

**RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAAC)**  
**1 p.m. on Monday February 1, 2021**  
**via Zoom**

**Present:**

Jeremy Alajajian	Stafford Farmer	Stephanie Sanchez-
Darlene Booker	Elaine Jacobs	Esparragoza
Lesley Brown	Rachel Ladenheim	Nikki Simmons
Audrey Callahan	Stacy Leotta	Peter Szanton
Vikki Cherwon	Sherry Loyd	Mary Welsh
Valerie Crickard	Carl Mahler	Shanda Wirt
Paul Cryer	Angelica Martins	Ellen Zavala

No Committee members were absent.

The meeting started at 1:01 p.m.

**Meeting Opening:**

- I. Approval of meeting minutes for 1/4/21 RAAC meeting  
Stacy Leotta moved to accept the minutes as submitted, which motion was seconded by Lesley Brown and passed without opposition.

**Old Business:**

- II. Revised Policy 50.5 Timeline and Implementation Memo  
Revisions to Policy 50.5 were approved at the December 2020 RAAC meeting. Since that time Dr. Tankersley has worked with the Associate Deans to identify the initial programs that will be subject to it, with the intention that the revised policy will be implemented for those programs by February 14, 2021. The policy will go into effect immediately, but guidance for the policy will specifically outline what it means to be a program in Phase I of the implementation of the revised policy, what it means to be in Phase II of the revised policy, and the timetable for full implementation of the policy. All programs are expected to be in full compliance with the policy by July 1, 2022. The greatest impact of the policy revision will be felt in the coming Fall semester. Dr. Tankersley will provide RAAC members with a link to a Google document that will be used to compile a list of Frequently Asked Questions; his intent is to collect as many FAQs as possible in the coming week so that they can be made available to the campus. According to the Associate Deans all the program directors involved are aware of their responsibilities with respect to the implementation of Phase I. Some further changes may be made to the policy document itself.
- III. Standardization of Excel Spreadsheets for Budgets  
Paul Cryer has made numerous revisions to the proposed spreadsheet so as to make it similar to the budget template that is used in Niner Research. The most current version of the spreadsheet was circulated on Friday, January 29. A review session will be held by Friday, February 5 and it is anticipated that the spreadsheet will be reviewed and approved at the March RAAC meeting.

- IV. Proposed revision of Policy 20.2 Deadline for Proposal Submissions to University Offices  
The proposed revisions have been vetted by the Associate Deans and will be fully implemented when all colleges have been on-boarded with the Grants Modules for Niner Research. There will be a soft launch of the policy when the Grants Modules are implemented, but the revisions will be in full effect campus wide when the Grants modules are live across campus. Peter Szanton noted that there was an unresolved question of how proposals would be handled if a researcher misses the submission deadlines. Dr. Tankersley prefers not to specify how exceptions will be handled at this time, but he is willing to entertain proposals. In the past proposals have been submitted even if the routing process had not been fully completed, but Dr. Tankersley prefers not to do so in the future. Shanda Wirt noted that in the College of Engineering if a proposal has not met the deadlines then approval must be obtained by the faculty member from the Dean before the proposal would be submitted. Ms. Brown noted that the process proposed by Ms. Wirt is common at other universities; she also asked whether there should be some leniency during the initial period following rollout of the policy. Ms. Wirt noted that she had not seen situations in the past at UNC Charlotte where a faculty member was prohibited from submitting a proposal even if timelines for review had not been met. Mr. Szanton prefers to follow Ms. Wirt's suggestion of having the faculty member request his/her Dean to allow submission of proposals that had not been routed in accordance with the timelines. Mary Welsh noted that in the College of Arts+Architecture a "hard no" would send a much stronger message than merely requiring the PI to request permission for submission from the Dean. Dr. Tankersley noted that submitting proposals that had not met the required timelines would negatively impact any proposals that were submitted in accordance with proper procedures. Jeremy Alajajian asked if the deadlines were important primarily for federal sponsors and noted that some local governments have asked for submissions within 3, 5, or 10 days after initial discussions with researchers. He added that there are no RFP's in these situations and that the submission "deadlines" for such proposals are ad hoc. Ms. Brown noted that proposals should be entered into Niner Research before they go to the local government – there have been situations in the past in which awards have been received without the proposals even having been entered into the system. Mr. Alajajian responded that many of the faculty in the Urban Institute were entrepreneurial and received requests for proposals over coffee with local leaders. Dr. Tankersley stated that there should be a ten day window for submissions whenever possible and that this requirement should be communicated to the investigators. The policy will remain "as is" during the Niner Research rollout. This topic will remain an agenda item for the March RAAC meeting, possibly with recommendations for moving forward if a faculty member fails to meet the criteria. For now the deadlines are "hard."

**New Business:**

- V. Academic Affairs personnel requests process getting in the way of hiring on project funds  
Mr. Alajajian requested assistance from the RAAC to help address a recurring situation. Academic Affairs ("AA") has implemented a process in which any hiring, reappointment, or new recruitment of employees must go through AA even on research projects that are not

State funded; this applies to student employees as well as to non-student employees. The new AA process is a result of the Covid pandemic and the reduction in budgets. Under the new process, if the proper paperwork is not submitted by end of business on a Tuesday it will not be reviewed by Academic Affairs until the week after the following Friday. This has caused significant delays, and delays of a week can create problems. He added that in at least one case the delay was so great that a candidate was not hired in time to receive the training that was needed for filling the position, and that in at least one case this process has caused a delay of three weeks. Mr. Alajajian asked if there is a way to change this process in the case of positions that are supported by grant funding. Valerie Crickard has reached out to Dawn Tench and others who confirmed that it can take over a week to get positions approved. Ms. Crickard asked if it is possible to fill positions more rapidly if they are grant funded and Ms. Tench replied that approvals of positions must be made by the Provost or, in some cases, by the Chancellor. This results in a cumbersome process in which the Provost must come back to GCA to find out whether the position is covered by the grant and whether the hiring is allowable under the grant. Ms. Crickard supports the creation of a process by which GCA can expedite the hiring process. Dr. Tankersley asked if there was a document from Human Resources or AA in the last year regarding this process, and Mr. Alajajian said that there was such a document and that he would share it with Dr. Tankersley. Ms. Crickard noted that no one from GCA was involved in the creation of this process. Ms. Welsh noted that she has not seen AA disapprove any of these position requests, so there seems to be little value added by AA's recently implemented procedure. Dr. Tankersley noted that this seems to be a problem across campus and is not limited to the Urban Institute. Dr. Tankersley asked that Ms. Crickard and Mr. Alajajian draft an alternative pathway for expediting hires when grant funding is available and allowed. He will then schedule a time for a subset of the RAAC to meet with the appropriate individuals in AA. He hopes to have this situation resolved in the next two weeks.

- VI. Processing of financial transactions for research awards not managed by GCA  
GCA is only responsible for financial transactions involving 5XXXXX funds and some 1XXXXX fund numbers that are related to Recharge Units. It cannot process or approve other funds. A Sponsored Release Time form is used for the colleges and departments to process a faculty member's pay for the time period specified in the grant as being available for that purpose; this releases State funds (1XXXXX funds) that would normally pay the individuals' salaries during that time period. 1XXXXX funds are handled and managed directly through Business Affairs. Dr. Tankersley asked Ms. Crickard to find out how other institutions in the UNC System handle this interplay between grant funds and State funds and noted that this information will inform future discussions on this matter between R&ED and Business Affairs.
- VII. Cost Share e-Form  
An electronic form for cost share has been developed in conjunction with IT to replace the paper-based cost share form currently in use. Ms. Booker hopes to see the new form implemented by the end of March, 2021 but it may not be fully effective until July 1. She

anticipates that this will help streamline the cost share approval process; once the PI inputs the information, he/she can see its progress through the review process; this visibility is not possible with the current paper-based forms. Ms. Crickard noted that use of the new electronic form will significantly improve transparency. April Spruill and Ms. Crickard will assist Department Administrators in implementing the use of the new electronic forms; one-on-one training can be provided as needed. The new electronic forms will be implemented in Perceptive Content rather than in Niner Research. There will be an annual certification of each approved cost share, but the new process can be used to calculate cost share on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis.

VIII. Year over year tuition escalation on grant proposals

Ms. Brown noted that a 5.5% figure has been used in the past as the escalation factor for tuition year over year and that this figure had been based on historical averages several years ago. Continued use of this figure is difficult to justify because tuition increases have been well below it for the last four years. Most sponsors accept charges for whatever the then-current tuition actually is, but others ask for an escalation factor along with proof of historical charges; it is important to provide those sponsors with information that is clearly supported. Mr. Szanton noted that if we project tuition based on historical data we may also want to do the same for faculty salary which has been projected to be 2% annually even though actual salary increases have been lower than that figure. Dr. Tankersley noted that costs of education have gone up due to increases in fees rather than in tuition. Ms. Wirt noted that cost of living allowances that are applied to salaries might be used to justify projected tuition increases as well as for projected salary increases. Dr. Tankersley noted that funders look primarily at the bases of escalation in order to confirm the reasonableness of the projections. He added that having an official policy would meet the requirements of the sponsors and that the policy need not be supported by historical documentation. He asked Ms. Brown and Ms. Zavala to draft a statement for the next meeting that could be used for projecting increases in salary, tuition, and other charges.

The meeting ended at 2:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl P. B. Mahler, II