

RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAAC)
1 p.m. on Monday, July 6, 2020
via Zoom

Present:

Jeremy Alajajian
Darlene Booker
Lesley Brown
Audrey Callahan
Marian Castle
Valerie Crickard
Paul Cryer
Stafford Farmer

Rachel Ladenheim
Stacy Leotta
Carl Mahler
Stephanie Sanchez-Esparragoza
Peter Szanton
Mary Welsh
Shanda Wirt
Ellen Zavala

Absent:

Vikki Cherwon
Elaine Jacobs
Gail Keene

Sherry Loyd
Angelica Martins
Nikki Simmons

The meeting started at 1:02 p.m.

Meeting Opening:

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes for 6/1/20 RAAC Meeting

Lesley Brown moved that the minutes of the June 1, 2020 meeting be accepted as submitted; the motion was seconded by Ellen Zavala and passed without opposition.

2. Welcome new RAAC Member, Rachel Ladenheim, Assistant Program Director, Intercultural and Educational Experiences, Office of International Programs

Ms. Ladenheim replaces Sheryl Meyer on the Committee.

Unfinished Business:

1. Training Grant Policies/Procedures Update

Peter Szanton has been working on a training grant plan policy which is based on a document that has been used in CLAS; this work has received a lower priority since teleworking was implemented. Dr. Tankersley asked if the proposed policy should be adopted across campus before more contracting work is done for the Fall semester. Mr. Szanton recommended discussing the proposed policy further at the August meeting after he has reviewed it with the Controller's office. Valerie Crickard noted that personnel from several offices had already reviewed it including Brad Trahan in the Office of Legal Affairs. Dr. Tankersley believes that this is an R&ED policy rather than a campus policy; Ms. Crickard planned to contact Mr. Trahan to ensure that this is correct.

2. Update on Minimum PI Effort Level on Proposals

Shanda Wirt and Mr. Szanton researched how other universities handle “minimum PI effort levels” in proposals and Ms. Wirt is consolidating their work to create a draft policy for the RAAC. Per Mr. Szanton, they should have a draft policy ready in time for the August RAAC meeting.

3. Revision of Policy 50.5/Compliance with UG 200.466 Update

Dr. Tankersley asked for feedback regarding implementation and operationalization of this policy. This is being done because UNC Charlotte’s practices differ from Uniform Guidance in that the terms of compensation packages are not comparable for graduate research assistants (GRA’s) across campus. Per the Uniform Guidance, all students – even those supported from differing funding sources – must receive comparable compensation packages. The goal is to take a multi-phased approach to bring the campus into alignment with Uniform Guidance, especially with respect to stipend levels, in-State tuition (prorated by effort), and health insurance. Dr. Tankersley will ask that all programs establish standard stipend levels and compensation packages for similar students enrolled in their program.

The proposed timeline for implementing these changes has not been established but they will include a date, likely next year, by which all newly submitted proposals and awards must comply with the new policy. Full compliance across campus must be achieved by August 1, 2021.

Jeremy Alajajian noted that tuition cannot be charged against State funds. He asked how the campus can be consistent across the board for other funders if we cannot do this with State funding – does this mean that we must disallow tuition in all cases? Dr. Tankersley said that if the sponsor does not allow tuition to be charged, then a waiver can be granted, similar to what we currently do for reduced F&A. Mr. Alajajian noted that his college does not have the ability to use GASP funding without first obtaining permission from the Graduate School. Dr. Tankersley replied that the Graduate School will need to work with programs to ensure that funding is consistent and that in some cases students may be required to pay their own tuition and fees.

Lesley Brown had heard that GASP money was only available for terminal Masters degree students and PhD students. Dr. Tankersley replied that GASP awards have been provided to some Masters degree students, not just terminal Masters.

Mr. Szanton noted that in some situations, such as in the humanities, rates might be raised too high for all the departments in that program to support the students. Dr. Tankersley repeated that student support levels within programs must be made consistent by the implementation deadline in order for us to continue to be able to charge tuition to grants. Decisions about GRA support must be established this year so that proposals submitted this fall and winter with start dates after August 1, 2021 will have the correct budget amounts.

Stacy Leotta asked if Dr. Tankersley was going to present this information to each college individually so that the colleges would then communicate it internally. Dr. Tankersley said yes, he would communicate the policy to the Associate Deans for Research; he hopes to accomplish this by August 1.

Mr. Szanton asked how to handle situations in which a person applies for a fellowship that has a fixed rate that is lower than tuition. Dr. Tankersley responded that fellowships are treated differently than research assistantships.

Per Dr. Tankersley, pursuant to Uniform Guidance, tuition costs charged to a grant must be prorated and proportional to the student’s level of effort.

New Business:

1. Research Faculty Positions/Paperwork

Audrey Callahan and Mr. Szanton reported that research faculty are sometimes dropped off of payroll when soft funding disappears. They asked whether other colleges are having similar issues and how those colleges handled such situations. Does Academic Affairs need to create a more streamlined process for these individuals, especially ones who are hired on soft money? Mr. Szanton noted that in some cases the funding is backed up by State funding and in others it is not. Ms. Callahan noted that NC State University has a way to handle these situations in a manner that prevents the faculty from losing financial support. Ms. Crickard said that Lori McMahon should be consulted on these questions. Ms. Leotta noted that the department administrators should be able to determine whether and when a person's support will expire so as to ensure that their funding does not cause them to lose their employment or to lose their University salaries. Ms. Crickard noted that this would be something to discuss with Associate Deans. Dr. Tankersley suggested looking at situations where this had happened in order to learn how to avoid repetitions in the future. Mr. Szanton will put together a group to identify and investigate cases where this occurred. Ms. Callahan, Mr. Alajajian, and Mr. Szanton will reach out to others to find out more about when such situations have occurred.

2. FY21 Fringe Benefit Rates

Stafford Farmer reported that FY2020 fringe benefit rates have been updated on the R&ED web site. He noted that the biggest change is that approved rate for FY2021 will be used for projections of future years. Mr. Farmer will continue to update health insurance rates using information from the student health center.

Mr. Farmer also noted that unsubmitted proposals from FY2020 should be re-numbered as IPFs for FY2021.

3. Participants for the 2020-21 Certificate in Grants and Contracts Administration Program

Ellen Zavala said that the most recent Certificate program will culminate in a virtual even on July 29, 2020. Eighteen people have already expressed interested in next year's program, including individuals representing five of the seven colleges. If any RAAC members know of anyone else who wants to participate in the program, August 12 is when the first meeting will be held. The meetings will be held virtually in FY2021.

The meeting ended at 2:10.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl P. B. Mahler, II