
RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL

Minutes of 9 January 2025

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Research Policies Council was called to order at 2:32 p.m. on 9 January 2025 in Walwood Commons Room 112W by Andre Venter, chair.

Members in Attendance: Hellen Agbevey, Onur Arugaslan, Mert Atilhan, Carrie Barrett, Patrick Bennett, Amy Bocko, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Christopher Cheatham, Lofton Durham, Angela Groves, Wanda Hadley, Michael Osei, Selim Ozyurek, Jesse Smith, Remzi Seker, Andre Venter

Members Absent: Bilinda Straight, German Zarate-Sandez

Guest: Christine Stamper, Office of Research and Innovation

Ex Officio in Attendance: Anthony DeFulio

Quorum

A quorum was present with 17 members in attendance, of the 11 needed to establish a quorum.

Agenda

The agenda was amended to remove Unfinished Business Item 8a. The item will be included in the reports of officers.

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Atilhan, to accept the agenda as amended. The motion carried.

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Ozyurek, to approve the 14 November 2024 minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Chair Venter reported that 24 Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA) applications have been submitted. RPC members will be assigned to review applications and will use InfoReady system to complete reviews.

Ex Officio DeFulio gave an update on Charge 3 – the development of a new Memorandum of Action (MOA) to incorporate the Four Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund (FRACASF) Programs into a single document. MOA was approved by the Faculty Senate. However, WMU American Association of University Professors (AAUP) contacted the Faculty Senate to request RPC to pause this issue. Charge 3 has been temporarily delayed, giving the AAUP time to review. Consequently, Charge 3 has been postponed until at least the February meeting. If recommendations for revisions are made, the MOA will be returned to RPC in advance of the February meeting.

Reports of University Representatives

Seker reported the following:

1. Total budget is \$300,000 for FRACASF fiscal year 2025. Funding distribution across the four funds is as follows:
 - a. Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA) budget is \$100,000. Maximum awards are \$10,000. There are no applications yet, so the full balance remains.
 - b. Faculty Research Travel Fund (FRTF) was allocated \$160,000. The maximum award amount is \$800. There were 77 applications, all awarded. \$98,840.20 remains in the fund.

- c. Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition (PPP&E) budget is \$20,000. The maximum award is \$1,000. Nine applications were awarded, leaving a balance of \$16,039.
 - d. Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA) total budget was \$20,000. There have been no applications submitted; the full balance remains.
 - e. There have been 86 total applications across the four funding sources. These numbers represent where the budgets should be at this point in the year.
2. The National Science Foundation (NSF) higher education survey rankings of universities based on external funding were published in November. WMU moved up by 24 places. WMU increased externally funded grants significantly and is performing much better than in previous years. There are several other universities that WMU surpassed based on the most recent rankings. WMU's reporting at NSF is joined with our medical school, which influences rankings.
 3. WMU made improvements for the last fiscal year in terms of intellectual property, expenditures, and patents.

The topic of whether and to what extent the medical school affects WMU's rankings in terms of NSF funding was discussed. Seker stated that, overall, WMU benefits from its relationship with the medical school when it comes to the NSF Higher Education Research Development (HERD) ranking.

Byrd-Jacobs reported that graduate students remain an important part of WMU's research enterprise. Graduate student travel grants are open, with applications due 18 February. Faculty will serve as reviewers of these applications. College fellowships are open for awards and are also due in February. WMU is currently accepting nominations for all-university awards, which are reviewed by the Graduate Studies Council. Byrd-Jacobs asked RPC members to encourage graduate students to apply for graduate awards. Graduate students are nominated for both regional and national awards. Graduate students do a lot of teaching and have a good chance of receiving these awards. This year, the nominee is a student from the English department. There are many different events upcoming to support graduate students, including writing circles. The GSA three-minute thesis competition is coming up and will be held at the student center. Encourage all to attend and volunteer to judge. Byrd-Jacobs also commented that The Hilltop Review is back after a couple of years on hiatus.

Cheatham offered a reminder about experience-driven learning grants and encouraged people to apply.

Reports of Council/Committee Standing Committees

Chair Venter reported on the Research Screening Committee FRACAA. Applications are due 9 February. A recording is available of the committee workshop held last week. There are three mentors for the FRACCA award. Chair Venter asked RPC members to volunteer as reviewers, and several agreed. There is anticipation of awarding 10 applicants, and other RPC members may be contacted to review applications.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

Chair Venter commented on a new charge request concerning name changes to the various funding sources under the FRACAA Support Fund. Chair Venter asked for clarification regarding questions faculty members have about course buyouts and how this relates to FRACCA. A discussion ensued about FRACCA policies. It was noted that there is a difference between buyouts and release time. Some members noted that "buyouts" stipulate "one course" in the academic year and that buyouts are based on a percentage (12.5%) of faculty salary. It was determined that the FRACCA budget would not allow for more than one course buyout. However, the FRACAA guidelines state that "faculty members may use funds designated for faculty release time only at the actual cost of the part-time replacement and with the approval of the department chair and dean". Thus, if a faculty want release time for both semesters in the academic year, they should upload a document of approval signed by the dean and department chair. Chair Venter suggested that clarification of this in the policy guidelines may be needed, but all agreed that

it is up to FRACCA applicants to come up with clear and reasonable plans within budget and to well-justify the need for the release time(s).

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Seker, that FRACCA policy allows as many course releases as can fit in the current budget, as determined by the RPC. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Venter raised the issue of renaming the four funding sources to better reflect their uses. His comments and suggestions were as follows:

1. That the FRTF is inappropriately named because this fund is only used by faculty to present and disseminate research, not to conduct or fund research projects. Chair Venter suggested the FRTF should be renamed the Faculty Travel Fund, or FTF;
2. The FRACSAF could be renamed "RISE," the Research Innovation Scholarship Expenditures Fund.
3. FRACCA could be renamed "ASPIRE," the Award for Scholarship, Performance, Innovation, and Research toward External funding;
4. The SFSA could be renamed SSFF, Scholarship Support for Faculty Funding.

Chair Venter opened these suggestions to RPC, and there was discussion about how name changes might affect contract language. Seker noted that the contract's naming of these programs is very specific and could cause problems, and that the RPC should discuss this with the Executive Board. Ex Officio DeFulio noted that the Faculty Senate Executive Board will be meeting with AAUP about an MOA that relates to these issues, and questions and concerns could be addressed at that meeting. Chair Venter stressed that RPC should make name changes before the next contract. It was agreed that RPC should wait to discuss name changes further until after the Senate leadership has met with AAUP representatives. Chair Venter agreed that in due course, he will be the one to put together an MOA to formally propose new names for each funding program after getting approval from the RPC.

Agbevey left the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Seker, to adjourn the meeting at 3:38 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Research Policies Council will meet next on 13 February 2025 at 2:30 p.m. in-person in Walwood Commons Bertha Davis Room 111W.

Approval

Submitted by Jesse Smith, Secretary

Minutes approved on 13 March 2025