



Office of the Chair  
Telephone: (510) 987-9303  
Fax: (510) 763-0309  
Email: [george.blumenthal@ucop.edu](mailto:george.blumenthal@ucop.edu)

Assembly of the Academic Senate, Academic Council  
University of California  
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor  
Oakland, California 94607-5200

July 29, 2005

**M.R.C. GREENWOOD**  
**PROVOST and SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT – ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

**Re: Recirculation of MRU funding and Proposed Joint Task Force**

Dear M.R.C.,

I am forwarding the enclosed statement on re-circulating funds for MRUS, which was drafted by the University Committee on Planning and Budget (UCPB) in consultation with the University Committee on Research Policy (UCORP), and endorsed by the Academic Council its July 27, 2005 meeting. The thrust of the statement is a reiteration of a long-held position at the Systemwide Senate, to wit: it should be a fundamental expectation of most MRUs that, within the regular review timeframe, they re-compete for UCOP funding or become independent of systemwide support. Such a “finite-term funding principle” would re-circulate UCOP funds to new or continuing research initiatives based on open competition. This notion, along with associated recommendations for re-categorizing MRUs, revising the MRU review process, and returning FTE currently held by MRUs to the Office of the President, is outlined in the 2004 Academic Council report “[Restructuring the MRU Review Process](#).” The report, which was drafted by UCPB and forwarded to you last June, specifically recommends instituting a funding structure for MRUs - similar to multi-year funding programs of federal agencies such as NSF or NIH - by which currently funded programs would be required to engage in a competitive funding renewal process following a reasonable time line.

In considering several MRU-related issues this year, the Academic Council raised general concerns about the funding and review structure for these important systemwide units. These concerns can, we feel, best be addressed by seriously revisiting the recommendations in the 2004 report and taking definite steps to implement them. Council believes that the resulting re-circulation of MRU funds would provide much needed resources for new systemwide initiatives and would revitalize the MRU program in general. Therefore, we also repeat the request, stated in Past Council Chair Pitts’ letter of June 24, 2004, that a joint administrative-Senate group be formed to determine an implementation plan. We suggest that the group include representatives from UCPB and UCORP, and that other members be identified by the end of the summer so that meetings could commence in early fall. We look forward to working together on this effort.

Best regards,

George Blumenthal, Chair  
Academic Council

Copy: Academic Council  
María Bertero-Barceló, Executive Director  
Lawrence Coleman, Vice Provost – Research

Encl: 1



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND BUDGET (UCPB)  
Michael Parrish, Chair  
[mparrish@ucsd.edu](mailto:mparrish@ucsd.edu)

The Academic Council  
1111 Franklin Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607-5200  
Phone: (510) 987-9467  
Fax: (510) 763-0309

July 14, 2005

**GEORGE BLUMENTHAL  
CHAIR, ACADEMIC COUNCIL**

**RE: Statement on Recycling MRU Funds**

Dear George,

Council has requested that our committee in consultation with UCORP develop a policy statement on the recycling of MRU funds. UCPB, guided by its subcommittee of Bernard Minister and John Edmond, submitted such a statement last year in its report, "Restructuring the MRU Process," which Council approved on June 25, 2004 and is also enclosed with this document.

In that report, we explicitly urged the adoption of a new "funding paradigm in a way that allows the opportunity for new program initiatives to emerge and be considered for funding . . . . The current funding paradigm is essentially stagnant with respect to new ideas and initiatives such that little if any credit accrues to the Office of Research, a position that makes it much more difficult to complete for increased resources over the years."

We recommended "a finite-term funding principle – comparable to multi-year funding programs implemented by Federal agencies such as NSF or NIH – be applied to existing and new programs in the system-wide research portfolio . . . . Currently funded programs with three or more years of operation since their last review be required to complete for the renewal of funding in three years . . . . Programs with less than two years before their next review can be extended to permit a full three years of operation . . . so that they be in a position to engage a competitive funding renewal process."

We stand by that recommendation. Indeed, recent reviews have only served to confirm for us the importance of UC moving quickly to adopt and implement new "finite-term funding principles" for all existing and future MRUs.

Despite our recommendation, endorsed by Council, that the Office of Research disestablish Cal Space and hold a system-wide, open competition for its resources, individual Cal Space campus centers will continue to be funded. In addition, the Office of Research intends to solicit advice about the long-term future of Cal Space resources from a limited cadre of past and present Cal

Space faculty. Simply changing the management structure of a “disestablished” MRU is definitely not what UCPB had in mind with respect to either finite-term funding or open competition for system-wide resources. Council should reject the strategy proposed by the Office of Research and insist on genuine open competition for Cal Space resources.

Our recently concluded review of IGPP exposed another reason why “the current funding paradigm is essentially stagnant” and why finite-term funding is essential to the future of UC. A major piece of IGPP funding remains locked into the support of faculty FTEs –13 at Los Angeles alone and 5 at Riverside. We do not question the quality of these appointments, but the use of MRU resources to fund faculty FTE is wholly inappropriate. When the present faculty FTE supported directly by IGPP retire or otherwise leave the university, those FTE should be returned to the Office of Research where they should fund research.

Both UCPB and UCORP believe that a new draft policy on recycling MRU funds is unnecessary, at least on our part. Instead, we urge Council to reaffirm the strategy outlined in former Council chair Pitts’ letter to Provost Greenwood on June 24, 2004: creation of a joint Senate-administration task force to consider and recommend improved methods for reviewing MRUs and funding them. We need to move beyond broad policy statements to actual implementation. Members of UCPB and UCORP stand ready to participate in such a task force.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael E. Parrish  
Chair, UCPB

Enclosure

cc: UCPB  
UCORP  
Executive Director Bertero-Barcelo