
RESEARCH POLICIES COUNCIL

Minutes of 13 March 2025

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 13 March 2025 in Walwood Commons Room 111W by Andre Venter, chair.

Members in Attendance: Onur Arugaslan, Mert Atilhan, Carrie Barrett, Patrick Bennett, Amy Bocko, Benjamin Bradley, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Lofton Durham, Angela Groves, Beixi Li (substitute for Wanda Hadley), Deirdre Nieves (substitute for Bilinda Straight), Selim Ozyurek, Jesse Smith, Christine Stamper (substitute for Remzi Seker), Andre Venter, German Zarate-Sandez

Members Absent: Christopher Cheatham, Michael Osei, Hellen Agbevey

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

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Ozyurek, seconded by Arugaslan, to approve the January minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Bocko, to postpone approval of the 13 February minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Chair Venter did not provide a report.

Ex Officio DeFulio did not provide a report.

Reports of University Representatives

Seker reported on the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund (FRACASF) report for FY 2025. There have so far been 134 total applications across the four funding sources, 108 for the Faculty Research Travel Fund (FRTF), 16 for the Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition (PPP&E), and 10 for the Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA). Of the total \$300,000 budget, there is \$112,856.56 remaining. Zarate-Sandez questioned the possibility and procedure for a second application to FRTF funds by individual faculty if funding is left over. Ex Officio DeFulio encouraged RPC members to note the level of unmet travel needs in their respective departments and to encourage all faculty to apply to the FRTF twice if needed to demonstrate to the administration the increasing need for travel funding among WMU faculty.

Byrd-Jacobs reported that there were 10 graduate student participants at the latest Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) event this year, one of whom was selected to compete in another event in Ohio. Byrd-Jacobs commented on the King-Chavez-Parks Future Faculty Fellowship program (FFF) operated by the state of Michigan. This is a 35K fellowship opportunity for graduate students who pursue careers in academia. A question that arose at the last RPC meeting regarding whether post-docs would count as pursuing a career in academia was answered "yes". Post-docs "may count", but students would have to get prior approval. There was a question about whether there can be more than one awardee per institution.

Byrd-Jacobs responded that there can be more than one, but there aren't often a lot of applications from WMU, so that would be unusual. There was discussion about the process and deadlines for faculty writing letters of support for graduate student applicants for this fellowship.

The Graduate Studies Council is currently reviewing the graduate catalog in an attempt to clarify some of the language. There should be a Memorandum of Action (MOA) forthcoming on that issue. Doctoral candidacy policy will be one of the issues addressed in the MOA. Byrd-Jacobs commented that the current policy needs revision because it is causing confusion and/or inhibiting students from applying for doctoral candidacy.

Ex Officio DeFulio asked whether graduate students get healthcare from WMU. Byrd-Jacobs responded "no". Sindecuse no longer provides healthcare insurance for graduate students. It was mentioned that this could be a reason WMU does not receive more graduate student applications than it does.

Reports of Council/Committee Standing Committees

Chair Venter reported on the Research Screening Committee Faculty and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA). Forty-two applications were received. Twenty-nine faculty members volunteered to review the applications. Panels were created with four to six proposals each for review. The due date for completed reviews is 25 March. Decisions will be made by the April RPC meeting.

Chair Venter commented on this issue of the anonymity of FRACCA applicants, particularly when applicants cite their own work within their proposals. This makes anonymity very difficult to ensure, as reviewers might come across information that reveals the identities of applicants. Chair Venter questioned whether RPC should consider removing the requirement around anonymity, as it does not make sense to pretend FRACCA applications are truly anonymous. There was some discussion of this, and a clarification was made that this would only take effect on the applicant side, and that reviewers would remain anonymous to applicants. Ex Officio DeFulio suggested that the RPC remove the current policy concerning the required anonymity of applicants in reviewing FRACCA applications.

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Bocko, to revise the current policy and remove the requirement of anonymity of FRACCA applicants. With one abstention, the motion carried.

Durham joined the meeting at 2:54 p.m.

New Business

Ex Officio DeFulio commented on the finalization of Charge 2 (b) Recombinant or Synthetic DNA Biosafety Policy 17-50.7 and raised the issue of exemptions from future RPC reviews: Policies Under the Purview of WMU Office of Research and Innovation Mandated by External Authority. Ex Officio DeFulio suggested that Charge 2(b) is not for the RPC to comment on because it is managed externally and at the federal level, and that as such, RPC should request not to be presented with this charge again because it is out of RPC's purview. There was discussion about the possibility of faculty making a complaint related to this charge in the future, and if RPC was unaware or unable to respond appropriately because RPC did not review or comment on the charge, that this would be a problem. Ex Officio DeFulio commented that RPC does not know how this charge was given to RPC in the first place, and that the Faculty Senate Executive Board and the Faculty Senate should determine which council should be assigned to this charge in the future. Ex Officio DeFulio and Chair Venter agreed that they would create and submit the appropriate language to the Faculty Senate.

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Atilhan, that the RPC take no action on Charge 2(b) at present. The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Venter commented on FRACASF and active department chairs' eligibility. Many department chairs conduct research and contribute beyond administrative duties, but do not have access to the research funds RPC manages because of their role as administrators (not faculty represented by the union). Chair Venter opened the issue for discussion. Bocko will discuss this issue with the libraries as they are currently looking for a chair. Byrd-Jacobs grappled with this issue herself as an administrator, and that any research funds made available to administrators by WMU would need to be in addition to what is already allocated, as chairs and other administrators would not want to be competing for the same

funding as faculty. Ex Officio DeFulio commented that this issue is clearly articulated in the union contract and is not a part of RPC's purview.

Barrett left the meeting at 3:04 p.m.

Atilhan left the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

Unfinished Business

Chair Venter returned to the issue of renaming the FRACASF programs and commented on a draft MOA 25/07 (an addendum to MOA 24/11) regarding possible FRACASF name changes. Chair Venter clarified that under this MOA, only the names of the four funding sources would change, and nothing about the funding processes would change. In the previously distributed document from the last RPC meeting, members were asked to complete a survey regarding their preferences for name changes. There was a discussion about a variety of possible name changes. Once again, a concern was raised about whether RPC can make these changes because of the AAUP contract language. Ex Officio DeFulio mentions that if AAUP does not sign the MOA with the proposed name changes, then none of these changes can happen. Chair Venter commented that if the AAUP agreed and would sign the MOA, then the name changes could be implemented under the next contract negotiations (a list of possible name changes can be found in the attached document). Ex Officio DeFulio suggested the Faculty Support Fund in place of Research Innovation Scholarship Expenditures (RISE) or FRACASF. There was further discussion about whether RPC should use any of the proposed name changes that use acronyms at all, and whether it might be better to use the full names of each fund.

Chair Venter conducted an informal survey of RPC members on the use of new acronyms. The results were six in favor of new acronyms, five opposed to new acronyms.

[MOTION] It was moved by Arugaslan, seconded by Bocko, to approve submitting MOA 25/07 with the proposed name changes to the Faculty Senate. With one abstention, the motion carried.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by DeFulio, seconded by Atilhan, to adjourn the meeting at 3:35 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Research Policies Council will meet next on 10 April 2025 at 2:30 p.m. in-person in Walwood Commons Bertha Davis Room 111W.

Approval

Submitted by Jesse Smith, Secretary

Minutes approved on 10 April 2025.