

CELS Research Committee Meeting February 3rd 2021 - Meeting Notes and Discussion

In attendance: Marta Gomez-Chiarri (FAVS), Niall Howlett (CMB) (Chair), Jason Kolbe (BIO), Elizabeth Mendenhall (MAF), Tom Sproul (ENRE), Mark Stolt (NRS), Cheryl Wilga (ex officio)

Absent: Thomas Boving (GEO), Carlos Prada Montoya (BIO)

Discussion on increasing research support in CELS and specifically ways to increase the numbers of SRGAs (scientific research grants assistant) to assist with proposal development and budget preparations

- Updates from Cheryl following discussions with Dean Kirby and Meredith Silvia:
If the distribution of indirect costs were to change from the current 75 (Deans Office):25 (Department) to 100:0 (no indirect costs returned to the Department and/or faculty), this would fund approximately 1.5 additional SRGAs
 - What is the process for implementation? Dean's call or faculty/chairs approval?
- If the Departments were to disband and reorganize into three larger units, e.g. Unit 1, 2, and 3 - as the college is currently fiscally structured, this would reduce the amount of funds paid to Departments Chairs, potentially enabling 3/4 SRGAs to be hired
 - What funds are currently used to provide extra compensation for Chairs?
Assume that indirect costs from research funding are not used for this? So why would this factor into SRGA support? How are SRGAs typically supported? In GSO, 110/indirect costs are used. But can they be funded by other means?
 - Related to this; the administrative responsibilities of 'unit' heads would be considerably greater than chairs, potentially warranting increased compensation
 - What are the chances of the faculty approving restructuring and this beyond purview of this committee?
- Other options:
 - Potentially reexamine the current 75:25 indirect costs distribution, particularly in light of a slowdown in hiring (the justification for the change from 50:50 split to 75:25 was based in large part on the need for startup funds). Could we revert to the 50:50 split?
 - Related to above: need to reexamine faculty start-up packages; analysis of return on investment – obviously this would be challenging to do
 - GSO receives an additional 5% of indirect costs via special arrangement with the Provost and Vice President for Research. Could CELS renegotiate?
 - Create a new CELS Research Institute for actively funded CELS research faculty. Opportunities for revised indirect costs distribution, SRGA support, fund raising/philanthropy, e.g. UMich Life Sciences Institute
- Related to this discussion and in particular questions about budgets and fiscal transparency within the college, interesting to read the charge of the committee below. Could the committee request access the college budget to review?

Research Committee.

11.2.1 **Charge.** The Research Committee shall have the responsibility for advising and assisting the Dean and Associate Dean for Research in planning and reviewing Agricultural Experiment Station and other research programs of the college, including all Research Centers and Institutes administered by CELS (See 1.6.4 of these bylaws), and make recommendations to the Dean on the annual allocation of AES facilities, personnel and resources, including the establishment of priority areas for requests for proposals and the establishment, oversight and dissolution of Administrative Cost Centers.

11.2.2 **Membership.** The Research Committee shall be composed of seven (7) Faculty members and shall be maintained with nominees selected by the departments and appointment made by the dean. Terms will be consistent with the language for the rest of CELS committees per Section 9 of these bylaws. The Associate Dean for Research shall serve ex officio.

11.2.3 **Chairperson.** The Research Committee shall elect its own chairperson at the beginning of the academic year. Ex-officio members may not serve as chairperson.