

Council of Principal Investigators and Research Administrators
Monthly Meeting
April 18, 2024, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

MINUTES

Attendees: Faye Bruun, Tianxing Chu, DeAnna Crites, Patrick Crowley, Heather DeGrande, Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan, Valarie Franco, Jim Gibeaut, Olga Gil Barrientos, Jordan Greer, Xiping Hu, Yajuan Lin, Ruby Mehrubeoglu, Joseph Mollick, Carmen Osier, Debra Plowman, Jian Sheng, Patricia Spaniol-Mathews (Pat), Mike Starek, Matt Streich, Trent Thigpen, Tammy Walker-Smith, Feiqin Xie

Absent: Tye Payne

Alternates: Ben Karimi (for Mark Olson), Jennifer Anderson (for Alexa Hight), Seneca Holland (for Devon Steffan)

Guests:

Quorum present

1. Guest Speaker(s): *Dr. David Ma, Dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, (20-minute presentation, 10-minute Q/A).*

1. Dean Ma provided a presentation about Research Excellence in Higher Education.
 - Dr. Ma talked about his background and his own research journey in various fields.
 - Research—Why, what and, how
 - Driven by problem-solving—science explains why things happen and engineering focuses on how to make them work.
 - It is important to choose which problems to focus on and understand that productivity changes over time, any meaningful work can lead to positive results, even if problems are not completely solved.
 - Success in problem-solving depends on how the problem is defined, with strategies like prioritizing impact.
 - Collaboration is essential—addressing the non-technical aspects require transdisciplinary efforts, which can be challenging due to “language” barriers between different disciplines.
 - Research—Challenges
 - Research has a lot of challenges due to its slow nature, need for resources, publishing decisions, ethical concerns, AI, and work and life. There are also other challenges with regulations, bureaucracy, and infrastructure efficiency.
 - There is no perfect system, one needs to know what one wants to achieve—the goal is to get there, and there will be obstacles.

Q&A

- What do you think we do best at TAMUCC in terms of fostering supporting research?
The system here seems to be very clearly defined.
- The College of Business has an approved list of journals, but they also permit interdisciplinary research, what is your view on this?

For engineering it is important not to rank every journal, and better to avoid questionable publishers. Researchers often feel pressured to publish, which may result in submitting papers to any accepting journal. If you establish a reputation, it does not matter where you publish. It is your work that is important, not the journal it is published in. In computer science, conferences may be more important than journals.

- Why shouldn't journals that are recognized as being valid and high quality in one college be recognized in other colleges (such as COB)? This would help interdisciplinary work.

Probably the ranking system in business is limited because not many collaborate with engineering or science, so exceptions need to be considered as no system is perfect.

- How to evaluate conferences, or maybe potentially include those types of works? Evaluating a conference is hard, since conferences can be very subjective. To ensure objectivity, a rubric or metrics such as acceptance rates can be used; some conferences are highly competitive with acceptance rates below 10%. There is no guarantee of having a good review, but if one consistently keeps doing good work one should be recognized.

Meeting called to order by Faye at 11:45 am.

2. Alternates/Guests Introduced themselves.

- Seneca Holland alternate for Devon Steffan
- Jennifer Anderson alternate for Alexa Hight
- Ben Karimi alternate for Mark Olson

3. Agenda was approved.

- MOTION: First-Ruby, Second-Tianxing, All in favor

4. March 2024 Meeting Minutes were approved with one edit.

- I. All minutes approved.
 - II. 1 abstain (Heather DeGrande)
- MOTION: First-Mike, Second-Carmen, All in favor

5. Ex-Officio Faculty Senate Update(s) (Jennifer Anderson)

- I. IT was the guest speaker at March meeting. Shared information about campus classroom scorecard—currently updating teaching classrooms across campus. They are taking feedback.
- II. Working on making the software request process faster by shortening the approval queue.
- III. There is a new button for requesting software in the service catalog—making it easier to request and approve software.
- IV. President Miller will be the guest speaker at the April Senate meeting—April 19, 2:00 pm, ECDC 210.
- V. Senate elections have taken place, and new Senators will have their first meeting next month.
- VI. The Committee on Committees has completed a survey to gauge faculty interest in service opportunities and has made recommendations based on it. They'll share the results with department Chairs and Deans to assign committees for the next year.

6. Ad-hoc Scholarly Librarian Update(s) (Jennifer Anderson)

- I. There are no more Open Access Publication funds for this year—applications will reopen in September when new funds are available.
- II. Open Horizons Celebration—honoring Open Education, April 30, from 1:00 to 2:30 pm, Bell Library 2nd floor.

7. CPIRA Committee Updates

- I. Research Administration Development & Training (Carmen Osier)
 - i. Faye thanked CPIRA members for attending the mixer.
 - ii. SRS in College Station was invited to be part of Research Month, but they could not attend.
- II. Operations & Communications for Sponsored Projects (Xinping Hu)
 - i. The contract with Handover has been terminated—office working with another company.
 - ii. A CPIRA member will be attending the FDP meeting in Washington DC in May.
- III. Facilities (Debra Plowman)
 - i. Committee met and reviewed the responses from the last CPIRA meeting together—will meet with Scott Meares and Freddy Sustaita again.
 - ii. The committee is going to emphasize the urgency of the issue of waste disposal, including:
 - Immediate addressing of the uncollected waste; this disrupts research and poses potential risks to students and professors handling these materials—It also risks falling out of compliance.
 - Know what their processes are, what happens when someone submits a waste pickup request.
 - Be more specific with the needs.
 - iii. Finish the new form—it will include Debra Plowman as a contact.
 - iv. A Google form will be included for people to submit facility complaints, allowing committee to track and address them more effectively.
 - v. A CPIRA member informed that grant applications for materials now require proposers to include the cost of waste (TAMU-CC requirement).
- IV. Bylaws, Elections, Rules, & Procedures (Tianxing Chu)
 - i. Election season is coming up.
 - ii. Requested data from R&I for the PI census data from the past three fiscal years.
 - iii. Expected to have one or two members from SAMC.
 - iv. Perhaps have an orientation for the new members in August.
 - v. Elections are only for colleges, not for Centers.
- V. Graduate Recruitment & Retention
 - i. Committee met with Dean McCaleb on Tuesday, no updates on funding increases or extra stipends.
 - ii. Dean McCaleb is collaborating with Dr. Mahdy and the Provost's office on proposals for potential scholarships for graduate students.
 - iii. Dean McCaleb will follow-up with President Miller about the issue of stipends and student salaries that was brought up at College Station.

- iv. Willing to make an exception for graduate students to be hired full time during the summer—Pls need to reach out the College of Graduate Studies.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities (DeAnna Crites)

- i. Updates on matrix on hold pending until the new person is hired.

8. Other Business

a. R&I Updates

- Compliance: NCURA updates

- The NCURA report has not been released yet.
- Plans for the transition while finding a replacement for Rebecca Ballard:
 - For IBC and IACUC problems, Dr. Scarpa
 - For IRB problems, Dr. Sollitto
 - Michelle Eisenman still working there—if you have questions go to her before going to Dr. Sollitto.
 - Dr. Pritt, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Research Compliance for the System, is offering her services for particular cases.
- Christina Loftin's old position needs to be filled.

b. RA for COLA, CONHS, COEHD

- No updates.

c. FDP updates

- Already covered.

d. Open Share

- PPOHA Grant

- Grant for grad students to increase enrollment, especially low-income Hispanic students. Being Hispanic is not mandatory but low income is mandatory. It includes stipends for the students and upgrades of spaces.

- Email Pat by April 23 to share any specific ideas you have to increase enrollment and graduation rates for both master's and doctoral students.

- The proposal is \$600,000 a year for 5 years. Only for US students.

- Fifth year of Title V

- Pat is going to have at least \$50,000 on October 1 to serve STEM students or kinesiology, health science, and nursing students. Email Pat and let her know what you need (send her bids or the costs) and she will list them as first come first serve.

- Prioritize what benefits the most people, aiming to make a decision within the next month or two, so funds can be allocated, ensuring expenditures before the grant's end to avoid any leftover funds—last year of the grant and funds must be spent early.

- A CPIRA member expressed some concerns about formality with proposals and proposals intake forms.

9. Adjourn: 12:39 pm.

MOTION: First-Jim, Second-Jordan, All in favor