

Minutes of the February 6, 2014 Meeting of the CELS Executive Council

Call to Order: A meeting of the College of the Environment and Life Sciences Executive Council was held at 12:30pm at the CBL 435. Members present were Department Chairs, Bengtson, Fastovsky, Green, Mitkowski, Opaluch, Roberts, and Thompson; Associate Dean Rhodes, Associate Dean Veeger, CE Representative Morreira, Faculty Secretary Rice, and *ex-officio* members Curfman, Messier, and Porter. Members absent were Department Chairs Greene and Sun, and *ex-officio* member Anderson. CMB was represented by Professor Cohen and NFS was represented by Professor English; Dean Kirby presided.

Approval of Minutes: *A motion to approve minutes of the December 5, 2013 meeting of the Executive Council was made by Bengtson and seconded by Gold. Minutes were unanimously approved as written.*

Announcements:

1. The major report of the Administrative Management Review Committee was released and input from the campus community is requested. The report can be found at: <http://web.uri.edu/amrc/>
2. A report of the University College and General Education Committee on the restructuring of the General Education Program at URI was released. The whole report can be found at: http://www.uri.edu/facsen/about/committees/minutes/2013-2014/UCGE/UCGE_report_final.pdf and a summary version can be found at: http://www.uri.edu/facsen/about/committees/minutes/2013-2014/UCGE/UCGE_short_version.pdf The report will be discussed at a forum at the February 20, 2014 meeting of the Senate, and a final vote on the restructuring of the General Education Program will be taken at the March 20, 2014 Senate meeting.
3. Matters concerning the procedures of faculty promotion and tenure review were discussed.
4. Meredith Curfman will be replacing Catherine Curtin-Miller as acting CELS Financial Administration Director and will be serving as an *ex-officio* member of the Executive Council
5. Associate Dean Veeger requested that a point person on the issue of assessments be appointed from each department and his/her name be forwarded to her.
6. Associate Dean Rhodes announced That the Division of Research and Economic Development is soliciting nominees for a number of research excellence awards that are awarded annually. Nominations are due at 4:00pm on March 7 for the 2014 competitions that will be reviewed by the Council for Research. More information can be provided by the Office of University Research External Relations, Melissa McCarthy, Director (melissa@uri.edu).
7. Associate Dean Rhodes announced that new proposals to add to the URI Capital Improvement Plan (projects greater than \$1M in cost) are due Feb 28. Current CELS projects in the capital improvement pipeline are: 1) improvement of some wet lab space at the Narragansett Bay Campus, 2) the Vivarium, and 3) renovation of Woodward Hall for 2019 at about \$27M.

8. Chairperson Green said that the roof of Rodman Hall has been in dire need of repair for many years. Associate Dean Rhodes said that the project is on the list of University Asset Protection projects but Asset Protection funds are extremely short.
9. Faculty Secretary Rice announced that elections for members of the CELS Commencement Committee, Bylaws Committee and a vacant CELS seat on the URI Faculty Senate are underway and all are urged to vote.
10. Dean Kirby announced that the College will be funding or partially funding two staff positions: a diving safety officer and a coordinator for Anatomy & Physiology Labs.

New Business:

1. Discussion of specifics of administrative reorganization began. Dean Kirby stated that the goal of administrative reorganization is to increase efficiency and increase opportunities for faculty. There was discussion of how various fund types (100, 110, 101, 105, 400 & 500) would be handled in the reorganization, and a general discussion how different departments handle fiscal matters of all sorts. A number of points of discussion about administrative reorganization are presented in **Appendix 1**. Dean Kirby said that a uniform research overhead distribution policy for the College would be desirable, and there was a brief discussion of the relative merits of a two-unit administrative model vs. a three-unit model.
2. Chairperson Roberts expressed concern about the logistics of scheduling and staffing some 300 classes by the BIO department & a growing demand for BIO lab offerings.

Old Business:

There was no old business.

Adjournment: *It was moved & seconded to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 1:50 pm*

Respectfully Submitted:
Michael A. Rice, Faculty Secretary

Appendix 1 Discussion Items for Administrative Reorganization

Considerations for general financial distributions within the new proposed CELS administrative restructuring:

1. **Course Fees.** The curriculum is under the purview of the Chair. Course fees, whose exclusive use is to support the Curriculum, should therefore also be under the purview of the Chair.
2. **Overhead.** Indirect costs support the activities of on-going grants. PI's need access to indirect costs to carry out their projects. We propose, therefore, that indirect costs be apportioned in the following way: of the portion going to CELS, 25% to Dean; 25% to the administrative unit (school) within CELS to which the PI belongs, and 50% to the PI. This leaves 0% for Departments which will become, in effect, vehicles for the major and for P&T, and shouldn't need indirect funds. This proposal has the following important ramifications:

Overhead return to PIs only results because they were successful in obtaining external grant funds. Clearly, they are doing something right. In short, this proposal incentivizes PIs, an important goal for CELS.

Virtually every successful grant project ends up with insufficient funds and requires additional investment (including the PI's nights and weekends) to generate the best outcomes from the project. These investments might be additional field work, lab work, statistical analyses, graphics, participation in synthesis workshops, an additional piece of instrumentation, service contracts, repair costs, additional travel. The PI is the best person to evaluate his/her needs and the overhead funds from grants represents the first step in covering these expenses. Such funds need to be available.

Faculty with grant obligations (and funds in their indirect cost accounts) should be able to fix an instrument or replace an instrument in real time without waiting 24 -96 hours for consent from their administrators. Stressed research faculty equal lousy teachers, lousy mentors and lousy colleagues.

3. **PCARD.** Are off-grant P-Card expenditures no longer possible without the permission of the school (for want of a better term) financial officer? Chairs currently authorize a variety of off-grant P-card expenditures, such as, for example, those that might be required in support of a class. Would such expenditures now all have to run through the school financial officer?
4. **Departments,** through their Chairs, should be required to submit an annual budget request to School heads of the costs to deliver the undergraduate curriculum (per course instructors, supplies, vans/field trips). If this is not done, individual faculty will be forced to make budget requests directly to the School heads and this will be cumbersome and inefficient.

Other considerations:

1. In this new administrative restructuring, where is the Department's voice in what happens to the Department? Does the imposition of a new bureaucratic level in CELS buffer the Dean from the Chairs? In short, how do we avoid paperwork and long delays?
2. Currently a PI and his/her department are responsible for any “over-runs” that occur on a grant that are discovered after the grant is no longer in force. This currently comes from the PIs and the department’s share of overhead. How will this be covered in the future? The answer is not better oversight by the PI; these mistakes occur for a thousand reasons, and often result from the actions of many different offices across URI.
3. How do we assure equal opportunity and transparency in the distribution of resources?
4. How will page charges on journal articles and related professional expenses, such as meeting attendance, be covered? Most papers emerge after a particular grant has ended. To charge a current grant for work done on a prior grant is fiscal malfeasance.
5. How will service contracts be covered?

Of note: our recommendations are based on (1) indirect costs are reimbursement to URI for research expenses, (2) appropriate use of indirect costs are clearly spelled out in OMB Circular a-21 section J.