

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE



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April 3, 2009

VICE PRESIDENT STEVEN BECKWITH

Re: Senate concerns related to the MRU/MRPI RFP

Dear Steve:

The Academic Council discussed the MRU/MRPI Request for Proposals at its meeting on March 25. Please note that the Senate continues its strong support for competing these research funds because of the difficulty of establishing new initiatives or programs without competition. I am writing to convey Council's concerns and to respectfully request that several strategies be undertaken to address them.

As you know, shared governance procedures govern the establishment and disestablishment of MRUs. Divisional Senate Chairs noted serious concerns on their campuses that the RFP violates these procedures and shared governance principles. While the RFP competition is not inherently tied to disestablishment procedures, it will likely result in the establishment of some new MRUs and it may result in decreased funding for existing MRUs. As such, there is the potential for some existing MRUs to be disestablished if they are heavily dependent upon funding from UCOP. Thus, it is important to note that Senate procedures for establishment and disestablishment of MRUs will need to be followed under these circumstances. In addition, consideration should be given to transitional funding for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows to find other positions when circumstances warrant disestablishment of a MRU.

In our multiple requests for re-competition, the Senate has emphasized the following principles: 1) MRU money is intended to be seed money to establish new, innovative, collaborative, and cross-campus research initiatives; (2) each MRU is to be reviewed every five years using the Compendium process, with attention given to the need for continued funding and proven success; and (3) our MRU policies indicate a 15 year sunset clause for MRUs. In addition to requesting a re-competition of the funds, the Academic Council's December 22, 2006 letter to then VP for Research, Larry Coleman recommended several other actions. These requests included an advisory body, a taxonomy of multicampus research entities, and a multi-year phase-in of the competition. It is important to note

that not all multi-campus research funding recipients are actually MRUs and they should be considered separately according to the taxonomy previously proposed. We recognize that the multi-year phase-in necessarily means that it will take considerably longer to establish new MRUs; however, transition funds for existing programs may be necessary.

Last week members of Council wrestled with the challenge of developing recommendations that would simultaneously support the competitive process, free up funds, and ensure that the competition does not undermine shared governance. On behalf of the Academic Council, I respectfully request that you undertake the following procedures for addressing the concerns noted above. Most will require notification to campuses and potential Principal Investigators, and you may want to modify the RFP accordingly. We believe that these changes can be made without affecting the timeline you have already established for reviewing proposals and announcing awards, although they are likely to require a longer transition period to new funding patterns.

- Issue a formal announcement to the Chancellors and the Academic Senate that decisions to fund or deny funding to proposals submitted in response to the RFP do not constitute decisions to establish or disestablish any formal MRU, and these decisions are independent of the Compendium review process for establishing or disestablishing an MRU.
- Include in the announcement an explanation that formal reviews will be carried out as prescribed by the shared governance procedures codified in the "Compendium: Universitywide Review Processes for Academic Programs, Units, and Research Units" ("the Compendium") and in ORGS' Administrative Policies and Procedures Concerning Organized Research Units ("Administrative Policies") for: 1) any existing MRU whose loss of funding puts its future in jeopardy; and (2) any new MRU that will be established. Clarify that the requirement for reviews may extend the timeline on which funds are awarded.
- In consultation with the Academic Senate, develop a process for determining which proposals will confer formal MRU status, as defined in the Administrative Policies and Procedures. For these proposals, a PI who is selected to receive the competitive funds must receive approval through the Compendium review process prior to receiving funds. The Administrative Policies distinguish between formally established MRUs and less formal Multicampus Research Groups and Programs, while the Compendium applies to formally established MRUs.
- Include in the announcement an explanation of the provisions that will be made for transitional funding. Such provisions should consider existing agreements and end-dates for current funds. Timelines for transition may be between 6 and 24 months depending upon the circumstances. Twelve months is likely to be the most common extension.
- Issue an announcement to the Vice Chancellors for Research and to each individual or group that has submitted a Letter of Intent that final proposals must include, *in addition to* the letter of support from the Vice Chancellor for Research already prescribed, letters of support from the Divisional Graduate Council, the campus budget committee, and the Committee on Research to indicate that the Division has been consulted and supports the proposal. Given the short time frame prior to the submission deadline, the deadline for receipt of these letters could be extended to the week before the review panels begin to meet.
- In the RFP and in the peer review process, consider establishing a scoring preference for existing MRUs that are particularly productive in multi-campus collaborations that are difficult to fund through other sources. In addition, preference may be given to those areas for which external funds are difficult to obtain (e.g., humanities fellowships).
- Taxonomy or classification of proposals and programs is still necessary. In 2006, we recommended the following classifications: facilities, granting programs, multi-campus

research networks, and fellowships. Given this taxonomy, consideration can be given to proposals that consider research, teaching, and service (as opposed to only research).

We believe that these procedures and modifications in the RFP will address many of the Senate's concerns for shared governance while permitting the process of reallocating funds to move forward.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding Council's comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Croughan". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mary Croughan, Chair
Academic Council

Copy: Interim Provost Pitts
Academic Council
Martha Winnacker, Senate Director