

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH POLICY

Monday, February 13, 2023

Meeting Minutes**I. Announcements, Approval of Meeting Minutes***Cynthia Schumann, UCORP Chair*

Chair Cynthia Schumann reviewed the agenda and the committee briefly discussed questions for the MRU directors.

ACSCOLI liaison Gert Cauwenberghs (UCSD) reported on the January 23rd ACSCOLI meeting.

Meeting minutes from January 9, 2023, were approved.

II. MRU Review – Interview with UC ITS Directors and Staff*Adam Millard-Ball (Acting Director, ITS UCLA – Brian Taylor on sabbatical)**Stephen Ritchie (Director, ITS Irvine)**Daniel Rodriguez (Director, ITS Berkeley)**Daniel Sperling (Director, ITS Davis),**Laura Podolsky (Assistant Director, UC ITS)**Maggie Witt (Research Program Coordinator, UC ITS)*

After introductions, UC Davis ITS Director Daniel Sperling led the meeting by noting that all four directors head campus ORUs that are bigger individually than the MRU. Each campus institute holds events, does fundraising, and engages both graduate and undergraduate students. All four are leaders in the field. UC ITS sees itself as uniquely bringing science to policy in the state of California, working closely with government agencies, organizations, companies, environmental justice groups, and others. UC ITS leaders are brought in to State hearings for briefings and testimony and the MRU has had a big influence on programs that are adopted in the state.

Sperling and the other directors talked about how the MRU uses the funding it receives from the state, which includes an ongoing, annual allocation of \$5 million from SB1, and a recent award of \$10 million for the California Resilient and Innovative Mobility Initiative (RIMI). While the majority of the funds are used to support research, some of the funding is used centrally for engagement and outreach. One of ITS' newer efforts is building up expertise in labor, jobs, and equity.

Established by the legislature in 1947, ITS began at Berkeley and UCLA. UCLA subsequently dropped out, and UC Irvine joined Berkeley in the 70s, then Davis, and then UCLA joined back in. The four campuses really only started working together as an MRU seven years ago, partly as a result of a “sunset” review by the Academic Senate. The resulting central organization facilitates dissemination of funds to multiple campuses, joint proposals for larger funding, and a for-credit transportation course that is administered centrally. The directors now meet every two weeks. After coming together, the MRU was awarded the \$5 million per year SB1 funding from the State, which is divided equally between the participating campuses. Working across campuses is encouraged and rewarded.

The MRU is now competing for funding from the UC Climate Action Research Initiative grant and is taking the lead on the transportation aspect of California's Hydrogen Hub funding from the DOE.

When asked about the benefits of the MRU designation, the directors noted the ability to funnel funding to research across the system, with much of it going to graduate students. Being a single entity allows the State to

work with one entity instead of four. As one unit, UC ITS is able to offer matching funds when required for grant competitions. The campus ITS institutes operate as competitors and collaborators at the same time.

Asked about the impact of its collaborative research, the ITS staff pointed to RIMI, which, as multi-year endeavor, allows more time to develop partnerships. A recent UC ITS report was heavily referenced in the recently published California Air Resources Board Climate Change Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality. In 2018, a UC ITS forum in Sacramento brought together researchers from eight UC campuses to focus on innovative mobility. In the intermediate term, a multi-campus wildfire project resulted in an NSF grant.

Regarding Covid impacts on transportation, ITS staff talked about the decline in ridership during the pandemic (the “transit cliff”) that has largely not bounced back and remains 25-50 percent lower than pre-pandemic. ITS is helping transit agencies strategize in a changed environment, including revising transit routes. The ITS-produced book, *Pandemic in the Metropolis: Transportation Impacts and Recovery* brings together reports from empirical studies that explored the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on urban mobility and transportation in California and the associated policy responses. The book draws on this local experiences to formulate general lessons for other regions and metropolitan areas.

Addressing climate crisis is a large part of the ITS work. Efforts include mitigation strategies such as developing electric and hydrogen vehicles, alternate transportation and transit (a major focus of the RIMI initiative), and micromobility (scooters and bikes). The ITS foundational research has a huge impact on California and national policy. The group led California’s roadmap for getting to zero emissions by 2040 (which was then pushed up to 2035) and adopting rules for mandating electric trucking fleets. ITS research also influenced the change in parking requirements for new residential buildings. California’s low carbon fuel standard (the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006) was subsequently adopted by Oregon and Washington, and eventually may be adopted nationally.

Regarding graduate students, ITS sees itself as providing training for academic and advanced research positions in the public and private sector. Masters students come from the engineering and planning disciplines, and are finding employment with city, state, and other government agencies. At UC Irvine, the focus is on PhD students.

Asked about diversity, the staff noted that all proposals must address equity considerations by including a statement on “the relevance to and impacts of the research to transportation equity.” Transportation equity is defined as “fairness in access to the opportunities people need to lead quality lives, encompassing the needs of individuals historically marginalized because of their social status, including by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Transportation equity seeks to ensure that no group receives a disproportionate share of benefits, shoulders a disproportionate burden of discrimination or negative impacts, faces exclusion from meaningfully participating in decision-making processes, or is discriminated against.”

Asked about plans as an MRU for the future, the directors noted that benefit of being a larger collaborative group and the ability to attract other partners. ITS is seen as a research arm of the state, but it can have a wider influence nationally and internationally.

III. Academic Senate Leadership Update

Susan Cochran, Academic Council Chair

James Steintrager, Academic Council Vice Chair

The Senate Chair and Vice Chair joined the meeting to provide an overview of current activities of the Senate.

At a recent meeting of the Board of Regents, the Regents expressed concern about whether there is sufficient cybersecurity on the campuses. The Board received a briefing from UCOP and an update from the UCSC Chancellor on the topic. As a network of interlocking entities with different needs, the university does not

function like a typical business or government agency. Students and faculty can generally download any software. Academic Council Chair Susan Cochran pointed out to the Regents that she had to buy her own laptop and phone.

The Academic Council has forwarded to the UC President responses to a systemwide policy on vaccination programs. It sent letters regarding implementation of faculty salary increases and recommendations for a total remuneration study and a comprehensive benefits survey.

The Assembly of the Academic Senate passed a revision to a Senate regulation that ensures students receiving a UC degree complete at least some in-person coursework. The revision closes an unintentional loophole that made it possible for students – especially transfer students – to complete online degrees and for departments to create fully online undergraduate degrees. Campuses are starting to propose such degrees, often targeted at transfer students, which must be reviewed following the Academic Senate and campus procedures. The University Committee on Educational Policy suggested that the loophole be closed before assessing these proposed programs and determining limitations. Discussions will continue.

The attestation forms sent to faculty after the recent graduate student strike were for the most part not filled out. The biggest issue is work effort forms for grants and ensuring accurate reporting for grants. UCOP is still finalizing the contracts with the union and some issues remain. With a union, faculty are not technically supervisors (monetarily speaking), so they are asked to utilize departmental administrators to deal with any salary issues that come up with students.

UCORP members noted that faculty are already having to make decisions about next year and are feeling a lack of guidance and support from the administration. UCOP has apparently provided around \$1m to each campus to fill in this year, but each campus is handling the funds differently. Faculty are encouraged to ask questions. UCORP members are interested in sharing campus action plans. UCSF acted quickly and is providing each PI with \$12k to cover salaries.

Post-strike, there will be challenges in distinguishing between labor and education. This and related issues are being discussed, but meanwhile there will be an adjustment period.

IV. MRU Review – Interview with UC MEXUS Director and Staff

Isabel Studer, Director, Alianza MX

Julio Sosa, Academic and Research Programs Officer

Aaron Melaas, Associate Director for Research and Innovation

Laura Manor, Chief Financial & Administrative Officer, Research & Economic Development, UCR

The UC MEXUS/Alianza MX director and staff talked about the changing context and environment that the initiative finds itself in. Specifically, the impact of the pandemic on research exchanges, reduction in funding from the Mexican government starting in 2019, and the expiration of the UC MEXUS/CONACYT agreement in 2020. Alianza MX was created with the mission to integrate three programs: UC MEXUS, UC-Mexico Initiative, and Casa de California. Director Isabel Studer was appointed in 2020 and began a process for establishing a new strategic direction based on three pillars: Research & Innovation; Academic Mobility; and Policy Engagement, Outreach & Dissemination. Director Studer created a new bi-national, bi-lingual infrastructure that is more balanced between the US (at UC Riverside) and Mexico (in Mexico City), reducing administrative cost and reintegrating the initiative into UC Riverside's administrative structure. The UC MEXUS budget has essentially remained the same for over 20 years.

Director Studer described the work done in communication and outreach: a new website, newsletter, faculty directory of exports, fact sheets for each campus, and social network presence. When it became clear that the contract with CONACYT would not be renewed, the UC MEXUS-CONACYT programs with joint funding support were suspended. This included calls for the Collaborative Research Grants, Postdoctoral Fellowships, and Doctoral Fellowships. To continue these programs as they were structured in the past would require an additional \$3.5m annually. Director Studer introduced some ideas for restructuring the postdoctoral and research grant programs to be more effective and efficient.

The Alianza MX staff were asked about the budget, reserve funding, organizational structure, staffing, and plans for moving forward. Specifically, it was unclear how the MRU would function without funding from Mexico, and how UC MEXUS fits into the overall initiative structure.

When asked about the MRU designation, Director Studer noted that it had been important for the CONACYT agreement to show the multi-campus nature of the initiative, and that it had central support. She thought it would be worthwhile to retain the designation for potential future agreements.

A consequence of the Mexican government and Mexican institutions pulling funding has been on the graduate student fellowships and the programs ability to engage and support Mexican students. Director Studer is seeking input on engaging Mexican students to be able to bring graduate students to UC.

V. Round Robin Discussion

Members shared campus plans to help faculty with the increased cost of supporting graduate students.

UCD: The Provost has proposed a funding mechanism for GSRs (not TAs) and solicited feedback. Younger faculty will be eligible for additional support, but PIs were told to first look for discretionary funding. If there is no discretionary funding, then additional funding can be applied for. Several local Senate committees gave feedback on the plan. Some thought UC could be advocating with big funders to change funding models to accommodate new levels of support.

UCSF: The campus is providing \$2,400 for each graduate student and \$12,000 for postdocs from April 2023-April 2024.

UCM: Faculty received assurance that assistant professors can get assistance with GSRs until the end of June. Beyond that is unknown, but the administration is working on it.

UCSD: The VC-R and EVC are contributing \$10m for the coming year, which is anticipated to be 2/3 of the total cost. PIs were told to contact funding agencies for additional money, and, if not available, to use discretionary funds, then escalate to the department level. PIs can apply for funds for the first year, but going forward, the increased salaries need to be included in grant budget.

UCLA and UCSB are waiting for guidance. UCSB is forming a committee.

UCSC: Reported that the messages are the same as the other campuses, and that administrators are saying different things.

All agreed that sharing campus guidance would be useful.

VI. Executive Session

No notes were taken during Executive Session.

Meeting adjourned: 3:05 p.m.

Meeting minutes drafted by: Joanne Miller, UCORP analyst

Attest: Cynthia Schumann, UCORP chair