

Research Advisory Council

Minutes of September 9th 2019 Meeting

3.30 p.m. Brookside Room, Administrative Center

Members present: Sarah Dallas, Chris Liu, Sheri Gromley, Michelle Maher, Brenda Dingley, Amanda Emerson, Alex Holsinger (sub for Lori Sexton), Beth Vonnahme, Russ Melchert, Mark Nichols, Paula Monaghan-Nichols, John Kevern, Jennifer Allsworth, Jeff Price

1. Approval of minutes from August 2019 meeting

The minutes were approved with no changes except for expansion of the attendee list (Michelle Maher and Brenda Dingley were added).

2. Mark Nichols announced the Veatch and Trustees Faculty Awards

- a. N.T. Veatch Award: Kun Cheng, School of Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences
- b. Trustees Faculty Scholar Award: Benjamin Woodson, College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Political Sciences
- c. Trustees Faculty Fellow Award: Jeffrey Price, School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry

3. Comments from Vice Chancellor for Research, Dr. Yusheng Liu

- a. Dr. Liu first noted aspects of the grant submission and management process that his office would oversee: proposal development, the pre-award process, research compliance, student involvement with grants, fiscal management, the post-award process, and product transfer. He needs advice on current policies that need to be revisited, the management process, and the role of leadership for all 7 of these areas. He noted that the Deans do not have time to read and analyze the details of all proposals submitted from their units. For example, there might be an implicit cost share of which the Dean is not aware. The University wants to double research funding to grow our grant award level into an R1 level.
- b. He also noted that other factors besides grant funding dollars are required to become rated at the R1 level. For instance, the number of graduate students produced every year must reach a certain level. He described goals for his office in addition to elevation of grant funding for UMKC. There is a need to link research to educational experience and bolster the research environment by increasing the number of graduate fellowships. We need to invest in research cluster areas that are broad enough not to

be exclusionary. How do we prioritize a campus wide strategy for these areas? How do we prepare the University budget for growth and prioritize fund-raising through a more active research foundation? How can we partner with industry and community for industrial and translational research that will involve STEM and medical areas but not agricultural research? How can we contribute to development of research in the community?

4. Discussion with Dr. Liu on the RAC's view of its priorities and how to address these in the coming months.

- a. The RAC needs to come up with a solid plan to advance these priorities.
- b. There was a discussion of various problems with the hiring process at UMKC. Paula Monaghan-Nichols noted that it is difficult to hire researchers like postdocs. There are too many steps to go through. In addition, we need more flexibility on the nature of positions. Sarah Dallas noted that one can get an applicant for a postdoctoral position who is not qualified for this position but could be hired as a technician, and yet one cannot immediately re-open the position in another category. We need to hire people more quickly.
- c. There was a discussion with Dr. Liu, of some specific research core facilities that are currently funded by individual units but might be funded by the University to promote greater access and more financial stability. We may want to put together UMKC-wide cores with all basic things needed. Grant support of these facilities means instability in the level of support, and it is difficult to hire core managers with lack of stable support. Dr. Liu noted that his office used to receive IDC support but no longer does. Therefore, there is no money now for centralized services. ORS is also responsible for covering the costs of overspent grants; ORS should not be responsible for these costs, which should be covered by the PI or the unit responsible. There was a discussion of possible core needs. Jeff Price presented a document that described the various projects and expenses of the SBS proteomics facility. In addition, Pharmacy and Chemistry have mass spectrometry instruments and NMRs that need support. He noted that Dentistry has Electron Microscopy and Confocal Microscopy cores. Dean Melchert suggested that we need a Big Data core, with statistics and data extraction expertise. Paula Monaghan-Nichols suggested a phenotyping and animal behavior core. John Kevern suggested a materials characterization core. Faculty were encouraged to draft documents like those submitted by the proteomics core to demonstrate current work-load and expenses.
- d. Dr. Liu expressed interest in growing our NSF grant portfolio. These grants can be linked to education and outreach to minority populations.

Paula Monaghan Nichols noted that the Schools of Medicine, Pharmacy and Engineering are proposing a health science PhD program.

- e. The RAC discussed possible changes to the Faculty Funding for Excellence awards. Dr. Liu wondered if individual awards should be smaller than in the past. We only have \$100,000 total per year. Perhaps we need to shrink the maximum award size from \$15000 per project to \$5000 per project. It was noted by several committee members that more money than \$5000 is needed for “wet bench” biomedical research. Mark Nichols suggested that it might be appropriate to offer these awards only to assistant professors. Potentially we can define the number of grants in each range – for instance, 3 in the \$15000 range and 8 in the \$5000 range. We need to follow up on the future success of awardees; faculty should not be allowed to apply again until they have applied for a federal grant if they are a biomedical researcher. In the end the RAC decided to make no changes this year, since the deadline is rapidly approaching.
5. **The 2019-2020 RAC roster will be reviewed** - the terms for several of the current RAC members expire this fall, as many of the members were appointed in 2017. Some of these representatives should agree to remain on the committee for another year, so that there is some continuity of the committee roster. Sarah Dallas and Jeff Price will submit a list of potential initial terms for current members. We will use BOX rather than Canvas to post future minutes and documents.
 6. **Elect a new Vice Chair for the RAC** - our SOP stipulates that the Vice Chair should become Chair after the Chair's 2-year term expires. Sarah Dallas, who has been Chair for 2 years, will step down as Chair, and Jeff Price will become Chair after we elect a new Vice Chair. Michelle Maher nominated John Kevern for Vice Chair.
 7. **Adjourn**