  
Nick Markettos

Naresh Agarwal  
Bonny Ibhawoh  
Tony Porter  
Kathy Charters

Brent Davis  
Barb McKenna  
Greg Weiler

Regrets:

Stephen Collins  
Gianni Parise

- Peter Mascher and Nick Markettos motion to accept minutes of the October 1, 2012 meeting
- Motion passed

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 1, 2012**

**DIRECTORS UPDATE ON SCHEDULING OF WORKSHOPS**

- Discussions are taking place with the Associate Deans of Research regarding the workshop format, timing and whether the workshops will take place at the department or faculty level
- Faculty of Humanities workshop is scheduled for January
- Further feedback to be provided in January

**ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT TO FACULTIES**

- Proposing to have 3 positions for the Faculties of Business, Humanities, and Social Sciences, one FTE in each Faculty. Fifty percent of the position will be funded by the VPR and the remainder by each Faculty.
- These positions will report to either the respective Associate Dean of Research or the Faculty
- The suggested organization will have these positions interface with one another, as well as the Associate Deans of Research for the Faculties and each will interface with one person at ROADS/MILO/Research Finance. This can be adjusted as the positions develop.
- All affected Faculties are satisfied with the proposed arrangement. The Faculty of Social Science currently has a person performing duties that will fulfill part of this role and Dr. Porter is in discussions with the Dean on how to fully establish this position.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST UPDATE – FIONA MCNEILL**

- There has been confusion around the policies related to conflict of interest and the management of potential conflicts. The confusion comes from the existence of two policies; one that pertains to research conducted by faculty members and one that pertains to all other areas:
  - Conflicts related to conducting research should be reported to the Associate Vice President of Research

- All other conflicts should be disclosed to the Chair and Dean or appropriate supervisor as required by the University's Conflict of Interest Policy for Employees
- Dr McNeill discussed the nature of a conflict of interest. A conflict is a situation where it may be perceived that a faculty member's decisions are not being made in the best interest of the University. This applies to all work with external partners and is separate from any Ethics review.
- The Associate Vice President of Research's role is to manage and mitigate the conflict and make sure that there is oversight in place to ensure the University's best interests are protected; the disclosure process is not meant to hinder research activity.
- To that end, two things have happened:
  - There has been a change in the internal approval forms that are required for all externally funded research projects to ensure that potential conflicts are declared. If a conflict or potential conflict is disclosed, the responsible research administration office then reports this declaration to the Associate Vice President of Research for action. A database of such conflicts is maintained; to date 23 conflicts have been disclosed and managed
- Dr. Ibhawoh raised the point that interaction with community organizations is not captured by the approval forms and some thought should be given to ways to capture this

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **LARGE RESEARCH FACILITIES**

- The new budget model is activity based, and a separate fund is being created to manage maintenance of large research facilities. Dr. Elbestawi has discussed this with the Provost and thinks this will ease the risk of deterioration of large scale facilities.
- The facilities are mainly in the Faculties of Health Science, Science and Social Science
- A strategy needs to be developed to ensure that facilities position themselves properly to benefit from this fund
- Dr. Elbestawi recommends that the Faculties develop a list of priority or at-risk facilities and create a strategy for ensuring their maintenance. Such facilities were probably CFI funded 6 or 7 years ago and the Infrastructure Operating Funds (IOF) have run out
- The University has obligation to maintain these facilities and has signed documents stating it continues to maintain these after the IOF run out

### **BEST PRACTICES ON SUPPORTING RESEARCH AT FACULTY LEVEL**

- A discussion began on the topic: What is really needed by way of research support and how can URC help?
- Dr. Agarwal noted that Business needs to develop a culture at the Faculty level and needs mechanisms to do this. Opportunities need to be created in a more formal structure and promoted as collaborative research to stimulate and develop this culture. Dr. Agarwal is planning monthly meetings with Kathy Charters and sees the new Associate Dean of Research position within the Faculty of Business as an important step in creating this culture and is interested in learning best practices from the other Associate Deans
- Dr. Ibhawoh noted that faculty members are facing paradigm shift towards engaging the community and colleagues are asking how to do this using SSHRC partnership grants. The new positions in Humanities, Social Science and Business will help to facilitate this change as will the

planned knowledge mobilization workshops. While partnership building in Humanities is different than in physical and life sciences, there is still much to learn from others.

- Dr. Porter stated that it is important to build a sustained capacity rather than a one-off initiative per grant and this requires increased engagement with researchers to help facilitate process
- Community-based research is very important and York University has a useful model that has had some success and did well with the SSHRC round of funding. York has a Knowledge Mobilization office that works towards increasing community engagement and enhancing the connection between researchers.
- Greg Weiler noted that the Faculty of Health Sciences has had success with Knowledge Mobilization (Dr. John Lavis is the Canada Research Chair in Knowledge Mobilization) and that the Faculty understands that it is a long process. The key for FHS has been to look at what you already have and exploit it in a useful way, such as cutting healthcare costs. The Federal focus is turning away from traditional measures of success, such as patents and licenses and turning to knowledge mobilization as a metric. The University should be looking at what is coming out of the labs and the social readiness of that research
- Knowledge Mobilization Workshops
  - This is a priority in the VPRs office and there will be funding for 3 one-day workshops. The workshops will be geared to faculty in Social Science, Humanities, and Business. Existing practices in place at York, University of Victoria, and University of Alberta were reviewed
  - Dr. Elbestawi is also seeking input from the URC regarding who the speakers should be, how to increase networking opportunities and how to expose the outside community to what is happening in these faculties
  - The VPRs office will help to organize workshops but details and input from the Associate Deans is needed for the content of each workshop. Current thinking on structure is:
    - 4 speakers in the morning from within the Faculty will discuss Knowledge Mobilization within the context of their own research and communicate why their research is relevant to the community
    - The attendees should see a good cross-section of faculty
    - Chad Gaffield or someone from SSHRC should be invited to discuss funding perspectives and this will be an opportunity to showcase Humanities to SSHRC and create networking and funding opportunities
    - Opportunity to invite someone from community to speak and an international figure could be invited to share best practices
- Dr. Porter suggested an additional model could have more workshops out in community with more focused topics. There are two functions of the workshops, sharing research and creating better linkages. Experts should be brought in to discuss how to foster these relationships.
- Dr. Ibhawoh suggested that the workshops be tied to a KM website and the workshops can provide content for the site that can be updated each year to ensure the site retains its relevancy.
- Past feedback is that McMaster is not community friendly; for example, the peace studies symposium charging for admission when previous years it did not, so this should be kept in mind when engaging the community in these workshops
- Dr. Mascher added that Knowledge Mobilization is important that that Engineering has participated in this at some level through private sector partnerships and that the Faculty is always looking to do better and would participate in workshops
- Dr. Elbestawi suggested that after the initial workshop that the Council come back to the table with suggestions for improvement

**BEST PRACTICES ON SUPPORTING INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH**

- There is an increasing emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinary research, without focussing on funding and space, what can be done to foster this?
- Past suggestions have included inter-campus coffee sessions scheduled to promote interaction between the faculties
- Dr. Mascher noted that while in principle scheduled sessions are a good idea; in practice this still requires something of the faculty member because of layout of campus. The only way this works is where physical layout means you run into people and naturally begin discussions
- Dr. Ibhawoh added that there needs to be a change to the system that incentivizes and motivates faculty towards interdisciplinary research and that without incentives the institutional barriers will remain and an opportunities are lost as a result.
- Can the University Research Council play a role in fostering interdisciplinary research?
  - There is an increase in focus on interdisciplinary research in the recent calls for proposals
  - There should be an effort to recognize and build on existing strengths. Even within each faculty there are a number of disciplines and a lot of opportunities for interdisciplinary research within a Faculty.
  - Dr. Porter noted that there are two motivators – one is career progression and recognition and the other is inspiration. The scheduled coffee networking sessions could go further by identifying faculty members working in a thematic area and bringing them together.
  - Determining themes should be done with caution. The new positions within Social Science, Humanities and Business should be able to facilitate this and act as internal research brokers.
- Next Steps
  - The VPR will issue invitations to the Associate Deans of Research to meet with him to discuss interdisciplinary research and determine how best to move forward and implement. These discussions should take place in the coming months.
  - These meetings can assess if the proper structure, policies and practices to promote interdisciplinary research currently exist

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**RESPONSIBLE:**

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|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Feedback from Associate Deans of Research and Directors on Faculty Workshops                         | ADRs & Directors               |
| 2. Research Administration Approval forms to be reviewed for inclusion of reference to Community groups | Directors                      |
| 3. Faculties develop a list of facilities where funding is “at-risk”                                    | ADRs                           |
| 4. Develop initial plans for Knowledge Mobilization workshops   | ADRs with support of Directors |
| 5. Meeting to be scheduled for VPR and ADRs to discuss interdisciplinary research activities.           | VPR & ADRs                     |