

## UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH POLICY

Monday, May 8, 2023

**Meeting Minutes****I. Announcements, Approval of Meeting Minutes**

*Action:* Meeting minutes from April 10, 2023, were approved.

**II. Consultation with the Office of the President – Office of Research and Innovation**

## 1. UC NRS – Natural Reserve System

*Steven Monfort, Executive Director, Natural Reserve System*

Steven Monfort, the Executive Director of UC's Natural Reserve System since November 2021, joined the meeting to talk about NRS and its place within UC. The system began in Palm Desert in 1955 with the intention of setting aside lands for research and education. It was officially founded in 1965. With 47 reserve sites, NRS is the world's largest university-administered reserve network. The work of the system is heavily connected to climate change and global warming, including factors such as population growth, rising CO<sub>2</sub> levels, and biodiversity impacts.

The overall mission is to “contribute to the understanding and wise stewardship of the earth by supporting university level teaching research and public service.” Divided up by campus, each reserve offers a “living laboratory” to be used by UC researchers, students, non-profit organizations, other California college constituents, and K-12 programs. The system serves over 100,000 users per year. In addition to tracking usage, NRS keeps metrics on publications, research grants, and systemwide impact from crossover usage among campuses. Challenges to the system are in the areas of operational and capital management and finance. There are many structures and facilities to maintain, and very little income. More staff are needed to manage the sites. NRS recently received \$1m from the state as part of the climate resilience funding, but otherwise it must rely on campus funds. As the system director, Monfort is looking for strategies to bring together and amplify its work for greater effect. It is interested in being more of a monitoring network for the state.

Vice President Theresa Maldonado pointed out the connection between mental health and interactions with nature, and the potential resource that NRS could be for health and the health sciences. There is interest in opening a new reserve that would encompass art, culture, and the environment. Like the UC Observatories, NRS is a multi-campus entity with impediments to obtaining dedicated funding and engaging in fundraising. UCO and NRS must rely on unrestricted state funds that go to UC, while ANR – UC's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources – has its own line-item in the state budget. Although the reserves are run by campuses and may even be promoted in their marketing, anything that is off campus is generally not considered part of the core university mission. In the 1990s, systemwide reviews of NRS attempted to determine a sustainable financial model and settled on the establishment of endowment funds that would run the facilities, but it has not been enough and there is no mechanism for capital funding. Monfort is strategizing new financial pathways and is optimistic about a set-asides model.

## 2. Updates from the Office of Research Policy Analysis and Coordination

*Deborah Motton Executive Director*

*Lourdes DeMattos, Director*

*Agnes Balla, Director*

*Brian Russ, Research Policy Manager*

UCOP is working to finalize its pay escalation guidance in the wake of the graduate student strike. The guidance is intended to provide a standardized approach for all of UC, enabling PIs to use a simple percentage increase based on their grant end date. The guidance is not intended to be policy or a mandate.

UCORP members asked whether federal funders will accept the UC rate. Some agencies will not. UC's Federal Government Relations (FGR) team is engaged in conversations with federal agencies.

### 3. Animal Research Transparency (ART) Working Group Update

*Dragana Alexander, Research Policy Manager*

*Karen Bales, Professor, UC Davis, and former UCORP Chair*

*Jennifer Klahn Director of Research Safety and Animal Welfare, UCLA*

The UC Animal Research Transparency (ART) Working Group was convened last year after an increase in researcher contacts and public records act requests from animal rights activist groups. Researchers were inconvenienced and at times felt threatened. The white paper drafted by the group is intended to raise awareness and publicly state the support of the university for animal research conducted at UC.

The five recommendations in the paper are:

1. Issue a statement of support for its researchers and their animal research work
2. Develop systems to support the safety of researchers, students and staff engaged in animal research
3. Leverage UC's resources to support education and openness on animal research information within the UC and to protect animal researchers, staff, and students engaged in animal research
4. Support a public information campaign to counter widespread misinformation regarding animal research
5. Explore state and federal legislative initiative opportunities

The team will be invited back to UCORP's June 12<sup>th</sup> meeting to get comments from committee members.

Also, having lost a few faculty members from its original composition the Working Group is looking for more faculty who would be interested in joining. UCORP members are welcome to send suggestions.

### 4. Updates from UC Research Initiatives

*Kathleen Erwin, Executive Director, Research Grants Program Office*

Executive Director Kathleen Erwin provided an update on the California climate action funding opportunity. Entrepreneurship funds were already distributed. 226 proposals were submitted from groups within UC, from the CSUs, and from private institutions in California for the seed and matching grant competitions. The proposals will be reviewed in June, with decisions in July and awards announced in the fall.

There will be six review panels covering multi-disciplinary topical areas. Each will read 30-40 proposals. None of the reviewers are from California. Each proposal will be read by three different reviewers. The seed grant proposals will be scored and assessed. The matching grants have stricter criteria with the highest scored proposals receiving a second review to determine which are funded. A subset of selected awards will get a small supplemental amount for community engagement/impact.

The MRU scheduled to be reviewed next year (in 2023-24) is the UC Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI), which is also currently undergoing a review at UCOP.

## III. Academic Senate Leadership Update

Senate Chair Susan Cochran and Vice Chair Jim Steintrager joined the meeting to provide an overview of current activities of the Senate.

Chair Cochran mentioned the work of the upcoming Working Group on the Future of Doctoral Programs. It will focus on long-range ideas and develop alternative models of graduate education that would work best for UC. She acknowledged that there are similar groups that have been convened on the campuses and the intention for these groups to work together. Short term fixes will likely primarily be at the campus level.

Committee members commented on the drastic variation in the funding, work expectations, and even time to degree in different academic fields, and noted that the best way forward might be a discipline-specific graduate student funding approach. The economics of graduate education has evolved over the years, and the high cost of living – especially housing – in California, makes the “apprenticeship” model unrealistic for most people. UCORP’s graduate student representative noted that in some fields, graduate students receive funding for less than the full year and then had to somehow make up the difference – often by TA-ing for classes in different departments. For those with fieldwork, it can be even more challenging to juggle.

UCORP’s initial feedback for the new working group is that it should realize and acknowledge the differences in disciplines and incorporate flexibility.

#### **IV. Campus Round-Robin**

*UC Davis:* Faculty members at UC Davis are circulating a letter with suggested changes to the new UC patent policy and asking colleagues to sign on. An Interim Vice Chancellor joined the local committee’s recent meeting to discuss the increasing rate of on-campus crime, which is mostly property-related. Campus security will be augmented. Every academic unit is being asked to plan for reduced budgets for the next six years. The Office of Research has been asked for cuts of \$500k per year for each year. Faculty grants have been disbursed, and due to an unfilled staff position in the Senate Office, additional funding was offered.

*UC Irvine:* The local committee is talking about procurement and software vendor risk assessments that have become a huge burden, even for minor purchases. Regarding the new patent policy, faculty have asked about inheritance rights and about other types of IP such as trademarks. At UC Irvine, faculty grants are handled by the schools.

*UCLA:* The concern with the new patent policy at UCLA is about the removal of the additional percentage of distribution of net commercialization royalties. There were also questions about joint ownership. UCLA’s faculty grants program concluded in March. \$1.4m was distributed.

*UC Merced:* Merced is wrapping up the semester and still feeling the consequences of the Oracle financial system debacle. There was recently another response from the Chancellor. Faculty and staff morale is low.

*UC Riverside:* Faculty grant applications have climbed back up to pre-pandemic levels. There were 461 total applications for all grants, vying for \$460k available to disburse. Proposals are now under review.

*UC San Diego:* The local COR has heard good news from research administrators, such as the record amounts of grant funding that have come to the campus. Funding for PIs continues to be a topic of discussion. The campus climate committee has drafted a proposal about disclosure of fossil fuels funding for research. Some faculty are interested in turning it into a broader discussion that would encompass all funding sources.

*UC Santa Barbara:* UCSB is dealing with budget issues and unfilled staff positions. The faculty grant program has \$1m grant funding and around 100 applications, but reviewers are proving hard to find. The campus is concerned about lack of housing and is thinking about ideas to help, such as improvements to transportation options.

*UC Santa Cruz:* Although the UCSC faculty grant program now provides for an allowance for all faculty who opt in at beginning of the year, there is now a secondary opportunity to apply for \$2,000. Ninety applications have been received. The campus is engaging in a strategic planning exercise and the search for a new VC-R is underway.

## **V. Items Under Review**

*Action:* UCORP will send comments on the proposed Presidential Policy on Inventions, Patents, and Innovation Transfer. A draft will be circulated for review.

Revisions to APM 210, Review and Appraisal Committees: Mentoring, will be discussed at a future meeting.

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Meeting minutes drafted by: Joanne Miller, Committee Analyst

Attest: Cynthia Schumann, UCORP Chair