



**University Research Council  
Minutes  
October 1, 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

- Dr. Elbestawi opened the first meeting of the University Research Council (the “Council”) and explained that the Council has been established following recommendations by *Forward with Integrity*
- The mandate of the Council, as identified in the Forward with Integrity Advisory Group document *The Emerging Landscape*, is to serve as an open forum meeting quarterly to discuss changes to policies and procedures, exchange ideas and initiatives across all Faculties, to discuss implementation of interdisciplinary approaches to research and to identify opportunities for partnerships

**RESEARCH MENTORS**

- The Council discussed the best practices in developing research mentors within the Faculties
- The consensus was a formalized approach to mentorship within the Faculties and/or Departments is not needed. A formal approach could create a sense of obligation if the mentorship is imposed on the faculty member at the Department or Faculty level
- The current approach to research mentorship within the Faculties is an informal and handled mainly at the Department level
- Role of the Associate Deans of Research (ADRs) should be to assist new faculty in identifying potential mentors and establishing linkages between new faculty and seasoned grant holders but not imposing a relationship
- Faculty should be encouraged and given incentives to act as mentors; consider recognition and rewards (such as CPM and Service Reviews) that will encourage faculty to serve as mentors
- Action – Council members to take the idea of recognition and reward to their Deans for discussion and advise the Council further

## **INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH**

- A discussion on the issue of interdisciplinary research and study was undertaken and centred on how to best manage the approach. Reference was made to the School for Biomedical Engineering as a strong example and it was noted that it functions as an academic vehicle as opposed to a department
- Further discussion was deferred to the next meeting when Dr. Elbestawi will provide the group with a copy of the University's Policy for Centres and Institutes (attached as Appendix 1)

## **RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION SUPPORT WITHIN THE FACULTIES**

- The Council discussed the development of research administration support embedded with the Faculties.
- It was noted that large research institutions utilize resources embedded in the Faculty and Department for research administration support and those resources connect with the central services. Such embedded resources assist with administrative work (such as budget assistance and obtaining quotes) during proposal development and can assist in bringing people together for future projects. Most McMaster Faculties and Departments do not currently follow this model
- Current practice for Tri-Council funding utilizes dedicated, centrally located experts based on the specific granting agency targeted by the proposal and works well within the three research admin offices. However, not all funding corresponds to Tri-Council agencies. In these instances, ROADS relies on other expertise and MILO provides support where necessary
- For large research initiatives, resources embedded in a Faculty to provide support in obtaining quotes, coordinating with facility services and other support to fill in the gaps would be beneficial. The Faculty of Science has been working towards this model and it does take some of the administrative burden off of the researcher
- The Faculty of Engineering would prefer an option to use highly qualified technical people that have very focused expertise and understanding of the needs of the project to assist with the administrative support needed for initiatives, such as CFI funding, etc. This model would use available funding to buy an RAs time for two days/week to assist PIs with RFPs and obtaining quotes
- Some programs do allow for funding to be used in support of proposal development but such support is only for large scale projects and is limited to pre-award stage
- Further promotion of resources available in the 3 research offices is needed and could take the form of workshops/information sessions with a representative from each research admin office present
- Actions.
  - Sessions are to be scheduled for each department to emphasize the services that each office provides and the benefit to faculty for engaging with research offices early (ROADS to provide stats of success rates for grant funding when assistance is sought early).
  - Sessions are to be done in combination with emails from the offices highlighting their services.
  - Council members are to ask for their department chairs to support the above initiative and the research admin offices are to schedule these to occur by the end of January.

- Faculties of Humanities, Social Science and Business agreed that the administrative support within their Faculties would be beneficial
- Action. Create 1 or 2 positions to be shared by and embedded within the Faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences and Business to be jointly funded by these Faculties and the Vice-President, Research & International Affairs. Details to be further negotiated and confirmed.

#### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

- Dr. Elbestawi introduced a discussion of the issue of conflict of interest and indicated that two current University policies relate to Conflict of Interest in research:
  - Statement on Conflict of interest (2009)
  - Conflict of Interest Policy (2012) passed through the Senate in June and was submitted to the Board of Governors in mid-September
- The 2012 policy is an overarching policy for the entire university community while the 2009 Statement pertains to the identification and handling of conflict of interest in research
- Currently, conflict of interest is self-declared by the PI and reported on the Sponsored Project Checklist in the Faculties of Science and Engineering
- Other faculties use alternate checklists which will be reviewed by the research admin offices to determine if it adequately captures conflicts of interest
- Next Steps – further discussion in the next meeting regarding the need for a central repository to record the conflicts and the need to increase awareness and communicate how such conflicts are managed

#### **LARGE RESEARCH FACILITIES**

- Dr. Elbestawi advised that he will meet with affected Associate Deans of Research separately before next University Research Council meeting

#### **NEXT MEETING**

- Open discussion regarding best practices for supporting research at the Faculty level
- Discussion related to supporting large-scale facilities
- Approaches to interdisciplinary research

**APPENDIX 1**

(SEE ATTACHED)