

CELS Research Committee Meeting February 26th 2020 - Meeting Notes and Discussion

In attendance: Thomas Boving, Niall Howlett (Chair), Jason Kolbe, Elizabeth Mendenhall, Carlos Prada Montoya, Tom Sproul, Mark Stolt, Carol Thornber (ex officio)

Absent: None

Karen Markin, Director of Research Development, URI Division of Research and Economic Development gave an overview of the SPIN database and discussed additional aspects related to applying for graduate training grants.

SPIN database: <https://spin.infoedglobal.com/Home/SOLRSearch>

- Database appears to be somewhat user unfriendly, but comprehensive source of information nonetheless
- Primarily for use on-campus/URI IP address; can also be configured for off-site use if necessary
- Can set-up specific funding alerts to be received on a daily or weekly basis
- Carnegie classification discussion: how are Universities classified?

Methodology. Institutions that conferred at least 20 research/scholarship doctorates in 2016-17 and reported at least \$5 million in total research expenditures were assigned to one of two categories based on a measure of research activity. The research activity index includes the following correlates of research activity: research & development (R&D) expenditures in science and engineering; R&D expenditures in non-S&E fields; S&E research staff (postdoctoral appointees and other non-faculty research staff with doctorates); doctoral conferrals in humanities, social science, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, and in other fields (e.g., business, education, public policy, social work). The mapping of doctoral degrees to these four disciplinary clusters is available in document in this [Excel file](#). These data were statistically combined using principal components analysis to create two indices of research activity reflecting the total variation across these measures (based on the first principal component in each analysis).

One index represents the aggregate level of research activity, and the other captures per-capita research activity using the expenditure and staffing measures divided by the number of full-time faculty within the assistant, associate, and full professor ranks. The values on each index were then used to locate each institution on a two-dimensional graph. We calculated each institution's distance from a common reference point (the minima of each scale), and then used the results to assign institutions to one of two groups based on their distance from the reference point. Thus the aggregate and per-capita indices were considered equally, such that institutions that were very high on either index were assigned to the "very high research activity" group, while institutions that were high on at least one (but very high on neither) were assigned to the "high research activity" group. Before conducting the analysis, raw data were converted to rank scores to reduce the influence of outliers and to improve discrimination at the lower end of the distributions where many institutions were clustered. Detailed information about how the research activity index was calculated can be found [here](#). A more detailed description of the methodology is available [here](#).

- Does the University have a strong interest in upgrading to 'very high' from 'high' research activity? Are there tangible benefits associated with an upgrade? Could this be used as justification for increasing (and helping to facilitate) the numbers of graduate training grant applications?
- Strategy and role of the Research Office and/or TIG - Karen mentioned that previously she worked closely with three strategists/team members in the Research Office who would identify and match faculty with funding opportunities and essentially function as project managers for driving the administrative aspects, e.g. facilitating team meetings, securing institutional support, setting deadlines, coordinating aspects of proposal submission, act as liaisons between investigator/team and the research office
- The topic of 'institutional support' was also discussed briefly. Could someone in the research office function as a point of contact to help investigators with institutional support, from the research office and elsewhere, e.g. Provost's office?