

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAAC)
11 a.m. on Monday, April 6, 2020
Held Virtually

Present:

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

Absent

Gail Keene
Sheryl Meyer

The meeting opened at 11:00 AM

1. Approval of 3/2/20 RAAC Meeting Minutes

Vikki Cherwon moved that the minutes be accepted as amended; the motion was seconded by Ellen Zavala and passed without objection.

Unfinished Business

1. Revision of Policy 50.5/Compliance with UG 200.466 (Update)

After meeting with the Graduate School, holding preliminary discussions regarding students who are currently funded, identifying which departments have the largest number of students currently funded, and meeting with those departments to discuss the changes to the policy, the current goal is to extend the policies to the other departments. For the immediate future there will be relatively little impact on the research administrators; the associate deans will be more strongly impacted as programs are moved into compliance with the revised policy. Program-wide policies will apply to the

students, the departments, and the graduate school. Dr. Tankersley hopes to restart these discussions with the associate deans later in the week.

2. Training Grant Policies/Procedures Update

This discussion was postponed to until the May RAAC meeting without objection.

3. Human Subject Payments Revisions Approval

This discussion was postponed to until the May RAAC meeting without objection.

New Business:

1. New Process for the SEA System – detail codes

Currently new fund numbers are set up to provide support for students such as health insurance when the funds are established. This will change to only setting up the student support until needed. Once research administrators are notified that this support is needed, they will notify employees in GCA, who will then set up the support for students with a goal of completing this work within two business days of receiving notification. Ms. Crickard intends to implement these procedures for the next three to determine how it impacts the various colleges, after which time she will talk with Dr. Tankersley to determine whether further changes to the procedures are needed. Questions in the interim should be directed to Ms. Crickard. Peter Szanton noted that research administrators should be ready because there will be deadline dates, and there is usually a “flood” of submissions just before those deadlines. July and December are the usual cutoff dates for tuition payments. The Bursar’s office has committed to a twenty-four hour turnaround time for confirming the student support once established by GCA. Dr. Tankersley asked whether an early deadline should be established for the notifications to the research administrators, and Mr. Szanton indicated that he hopes to achieve this so that, for example, for a July 10 deadline the notification to research administrators would be made by July 3. Jeremy Alajajian asked if there would be any guidance provided for the research administrators to share with other employees and Ms Crickard said that such guidance would be provided via the GCA web site.

2. COVID-19 Administrative Leave for Grant Funded Students/Staff

A week prior to the meeting a memo was circulated about students funded on research grants and how they would be affected by the COVID-19 administrative leave. Dr. Tankersley opened the floor for any questions that related to that memo. He summarized the memo as saying that the administrative leave policy applies to staff and students supported full or part time by a research grant so long as the sponsor permits the policy to apply. The research administrators are responsible for determining whether the sponsors allow this. For federal awards, OMB released a document giving the agencies flexibility as to how they account for personnel time on grants; all the federal agencies agreed that if an institution has a policy that applies to all personnel and provides administrative leave to be funded from research grants then that institution could apply this policy to students. It is still an open question whether there are non-federal sponsors who will not allow this policy to be implemented. Research administrators will need to consult the terms of the award to see if this policy is applicable to grants from the various sponsors. Associate deans of the colleges have committed to work with the individual PI’s to help students who are supported on grants to find funding that will allow the students to complete the current semester so that students will not lose

tuition or income. If a faculty member contacts the research administrators about this, the research administrators are to encourage the PI's to work with the associate deans. Note that this only applies for the time period in which the COVID-19 Administrative Leave policy is in effect, and that the period is set to expire at the end of April; Dr. Tankersley will inform the RAAC members if and when the policy is extended. Dr. Tankersley asked if anyone had received questions about this policy from the faculty; Shanda Wirt said that she has received questions about research continuity plans when she spoke with Ron Smelser earlier, and she asked whether such questions should go through the department chair and dean before going to Dr. Tankersley. Dr. Tankersley replied that the continuity plans should be shared with the chairs, and that include any exceptions to the shut-down policies (which permit only essential research to continue on campus) should have already been identified previously; he noted that the decisions regarding on-campus research are different from the continuity plans. Ms. Wirt noted that when research administrators are asked about access to buildings, the answers should be provided by the associate deans and should be consistent with the list of exceptions to the shut-down policies. Dr. Tankersley has made the list of exceptions to the shut-down policies available to Safety and Security personnel. Denise Bradley Fluellen asked if the associate deans have agreed to cover tuition and salary, and Dr. Tankersley said that the associate deans have agreed to *attempt* to cover those expenses, and that this might be accomplished by moving the students to other grants through the semester.

3. Graduate TA and RA Definitions

Prior to the start of the meeting Dr. Tankersley circulated a draft policy currently under consideration outlining how Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Graduate Research Assistantships are defined and administered. The full discussion of this draft policy has been postponed to the May meeting. Graduate "Research Assistants" should be supported by extramural research support, and that support must be consistent with federal policies. Dr. Tankersley asked for feedback on the highlighted portions of the proposed policy, such as for the definition of a Research Assistant. In some cases the PI is not a member of the Graduate Faculty, so the wording of the draft policy must be modified if these PI's desire to have Research Assistants as set forth in the policy. Dr. Tankersley asked for suggestions as to modifying this language and particularly requested that Mr. Alajajian comment about this as the policy could significantly affect in his college. There is currently only one faculty member on the staff whose Research Administrators might qualify for the policy's definition. Dr. Tankersley asked the committee members to take the policy to their staffs for discussion so as to provide feedback for the May meeting.

4. Updates to NSF's Proposal and Awards Policies and Procedures Guide ("PAPPG")

Ellen Zavala attended a webinar about NSF's PAPPG that becomes effective June 1 (the document from NSF can be accessed at https://research.uncc.edu/sites/research.uncc.edu/files/media/nsf20_1-2_0.pdf). Ms. Zavala has created a guidance document for the updates to the PAPPG, and that document can be accessed at <https://research.uncc.edu/departments/office-research-services-outreach-orso/proposal-submission-information>. In addition, a link to a recording of the webinar (which is 58 minutes long) can be found at <https://www.nsfpolicyoutreach.com/resources/2-20-pappg-webinar/>. Lesley Brown indicated that she did not see the changes to the PAPPG as being particularly significant. Ms. Bradley-Fluellen indicated that she is seeing many faculty members submit proposals to NSF who had not done so previously and mentioned that they needed training.

Vicki Cherwon did not feel that training was required for her college, and both Mr. Szanton and Ms. Wirt noted that they were not sure that faculty would take part in training during the COVID-19 mandatory teleworking.

5. Tiger Team Activities

The various research administration offices all have their own short-term continuity plans for their own units, but there is little cross-over with similar offices on campus. Dr. Tankersley is concerned that the University is likely to lose capacity in some key areas should people in these offices go on administrative leave or otherwise become unavailable and asked how we should best deal with this potential loss of capacity. The associate deans and deans have asked R&ED to address this concern. Dr. Tankersley therefore asked Peter Szanton to lead the "tiger team" he formed around this concern and specifically to address three questions:

- a. What are the "essential functions" that will need to continue? Who is currently responsible for these functions? Are there sufficient redundancies to provide coverage?
- b. Are there any "single points of failure" that still exist in the research administration operations? What are the countermeasures?
- c. What are some of the possible scenarios that could arise under the current crisis? What would be some of the possible responses to these scenarios that would enable us to recover and continue to operate?

While various research administrators reported on efforts within their colleges to create redundancy, particularly for proposal submissions, Dr. Tankersley noted that staffing within GCA had been sufficient to step in to support various colleges such as during vacation times but that under the new COVID-19 conditions additional difficulties were likely to appear. He noted that any office (including GCA) could have reduced capacity, so an exceptional level of redundancy might be required. He asked that the various research administrators think creatively and beyond past operations to determine possible scenarios that might allow more participating across the colleges. Ms. Brown asked that agency expertise (e.g., working with Dep't of Defense or NIH) be considered and noted that the requirements for proposals can be significantly different for the various agencies.

Announcements:

Research Town Hall and Open Forum: Research and Economic Development will be hosting a **Virtual Town Hall** from 11 am - 12 Noon on Tuesday, April 7, 2020. The session will include a brief update on the status of the university's research enterprise under the current "stay at home" order and a discussion of several new initiatives that R&ED is launching to help faculty respond to recent funding requests targeting the coronavirus. The session will also include an overview of the impact of recent supplemental spending bills, including the CARE Act, on federal support for basic and applied research. R&ED staff will be on hand to answer questions about research operations under COVID-19, including recent guidance from federal agencies on the management of existing awards.

The meeting ended at 12:03 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Carl P. B. Mahler, II