

**RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAAC)**  
**10 a.m. on Monday, December 4, 2019**  
**Reese 524**

**Present:**

Jeremy Alajajian	Vikki Cherwon	Carl Mahler
Darlene Booker	Paul Cryer	Peter Szanton
Denise Bradley-Fluellen	Stafford Farmer	Nikki Simmons
Lesley Brown	Stacy Leotta	Mary Welsh
Audrey Callahan	Sherry Loyd	Shanda Wirt

**Meeting Opening:**

Vice Chancellor Rick Tankersley submitted the minutes of the 11/4/19 RAAC meeting. Lesley Brown moved that the minutes be approved after amending them to delete the “note to Rick” wording in Section 4; the motion was seconded by Peter Szanton and was approved without objection.

The attendees were all invited to the Research and Community Partners Annual Celebration in PORTAL on Thursday, December 5.

**I. Appointment of Scribe and Discussion of Vice Chair Position**

Carl Mahler was appointed as Scribe; minutes will be sent out after each meeting. Dr. Tankersley requested comments regarding the appointment of a Vice Chair for this committee and suggested that a Vice Chair be appointed each year. He also asked (i) whether the Vice Chair should be someone from outside of the Office of Research & Economic Development, (ii) how the committee felt that this person should be selected and (iii) whether the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development should nominate the person or whether the nominations should come from the committee. Peter Szanton stated a preference that someone from outside of R&ED serve as the Vice Chair but added that this should not be a requirement. He clarified his intent by stating that if there were two people nominated to be Vice Chair, only one of whom was from within R&ED, then the other candidate should receive the appointment. The Committee members offered no suggestions as to how the Vice Chair should be selected or who should make the nominations. In the absence of recommendations from the Committee, Dr. Tankersley stated that nominations would be accepted from the committee for the Vice Chair and that the period for submitting nominations would remain open through December 7.

**II. Closeout Spending Policy**

Valerie Crickard had proposed a closeout spending policy earlier. Her policy had addressed grants with no-cost extensions but did not address Assumptions of Risk (AORs) because AORs are not relevant at the time of grant closeouts. No comments on the proposed policy had been received prior the meeting. Although the RAAC is advisory in nature, Dr. Tankersley asked for recommendations as to whether to approve the proposed policy as submitted. Jeremy Alajajian moved that the policy be approved as submitted, seconded by Vicki Cherwon. The motion was approved without objection. Shanda Wirt noted that new policies and changes to existing policies were circulated within her college and that comments and questions were often referred to the authors of the policy. Dr. Tankersley

recommended that new or revised policies include introductory paragraphs explaining why each policy was adopted, as policies are often written in formal language that can make the policies difficult to understand unless such context is provided.

### **III. Updates on Pre-proposal research policy**

A draft of the proposed policy, largely based on a similar document from Tufts University, had been distributed prior to the meeting by Peter Szanton. Carl Mahler proposed that the policy be amended by replacing references to “NORM” with the wording “the University’s electronic research administration system”; this change would prevent the need for changes in the near future when NORM is replaced by InfoEd. Mr. Szanton asked whether the Office of Research Services and Outreach was the appropriate office to be responsible for this policy, which Dr. Tankersley confirmed. Mr. Szanton asked for other comments, and specifically asked Lesley Brown if the reference to Limited Submission projects was appropriate, which she confirmed. Ms. Brown asked whether the bullet points, which specify which pre-proposals are required to be routed for approval, should be amended to include situations in which the sponsor recommends a specific budget amount such as one dollar; the sense of the committee was that this change should be made. Stafford Farmer asked whether F&A waiver should be added as a special circumstance requiring routing for approval rather than mentioned in a notation after the bullet points. The sense of the committee was that an F&A waiver should not automatically require being routed as a pre-proposal. Dr. Tankersley requested that any questions or comments to the policy be submitted to Mr. Szanton prior to the next meeting, that Mr. Szanton reformat the document in the University’s standard template for policies and re-send it to members of the committee, and that it be submitted for recommendation to approve at the next meeting of the committee.

### **IV. Update on training grant policies/procedures.**

Mr. Szanton and MS. Crickard co-chaired a working group charged with developing policies and procedures for training grants. The group is working through a number of issues including situations requiring repayment of such awards by students; there is currently no policy for this situation. The College of Education provides a document (designated as a “Scholarship Award Letter”) for students to sign when they are awarded tuition support under a training grant. This document specifies, among other things, when students must repay tuition support. The Office of Legal Affairs and various other departments on campus are working on these policies including representatives from research offices within the various Colleges; representatives from the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid; representatives from the University Scholarship Office; University Controller Laura Williams; Mark Walter from the Scholarship Office; and Eric Conklin from the Bursar’s office. In addition, Greg Verret, Director of Treasury Services was added to the group after its most recent meeting. The group is considering the establishment of a “clearing fund” in each college for those situations in which a student must repay tuition, and if the students fail to complete these repayments then the individual colleges in which those students were enrolled are required to repay the tuition. Payment terms are expected to default to the University’s standard term requiring repayment within two years, but the repayment period may be extended to a maximum five years with a minimum monthly payment of at least \$100. Interest rates and administrative fees are also being addressed by the working group but these have not been finalized. There will be at least one more meeting of the group. FAQ’s for this new policy will be developed so

that there will be some standardization across the colleges. This item will remain on the agenda for the RAAC under “unfinished business.”

## **V. New Business**

1. PIFA Distribution Challenges/Mid-Award Modifications. Proposed changes to the procedures for approval of changes and/or waivers of F&A rates were distributed prior to the meeting. Carl Mahler proposed that the name “NORM” be replaced by “the University’s electronic research administration system.” The University instituted a practice of distributing a portion of F&A monies to faculty in November of 2018, but the practice required some refinement. A major challenge to the practice in calendar year 2019 resulted from modifications to the percent effort required from individual faculty on various projects. A default distribution of F&A from each relevant grant had been made from the percent effort projected in the earlier IPF for that grant, but there were thirty modifications made to percent effort in various grants during the year. Some of these modifications included change of personnel (loss of personnel in many cases) and re-assignment or re-evaluation of individual’s efforts. Another unforeseen complication pertained to supplemental funding made to projects, especially if a supplement listed a different group of individuals than had been specified in the original award. If only a single person was listed in the supplement then that individual would receive all of the portion of the F&A being distributed, rather sharing the F&A distribution among the members of a group specified in the earlier IPF. A mechanism must be determined for how F&A from supplements is to be distributed and this is a work in progress. Dr. Tankersley asked the Committee if they were aware of other situations that should be addressed while these adjustments are being considered. He noted that multi-year grants with changes to personnel occur, and the changes to personnel are only made on an annual basis; however, distributions are made on the basis of effort specified in anticipation of the work, not retrospectively after the work is done (or partially done in the case of a multi-year award). Darlene Booker noted that the PI’s look at the anticipated effort from the time that the project is started, not from the time when it is approved. Dr. Tankersley believes that the changes can be made during a fiscal year, but that these changes must be approved before the end of the fiscal year because that is when the distributions are determined. He also noted that all the personnel who were originally entitled to a portion of the distribution must agree to any changes in the distribution. These agreements do not have to be in formal, signed documents but should be recorded in some manner, such as by email.

2. Formal Implementation of the F&A Waiver Policy. “Soft” changes had been made to the policy about a year prior and it was not clear what extra burdens these changes imposed on various offices across campus. The major change was that if there were any reduction in F&A, the rationale for the change was required to be recorded; usually if a sponsor requires a lower F&A rate then the requirement must be approved and documented in a memo by Dr. Tankersley’s office. It is expected that this process will be streamlined within InfoEd when it comes online. Dr. Tankersley intends to make this change in the policy permanent. A document circulated prior to the meeting shows the proposed changes to the policy. Dr. Tankersley asked for feedback on the process as it currently stands and for requests for further changes before the policy is formally changed. Going forward, a cover memo with a detailed rationale will be required with any request for a waiver to the F&A rate; the request, along with the memo, should be submitted at least ten days prior to deadline for submission of the affected proposal. Denise Fluellen asked what the consequences would be if the ten

day requirement was not met; Dr. Tankersley's office has been fairly lenient with respect to the ten day requirement in the past, but going forward the requirement will be applied more diligently. Restrictions on F&A rates are usually known well in advance, so the PI's should be able to take care of the requests in a timely manner. About 35% of the proposals submitted in FY2020 required such waivers, so a significant number of proposals will be affected. Lesley Brown asked if a separate waiver would be required for multiple proposals made to individual sponsors that require lower F&A rates; Dr. Tankersley expressed a hesitancy to make a blanket waiver for individual sponsors and intends to review whether multiple proposals to such sponsors are common enough to warrant a blanket waiver. Shanda Wirt asked if the ten day requirement means ten business days or ten calendar days. Dr. Tankersley clarified this to be business days, but noted that most waivers are approved or rejected within 48 hours of his receipt of them so that from a logistical standpoint the distinction between business days and calendar days will rarely make a difference.

3. GASP for Grants and Reconsideration of Policy 50.5: Tuition Remission for Graduate Students Supported by Sponsored Awards. Dr. Tankersley has been working on implementing recommendations from the Task Force on Graduate Student Funding that focus on tuition support for students receiving Research Assistantships on grants. He has tried to implement the task force's recommendation in fiscal year 2020. A policy change for the Graduate School's distribution of GASP funds was drafted, focusing on criteria for distribution of those funds for students who are supported by extramural funds rather than by institutional funds. The Graduate School has indicated that they do not support the changes in the draft policy, despite their alignment with the recommendations of the Task Force. If the new policy is not adopted, changes will still need to be made to Grants Administration Policy 50.5 to bring it into alignment with federal policy and Uniform Guidance. In order to charge tuition on grants, Uniform Guidance requires students doing comparable work receive similar compensation. Dr. Tankersley asked for the RAAC members to consider the situation and come back with ideas at the next meeting; he is looking at the policies of other institutions and will provide a summary of them at the next meeting. One correction to be made moving forward is the university's current policy of freezing of tuition dollars from grants so that PI's cannot move the money; such freezes are inconsistent with federal policy and cause problems if the money has not been spent by the end of the grant, sometimes resulting in the money being lost or returned to the sponsor.

The meeting ended at 11:04.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl P. B. Mahler, II