

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, ACADEMIC SENATE

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Robert M. Anderson
Telephone: (510) 987-9303
Fax: (510) 763-0309
Email: Robert.Anderson@ucop.edu

*Chair of the Assembly and the Academic Council
Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200*

April 30, 2012

**MARK YUDOF, PRESIDENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**

Re: Laboratory Fee Research Program

Dear Mark:

At its meeting on April 25, the Academic Council endorsed a recommendation by the Academic Council Special Committee on Laboratory Issues (ACSCOLI) that the funds generated by the University's management of the national laboratories be allocated to research projects identified through the Laboratory Fee Research Program (LFRP) operated by the Office of Research and Graduate Studies. Last year, Council advised that, like other central funds, the lab fees should be made "available for University priorities including allocation to the campuses for general purposes or for use in a systemwide research program."

This year, ACSCOLI recommends, and Council concurs, that the funding not be redirected. ACSCOLI notes that many meritorious proposals already can not be funded and that a redirection of \$5 million would reduce LFRP's funding by 25 percent, with a resulting decrease in the success rate of submissions from approximately 10 to 7.5 percent. Council recognizes that that this recommendation reflects a change in its previous position, but agrees with ACSCOLI's assessment that the current environment requires protecting these funds for research. As the premier public research university in the nation, UC should make every effort to maintain its commitment to supporting cutting-edge research by its faculty. We urge you to maintain this program as originally envisioned.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Anderson, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: Academic Council
Executive Director Winnacker

Encl.



Robert L. Powell
Telephone: (510) 987-0711
Fax: (510) 763-0309
Email: robert.powell@ucop.edu

*Vice Chair of the Assembly and the Academic Council
Faculty Representative to the Board of Regents
ACSCOLI Chair
University of California
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, California 94607-5200*

April 23, 2012

**ROBERT M. ANDERSON, CHAIR
ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

Re: Lab Fees Competition

Dear Bob:

At its March 19, 2012 meeting, ACSCOLI discussed the Lab Fee Research Program (LFRP) in depth. As you are aware, this program is an example of both an excellent merit-based research funding program and collaboration between the Senate and UCOP's Office of Research and Graduate Studies (ORGS). The program is supported by the fees earned by the University for its participation in the management of the Los Alamos Nuclear Lab (LLNL) and the Lawrence Livermore National Lab (LANL). Under policies approved by the Board of Regents, the program is aimed primarily at supporting research that involves collaborations with the National Laboratories. In its first round in 2008 the LFRP awarded 66 awards, totaling approximately \$20M for each year of the program's three year cycle to UC researchers. While most proposals are science based, the program also funds research in social sciences and humanities.

Although somewhat delayed by budget uncertainties this past year, ORGS issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) in Fall 2011 and received 490 applications with budget requests totaling approximately \$520M over the coming three year program cycle. Although not all applications can be funded, ORGS intends to fund about ten percent of the proposals received, which equates to about \$57M over three years, or approximately \$19M per year. It should also be noted that this round of the competition received substantially more Social Sciences-related proposals – 25 such proposals, which is about three times the number received in 2008. Between April 13 and 25, the proposals will be reviewed in six subject area panels (Social Sciences, Policy and Security Studies; Biology, Biotechnology & BioPhysics; Earth, Energy & Environmental Sciences; Engineering, Computer & Computational Sciences; Chemistry, Chemical Engineering and New Materials; and Physics, Nuclear Sciences & Astronomy), as well as a large proposal/portfolio review. Once the panel reviews are completed, ORGS plans to announce the results of the LFRP by June 1.

Given the high quality of the proposals submitted to the LFRP, as well as the fact that the former round resulted in both on-going collaborations between the National Labs and the UC campuses and garnered additional grants from other sources, ACSCOLI urges Academic Council to support this program in whatever way it can. Specifically, we request Council to ask President Yudof to reaffirm the current time line, as well as the amount identified, while stressing the importance that the three

years' of specified funding be kept intact with no reallocation of the monies to other purposes. There is particular concern that \$5 million per year may be redirected from the available funds for other budgetary needs. Such a redirection would represent a more than 25 percent reduction in the LFRP's funding, resulting in a corresponding decrease of the success rate of the proposals – from approximately 10 to 7.5 percent. It is already recognized that many meritorious proposals will not be funded. This budget reduction would ensure that many more collaborations would not be started.

In sum, the LFRP has garnered system-wide praise from UC faculty. From its beginnings, ACSCOLI has ensured that the program has proceeded under carefully articulated and vetted funding assumptions. Changing those assumptions at this late date would undermine a clear understanding that hundreds of UC faculty hold regarding the program, as well as devaluing the time, effort, and energy that many of our best faculty have put into writing responsive proposals.

Thank you for considering our request. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. L. Powell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

Robert L. Powell,
Academic Council Vice Chair
ACSCOLI Chair

Copy: ACSCOLI
Martha Winnacker, Academic Senate Executive Director