
RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL

Minutes of 13 February 2025

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Research Policies Council was called to order at 3:05 p.m. on 13 February 2025 in Walwood Commons Room 112W by Andre Venter, chair.

Members in Attendance: Mert Atilhan, Patrick Bennett, Amy Bocko, Benjamin Bradley, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Christopher Cheatham, Wanda Hadley, Deirdre Nieves (substitute for Bilinda Straight), Michael Osei, Selim Ozyurek, Jesse Smith, Remzi Seker, Andre Venter, German Zarate-Sandez

Members Absent: Hellen Agbevey, Onur Arugaslan, Carrie Barrett, Lofton Durham, Angela Groves

Ex Officio in Attendance: Anthony DeFulio

Quorum

A quorum was present with 15 members in attendance, of the 11 needed to establish a quorum.

RPC welcomed a new member, Ben Bradley, from the College of Health and Human Services.

Agenda

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Bocko, to postpone approval of the 9 January minutes for corrections. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of University Representatives

Seker reported the following:

1. Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund (FRACASF) report FY 2025 included 109 total applications across the four funding sources, 98 for Faculty Research Travel Fund (FRTF) and 11 for Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition (PPP&E). Of the total \$300,000 budget, there is \$217,131.54 remaining.
2. WMU's administration is working through the implications of the recent executive orders regarding the impact on federal grants. Two grants to our institution have been canceled. There has been discussion about what the government's process was for freezing already approved grants. It was suggested to craft a response built on WMU's core values to target addressing the needs of students and stakeholders. Responding to the cancellations has consumed a lot of bandwidth at the Office of Research and Innovation and the university administration in recent weeks. While WMU's externally funded research and creative scholarship expenditures may go down, the goal is to work through this in a productive way, which strengthens our community. Questions have arisen about what will happen with proposals that were supposed to be reviewed imminently. The answer is that, for now, most of these reviews have been put on hold. Proposal submissions continue as deadlines still apply. Similarly, progress reports must continue according to the milestones set out in respective projects. However, regarding current approved projects, until researchers hear directly from the relevant funding agency to stop work on existing grants and contracts, the work should continue, and invoices should be submitted for processing as soon as possible. There are many unanswered questions, and it is a complex undertaking that universities are dealing with. WMU is conversing with other universities and professional organizations, and looking for appropriate ways to navigate recent changes while remaining in compliance with the law. Changes involving grants are for those from federal agencies only and not private foundations. Cheatham mentioned that the administration is being mindful of how funding freezes and the issues reported by Seker above will impact WMU's students.

Seker and Cheatham left at 3:30 p.m.

Byrd-Jacobs reported that dissertation completion applications continue to be submitted and that there are two significant upcoming research events for graduate students. The first is the three-minute thesis event occurring on 18 February at the student center. The second is the 18th annual Research, Innovation, and Creative Scholarship Graduate Poster Day event, occurring on 10 April at Waldo Library. There is a need for faculty judges for the poster event. RPC members are encouraged to serve as judges.

Byrd-Jacobs commented on a fellowship program for WMU graduate students interested in becoming faculty and/or pursuing careers in academia. The fellowship award is \$35,000. It is stipulated that awardees are required to get a job in academia, or the money has to be returned. It was asked whether post-doctoral research positions would meet the fellowship conditions. Most likely, but there was uncertainty, and Byrd-Jacobs would seek clarification.

Reports of Officers

Chair Venter commented on the recent Memorandum of Action (MOA) 24/11, in which the RPC recommended that the four funds subsumed under FRACASF be administered in a manner consistent with recent practices, and the 2021-26 agreement between WMU and the WMU Chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). The MOA was approved by the Faculty Senate at the January meeting.

Ex Officio DeFulio noted that MOA 24/11 was a significant accomplishment for the RPC and should make things clearer and easier for all parties.

Reports of Council/Committee Standing Committees

Chair Venter reported on the Research Screening Committee FRACAA. Forty-one FRACAA applications were received, but we can only fund 10 of them. The Research Screening Committee is in the process of inviting reviewers. Chair Venter commented that approximately 22 reviewers are needed and that RPC members may be invited to serve. Once sub-committees have been formed, they will meet, review applications, and make recommendations.

Venter reported on the status of Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA) applications. The RPC received 24 applications this round; 10 can be funded. Awards have been decided, and Joanne Mih of ORI will notify winners and unsuccessful applicants soon.

Ex Officio DeFulio left the meeting at 3:44 p.m.

New Business

Chair Venter distributed a document regarding the renaming of the FRACASF programs. The RPC agreed to complete/comment on these at the next meeting. A concern was raised that non-faculty might apply to these funding sources, given the name changes and possible confusion as to who is eligible. Another concern is the interpretation of the word "scholarship" because this can mean different things (e.g., "scholarship" as a source of academic funding vs. scholarly activities themselves). There was discussion about the meaning of the proposed funding source names and their associated terms. It was noted that the Faculty Travel Fund (FTF) has already been adopted as part of MOA 24/11. There was discussion of the role of open access publishing agreements funding and how this might relate to the current FRACASF programs in the future.

Chair Venter asked whether the RPC could present the existing and recently approved MOA 24/11 and use the new names within it and return it to the Faculty Senate for approval, or whether RPC needs to create a new MOA that separately proposes the new name changes. In the first case, RPC would duplicate MOA 24/11 as accepted but would just insert the new names. However, there was concern that this would open the whole MOA 24/11 for new discussion or that this process might confuse with the Faculty Senate. It was then agreed that it is better to create a new MOA to propose any name changes to the funding sources. It was also agreed that further discussion of renaming programs would be moved

until the March RPC meeting so that all members have a chance to consider the proposed name changes and offer comments or revisions. Chair Venter hoped to have a formal motion that could be adopted at the March RPC on this matter. The suggested name changes are appended at the end of the minutes.

Unfinished Business

None.

Announcements

Nieves from Geography, substituting for Straight, introduced herself to the RPC.

Chair Venter commented that his term limits as chair will be up this cycle and that the RPC will need to decide on a new chair by the April meeting.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Byrd-Jacobs, seconded by Atilhan, to adjourn the meeting at 4:03 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Research Policies Council will meet next on 13 March 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 2026.