

---

**RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL**

Minutes of 14 March 2024

**Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Research Policies Council was called to order at 2:31 p.m. on 14 March 2024 in Walwood Commons Room 112E by Onur Arugaslan, vice chair.

**Members in Attendance:** Onur Arugaslan, Christopher Cheatham, Lofton Durham (substitute for Paul Solomon), Angela Groves, Wanda Hadley, Daria Orlowska, Selim Ozyurek, Remzi Seker, Jesse Smith, Leslie Solares, Julian Vasquez Heilig

**Members Absent:** Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Kristina Lemmer, Alessander Santos, Bilinda Straight, Andre Venter, Kevin Wanner

**Ex Officio in Attendance:** Anthony DeFulio, Mark Hurwitz

**Guests:** Joanne Mih, Office of Research and Innovation; Amy Naugle, Faculty Senate President Elect; Sarah Summy, Faculty Senate President

**Quorum**

A quorum was present with 13 members in attendance, of the 10 needed to establish a quorum.

**Agenda**

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

**Minutes**

An amendment was made to change “turn on investments” to “return on investments”.

**[MOTION]** It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Hurwitz, to approve the 8 February 2024 minutes as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

**Reports of Officers**

President Summy reported on Memorandum of Action (MOA) 24/02 *Faculty Research Travel Fund* (FRTF) to be presented at the 22 March 2024 Faculty Senate Meeting.

The following issues were discussed:

1. Pre-tenured faculty have a preference in receiving travel funding
2. Language regarding running out of funds
3. AAUP announcement about arbitration

President Summy presented the following options for RPC as to how to proceed with this result:

4. table and remove MOA,
5. Revise the MOA and bring it to the Senate again, or
6. table temporarily and bring to the Senate next year.

Vasquez Heilig arrived at the meeting at 2:37 p.m.

Cheatham arrived at the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

Groves arrived at the meeting at 2:42 p.m.

Ex Officio DeFulio reported that RPC can expect \$300,000 in funds for next year and will vote on how to allocate these funds in April. Article 34 requires that RPC come up with a distribution process for travel funding, which MOA 24/02 provided. The previous MOA 03/10, did not have a signature from the University President or the AAUP President, making MOA 03/10 invalid. However, there are 15 years of precedent in terms of procedures followed to disburse the FRTF. This means that if MOA 24/02 is not accepted, the travel fund procedure will default to first come first serve, which will result in running out of funds. Ex Officio DeFulio reported that before COVID, RPC funds totaled \$475k with administration covering overspending, which will no longer happen. Historically, FRTF covered trips up to \$800, with a one-trip limit. Based on historic data, there will be at least 200 trips, with no more than 300 trips, but FRTF does not have enough funds to cover everything. RPC can set a trip cap, but it cannot make changes to

the distribution system (since MOA 24/02 did not pass). If RPC were to set the FRTF cap to \$2,000 per trip, which is a meaningful amount for travel, then only 50 trips can be funded.

Seker arrived at the meeting at 2:47 p.m.

Vasquez Heilig commended RPC on coming up with an equitable plan (MOA 24/02), noting that \$800 is not enough to travel, because that is often only enough to cover the registration fee. There is money for faculty travel in departmental accounts totaling up to \$4 million, so this is not the only source of funds for travel. A process is needed that is consistent from year to year. Vasquez Heilig remarked that there are other options where faculty money is not caught up in FRTF. But that would require RPC to put a smaller amount of money into FRTF and put the remaining money into departmental funds.

Seker commended the RPC subcommittee for work on MOA 24/02 with President Summy's collaboration. The purpose of the MOA is to protect and make equitable faculty research travel, and right now there is no policy. Deferring the decision of how to proceed to RPC.

The following comments and discussions were made regarding how to proceed:

1. Comment regarding the futility of placing MOA 24/02 back or postponing indefinitely.
2. The AAUP President reached out to work with RPC; perhaps this is a path. RPC is waiting until the end of April for the resolution of the arbitration.
3. Comment against removing budgetary requirements from policy, because all funds have a budget, and it is unrealistic to pretend that this one should not.
4. How will RPC distribute money in the absence of a policy? RPC does not want to be in the position of setting a limit that is too low/not meaningful, but there is the risk of having the budget run out quickly.
5. Discussion about comments being misunderstandings versus tactical comments. The Senate was open for revisions, but it was foreclosed since the members voted for a delay.
6. A recommendation was made to move the MOA to next year, since it is not feasible to bring it back to the Senate floor without getting tabled again before the next fiscal year.
7. A suggestion was made to poll the entire faculty in Fall 2024 and see where the faculty stands on issues such as merit and rank, and revise the MOA based on the results. In the meantime, RPC could set a funding limit (such as \$250 or \$400), which is an uncomfortable decision but more equitable for travel throughout the year.
8. A comment was made that arbitration has a delay of one to two months, so the resolution will probably not come in April but rather in June or July. Another comment was made that it doesn't make sense to delay arbitration because the decision of up to two trips versus a guaranteed two trips results in the same process for RPC, but the problem is that the senators are waiting for the arbitration resolution and will continue to postpone the MOA.
9. A recommendation was made about bringing the MOA to the Faculty Senate during spring 2024 and being better prepared by providing more context and information around the MOA. This could be achieved by posting information on the Senate website to allow more data to be available and give faculty an explanation of the purpose of the MOA beyond just having a discussion on the Faculty Senate floor.
10. A recommendation was made for employing the Faculty Senate Executive Board as a stopgap between May and September, so that faculty traveling during Summer II are not left out.
11. A question was raised if faculty understand that by postponing MOA 24/02, there isn't a policy in effect? This will default travel funding to precedent, which is first come first serve, and will force RPC to set trip limits so that funds do not immediately run out.
12. A comment was made that bringing the MOA to the floor again before the May meeting doesn't make sense.
13. A question was raised about removing language about junior faculty preference from the policy.
14. A recommendation was made to have the Faculty Senate vote on policy item by item.

**[MOTION]** It was moved by Durham, seconded by DeFulio, for the policy to move back to the Charge 1 subcommittee for further discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vice chair Arugaslan reported on behalf of chair Venter that all charge reports should be sent to Venter for inclusion in the annual report. RPC committee members should read the annual report in preparation for a vote next month.

Faculty Senate President Summy and President-Elect Naugle left the meeting at 3:26 p.m.

### **Reports of University Representative**

Seker congratulated the College of Engineering and the Michigan Geological Survey for secured grants. Seker reported the following updates on FY2024 funds:

1. 26 FRTF applications were funded, resulting in \$150,814.68 spent
2. 31 Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition (PPP&E) applications were funded, resulting in \$22,031.97 spent
3. 8 Support for Faculty Scholars Awards (SFSA) were funded, resulting in \$15,148 spent
4. Remaining balance is \$267,795.35

Vasquez Heilig reported that there is \$4 million in departmental accounts that could help carry over when research travel funds have been exhausted.

### **Reports of Council/Committee Standing Committees**

Ex Officio Hurwitz reported that Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRAACA) funding is ongoing. Thirty-nine proposals were submitted this year, higher than the pre-pandemic average, even with the funding amount dropped. FRAACA funding is subdivided into seven panels: four are quantitative, two are qualitative, and one is creative arts. Individual reviews are due 25 March, then panels will meet and have a collective decision on April 1. Ex Officio Hurwitz will summarize panel recommendations and report back to RPC as part of the April meeting, when RPC will vote on funding. Ex Officio Hurwitz reported that 22 reviewers have responded, and is still waiting on two who need to send in their conflict-of-interest forms. One additional reviewer will need to be recruited since an individual who agreed to serve on the quantitative panel in the fall opted out. Three reviews are necessary for each proposal, and this gap leaves six proposals with just two reviews. Seker stated that he can assist in recruiting a reviewer. A concern was raised about the challenges of finding reviewers for FRAACA within a smaller faculty body, especially with the increasing number of proposals.

Charge 1: Ex Officio DeFulio commented that the subcommittee will report out at the next meeting about setting limits and when the MOA will be brought to the Faculty Senate floor.

Charge 3: Arugaslan commented that the report has been sent to Venter for the annual report.

### **Unfinished Business**

Ex Officio DeFulio reported that MOA 24/XX Bio Safety is still waiting on a conversation between Seker and President Summy. It is still unclear what RPC's oversight is, given that this policy is already overseen by another group on campus.

### **New Business**

None.

### **Adjournment**

**[MOTION]** It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Seker, to adjourn the meeting at 3:48 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Research Policies Council will meet next on 11 April 2024 at 2:30 p.m. via Webex teleconferencing.

### **Approval**

Submitted by Daria Orłowska, Secretary

Minutes approved on 11 April 2024.