

RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL

Minutes of 12 October 2023

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Faculty Senate Research Policies Council was called to order at 2:32 on 12 October 2023 via Webex by Andre Venter, chair.

Members Present: Elissa Allen (substitute for Angela Groves), Onur Arugaslan, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Lofton Durham (fall 2023 substitute for Paul Solomon), Wanda Handley, Richard Meyer (substitute for Kristina Lemmer), Daria Orłowska, Selim Ozyurek, Remzi Seker, Leslie Solares, Bilinda Straight, Julian Vasquez Heilig, Andre Venter, Kevin Wanner

Members Absent: Alessandro Santos

Ex Officio: Anthony DeFulio, Mark Hurwitz

Guest(s): Sarah Summy, Faculty Senate President; Christine Stamper, Research Program Officer, Office of Research and Innovation

Quorum

A quorum was present with 16 members in attendance, of the 11 needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

[MOTION] It was moved by Durham, seconded by Arugaslan, to accept the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Minutes

It was noted that two corrections were needed to the 14 September 2023 minutes. To move Kevin Wanner as present and correct the College of Education and Human Development.

[MOTION] It was moved by Barrett, seconded by Durham, to approve the 14 September 2023 minutes as amended. The motion carries unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Faculty Senate President Summy explained actions taken by the WMU administration following the initial RPC setting of amounts for the Faculty Research Travel Fund this year. Communication of those changes was distributed to all faculty. President Summy requested that the 14 September 2023 RPC minutes be modified to reflect the changes and include a copy of the communication that was distributed. President Summy reiterated Article 34 Support for Faculty Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities of the WMU and American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Agreement. It is a unique situation as it involves the AAUP, Faculty Senate, and WMU Administration. As stated in Article 34.1 the administration of the fund shall follow policies established by the Research Policies Council and approved by the Faculty Senate. In practice, RPC has made recommendations of the maximum allocation amount for each of the four funding areas based on the total FRACASF funds allocated in ORI's annual budget. She noted that at the 12 September meeting, RPC referenced a 20-year-old Memorandum of Action ([MOA-03/10](#)) as a means to make recommendations of the maximum allocation amounts. As a partner in shared governance, the Faculty Senate Executive Board worked with Vice President Seker, Vice President and Provost Vasquez Heilig, Vice President Proudfoot, and President Montgomery to fund and establish the maximum award for eligible travel from the FRTF for the remainder of the 2023-24 fiscal year at \$800 per eligible faculty member. This rate is the same as was set in fiscal years 2017-18 through 2020-21. Additionally, the PPP&E fund was set at \$35,249, which is equal to the five-year average of expenditures in fiscal years 2018-19 to 2022-23. These actions were taken to allow RPC to improve the process, clarify roles, and develop an approach in line with Research-2 universities over the coming academic year.

Chair Venter shared concerns that faculty had brought to him in response to the announcements.

Ex Officio DeFulio did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Seker called for a decision on setting the Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition (PPP&E) amounts, and to start working on ensuring equity in processing of Faculty Research Travel Fund applications.

Byrd-Jacobs reported:

1. Meetings were held between graduate advisors, chairs, and administrative assistants.
2. Graduate students can apply for leaves of absence, which essentially stops the clock for time to degree and extends beyond the normal limits, but it is expected that during leave periods, students are not engaged with the University, and as a result of this, they lose access to Microsoft Office. She asked to warn students of the loss of access, along with the possible loss of access to buildings.
3. The Graduate Fair, which hosted 80 vendors and 130 students, offered information regarding Graduate and Professional schools at WMU.

Provost Vasquez Heilig did not provide a report.

Reports of Councils/Committees Standing Committee(s)

Ex Officio Hurwitz provided the Research Screening Committee report. He expresses concerns about the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award rules being vague. He questioned whether a faculty member on leave from their position is eligible to apply for a FRACAA award. Discussion was held. Chair Venter suggested that while the RPC is not the correct venue to reach a determination on this matter, the RPC might make a recommendation that faculty on leave can apply for FRACAA, but the onus lies mainly on faculty to understand their eligibility, and the determination ultimately rests with Human Resources. Hurwitz was asked when FRACAA will be available, to which he noted that the website is available now, and applications should open on 1 December and run through early February. President Summy raises concerns about why FRACAA committee members/proposal reviewers are compensated, while others on similar University committees are customarily not, as it may cause issues for the Faculty Senate and the Office of Research and Innovation. President Summy and Vice President Seker suggest this practice should end.

Unfinished Business

Ex Officio DeFulio suggests planning for completion of charges such that work be assigned to subcommittees that meet outside of the council meeting schedule. He suggests allocation of duties, with each council member working on at least one charge, and presents proposed assignments and a timetable for submitting work, with subcommittees reporting at future council meetings. Discussion was held.

New Business

Seker reopened the discussion regarding the award amount for PPP&E and suggested \$1000.

[MOTION] It was moved by Hurwitz, seconded by Durham, to set PPP&E at \$1000 for this fiscal year. The motion carried unanimously.

Seker led a discussion regarding how to make FRTF more equitable. Chair Venter noted that at the last meeting, it seemed there was no choice but to divide the budget by the number of eligible faculty, but Seker pointed out that there needs to be a cap on amounts, given the assumption that not all faculty will apply. Straight asked if three faculty on the same project all could apply for \$1000, to which Stamper replied that it has historically been the case. Vice President Seker questioned whether an MOA is needed to set allocations based on fiscal or academic year. This will be addressed under Charge 1. Ex Officio DeFulio suggested prioritizing FRACAA over FRTF funding, since the former is often more impactful. Discussion was held regarding the need to balance considerations of depth (on individual faculty members' careers) versus breadth (because more faculty benefit) of impact. It was expressed that there is a need to keep all funds active that are identified under AAUP Agreement Article 34.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Durham, seconded by Hurwitz, to adjourn at 4:21 p.m. The motion carries unanimously. The Research Policies Council will meet next on 9 November 2023 at 2:30 p.m. in Walwood 111W, Bertha Davis Room.

Approval

Submitted by Kevin Wanner, Acting Secretary

Minutes approved on 9 November 2023.