

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE SCHOLARSHIP COUNCIL**Minutes of 17 September 2026****Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Western Michigan University Faculty Senate Research and Creative Scholarship Council was called to order at 2:33 p.m. on 17 September 2026 at Walwood Connable Room, 112 E, by Amy Bocko, chair.

Members in Attendance: Onur Arugaslan, Upul Attanayake, Amy Bocko, Benjamin Brady, Christine Byrd-Jacobs, Alayna Houts, Beixi Li, Gellert Mezei, Jesse Smith, Bilinda Straight, Remzi Seker (substitute for Melinda Brakenberry), Rohullah Wahidi, German Zarate-Sandez

Members Absent: Christopher Cheatham, Sally Hadden, David Kemp

Ex Officio: Lofton Durham, Andre Venter

Quorum

A quorum was present with 15 members in attendance, of the 12 needed to establish quorum.

Agenda

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

Minutes

[MOTION] It was moved by Durham, seconded by Zarate-Sandez, to approve the 3 September 2026 minutes as distributed. The motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers

Ex Officio Durham explained that the election of officers needed to be completed. Bilinda Straight, was nominated and accepted the nomination. There were no other nominees.

[MOTION] It was moved by Durham, seconded by Byrd-Jacobs, to elect Bilinda Straight as vice chair of the council. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports of Officers

Chair Bocko reported that she would be reviewing the Creative Scholarship Council 2026–27 charges later in the meeting.

Ex Officio Durham reported that the council would spend the majority of the meeting discussing the charges.

Reports of University Representatives

Senior Vice President Seker provided the Office of Research and Innovation (ORI) report. For Fiscal Year 2026, the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Support Fund (FRACASF) has a total budget of \$440,000. There have been 49 Faculty Research Travel Fund (FRTF) awards totaling \$61,615.71 of the \$300,000 available funds. The Preparation and Publication of Papers and Exhibition of Creative Works (PPP&E) program has provided six awards totaling \$4,797.33 of the \$20,000 available funds. The Support for Faculty Scholars Award (SFSA), with a total budget of \$20,000, and the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA), with a total budget of \$100,000, have not yet been awarded. The total remaining balance across all awards is \$373,586.96. Senior Vice President Seker commented on the increased FRTF funding and noted that it will remain at the same level for this cycle. He also discussed the award language regarding the number of trips the funds may cover for each faculty recipient. He reiterated that all applicants will be required to have their department/unit chair review and justify the travel as part of the approval process.

Senior Vice President Seker reported that WMU had a strong year for research expenditures despite budget and federal funding challenges. He discussed changes affecting federal research funding, F&A rates, proposal requirements, and other

regulatory considerations. The ORI continues to monitor these developments and support faculty and student research. Seker encouraged discussion regarding WMU's research identity and distinctive strengths and suggested this as a future RCSC agenda item. He also reported 29 new patents and encouraged increased undergraduate and graduate student participation in research. When asked, he confirmed that the new Faculty Research Travel Fund began 1 July 2026, aligning with the fiscal year.

Attanayake joined the meeting at 2:42 p.m.

Dean Bryd-Jacobs provided the Graduate College report; the deadline for graduate student research and travel grants is 6 October 2026. She reminded the Council that awards are for up to \$1,000 for research and/or graduate student travel and that students may receive multiple awards during their time in their programs. There are both fall and spring application cycles. She noted that the grants are competitive, but approximately 65–70% of applicants receive an award each cycle, and she encouraged students to apply. She also mentioned that the Graduate College offers office hours and other opportunities for students to learn more about the application process.

Dean Byrd-Jacobs noted that there will no longer be a summer commencement ceremony. She commented that it remains unclear what this will mean for doctoral student graduates, given possible timeline discrepancies for dissertation defenses and other program completion requirements. She stated that the University will likely use the December graduation ceremony to accommodate doctoral students but will keep the council updated once a decision has been made.

Reports of Council/Committee Standing Committees

Ex Officio Venter reported that the Research Screening Committee's Support for Faculty Scholars Award and Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award are currently open for applications. The Research Screening Committee will begin recruiting reviewers soon.

Unfinished Business

Chair Bocko stated that the remainder of the meeting would be used to review and discuss the RCSC 2026–27 charges. She noted that artificial intelligence (AI) will be a major focus of the RCSC’s agenda this year. She stated that there is not yet a university-wide approach for addressing the opportunities and challenges presented by AI. She referenced a report produced by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc AI Committee and encouraged council members to read it. She also encouraged discussion about how the University should navigate research and teaching practices. It was noted that some universities looked to the practices of other institutions to address the challenges. There was discussion about faculty looking to the AI recommendations of their respective professional societies and other external organizations for ideas and general guidance. There was further discussion about how other universities are addressing AI and how WMU can learn more about addressing academic integrity issues involving both students and faculty.

Discussion was held regarding the Faculty Research and Creative Activities Award (FRACAA). It was suggested that additional guidance be highlighted for applications where there appears to be confusion. It was clarified that the ORI does not provide funding or make award decisions. The University uses a peer-review process involving faculty volunteer reviewers. Information about FRACAA is available and applicants should be encouraged to become more familiar with the application requirements and process. It was observed that there tend to be more quantitative project submissions than qualitative project submissions. The council discussed ways to encourage more submissions from qualitative researchers. Funding levels are influenced by the number and types of applications received. The council also discussed the long-term equity of awards and the work of reviewer panels, including the difficulty of finding reviewers. Faculty mentors are available to assist applicants with the FRACAA process.

According to charge #2 the RCSC needs to determine a method to recycle/refurbish/sell University equipment that is no longer being used. This includes information technology, laboratory, and scientific research equipment. There was discussion about the need for a mechanism to determine the value of this equipment and return proceeds to the University or departments when appropriate. For National Science Foundation (NSF)-

funded equipment, 90% of proceeds from the sale of used or outdated equipment must be returned to the funding agency, while the university may retain proceeds from sales of less than \$10,000. The council agreed that these issues warrant further exploration and that the RCSC should learn more about the applicable government requirements.

[MOTION] It was moved by Straight, seconded by Byrd-Jacobs, that RCSC accept the charges as provided. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

None.

Announcements

None.

Adjournment

[MOTION] It was moved by Seker, seconded by Venter, to adjourn the meeting at 3:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously. The Research and Creative Scholarship Council will meet next on 8 October 2026, at 2:30 p.m., in person in Walwood Connable Room, 112 E.

Approval

Submitted by Jesse M. Smith, Secretary

Minutes were approved 8 October 2026