

Council of Principal Investigators and Research Administrators
Monthly Meeting
November 21, 2024, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

MINUTES

Attendees: Mark Besonen, Faye Bruun, Tianxing Chu, DeAnna Crites, Oliver Cruz-Milan, Jennifer Epley Sanders, Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan, Valarie Franco, Jennifer Garza-Cuen, Jim Gibeaut, Olga Gil Barrientos, Jordan Greer, Taoran Ji, Ahmed Kamara, Sining Kong, Yajuan Lin, Ruby Mehrubeoglu, Jessica Parra, Tye Payne, Debra Plowman, Pablo Rangel, Mike Starek, Devon Steffan, Samuel Sugarek, Trent Thigpen, Peggy Valdes, Feiqin Xie

Alternates: Miguel Perez (for Heather DeGrande), Feri Billiot (for Mark Olson), Jennifer Wetz (for Matt Streich)

Absents: Amy McClure

Quorum present

1. Guest Speaker(s): *Dr. Catherine Rudowsky, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, (20-minute presentation, 10-minute Q/A).*

- Provost Rudowsky shared a chart with graduate education functions by unit/responsible person to help faculty and students navigate the transition.
- The transition was made to centralize certain functions for graduate education to make it more strategic and less transactional, with Karen McCaleb still overseeing the role.
- The goal is to grow graduate education and make it more strategic.
- They're working on reducing forms and creating a central contact for graduate education to make the process simpler.
- They are aiming to improve communication by directly contacting graduate program coordinators instead of relying on Deans and Chairs to pass on information.
- The push to increase graduate programs is driven by the need to graduate more PhD students in order to qualify for TUF funding, which requires the university to reach \$40 million in research expenditures and a certain number of PhD graduates, not just enrolled students.
- The Office of International Studies has been restructured, with responsibilities now divided among different offices.
- The university is refining its agreements with international student recruitment agents.
- Upcoming executive orders will target specific countries, and recruitment efforts may need to be adjusted accordingly.

Q&A

- A policy that may be limiting PhD graduations is that non-tenure or non-tenure track researchers cannot chair graduate committees. Is there any effort to change that policy?
The graduate committee procedure is being reviewed to allow affiliated research faculty to chair committees, and it will go through the dean, graduate faculty, and graduate council for approval.

- The issue of funding for graduate students has been a long-standing problem, and the team is working on solutions, including seeking donors for endowments and reviewing the budget for potential resources.
- Personal devices can have apps like WeChat and TikTok, but work-related apps like Outlook and Duo must be removed to comply with security policies.
- For international travel, you can bring a personal laptop, but you must comply with export control regulations and ensure no university apps are installed if you have any of the prohibited apps.

Meeting called to order by Faye at 11:47 am.

2. Alternates/Guests introduced themselves

- Miguel Perez alternate for Heather DeGrande
- Feri Billiot alternate for Mark Olson
- Jennifer Wetz alternate for Matt Streich

3. Agenda was approved.

- **MOTION: First-Oliver, Second-Jim, All in favor**

4. October 2024 Meeting Minutes were approved.

- **MOTION: First-Jennifer Garza-Cuen, Second-Jennifer Epley Sanders, All in favor**

5. Ex-Officio Faculty Senate Update(s) (Taoran Ji)

- I. Academic calendar guidelines
- II. CUPA data is used by HR to help determine salaries and align faculty salaries with market values.
- III. State/System-level news
The TAMUS Board of Regents eliminated 14 minors and 38 certificates without faculty involvement, raising concerns that similar actions may happen at other institutions in the system.
- IV. The search for the deans of COS and COEHD is underway.

6. Ad-hoc Scholarly Librarian Update(s) (Lisa Louis via email)

- I. The library has almost \$17,000 left from a \$60,000 budget for the Open Access Publication Fund. Request your funds from the library as soon as you submit your paper.

7. CPIRA Committee Updates

- I. Research Administration Development & Training (Jordan Greer)
 - i. No updates.
- II. Operations & Communications for Sponsored Projects (Matt Streich)
 - i. No updates.
- III. Facilities (Debra Plowman)
 - i. The new form is almost finished.
 - ii. Faye will invite Freddy Sustaita and Scott Meares for the spring, maybe in April.

- IV. Bylaws, Elections, Rules, & Procedures (Tianxing Chu)
 - i. Faye will invite Anna Gongora to be part of CPIRA.

- V. Graduate Recruitment & Retention (Ruby Mehrubeoglu)
 - i. No updates.
 - ii. The committee needs new strategies to help move forward.

- VI. Roles and Responsibilities (DeAnna Crites)
 - i. There is confusion about the rules for receipts requirement, as some departments or colleges have their own policies that differ from the university's general guidelines.
 - ii. While university guidelines may not require meal receipts, each department can set its own more restrictive rules, some units always require receipts for all travel, regardless of funding source.
 - iii. Receipt requirements depend on the department, college, and source of funds, with Kim's office requiring them for sponsored research.
 - iv. There is confusion and miscommunication between TAMU and TAMUCC regarding travel guidelines, causing inconsistencies in what people are being told and creating issues for those handling travel on the ground.

8. Other Business

- a. R&I updates
 - Compliance
 - No updates.
- b. FDP updates (Mark Besonen)
 - The notes, presentations, and some videos from the FDP meeting in September are on SharePoint.
 - Next FDP meeting will be from January 13th to 15th.
- c. CPIRA filing Ad-hoc committee
 - An Ad-hoc committee is working on creating a standardized, organized, and confidential filing system for archived documents, with the goal of making it easier for future leadership to access important materials and issues.
- d. December CPIRA meeting
 - There will not be a CPIRA council meeting in December.
- e. Open Share
 - A CPIRA member asked permission to share a slide through CPIRA about the Regional Science Fair that will be held on Valentine's Day. It will include information for students and professors from different fields in order to serve as judges for middle school and high school projects.
 - Due to the transition out of the College of Graduate Studies, the process for requesting graduate students has changed, so it's important to submit requests early and communicate with your department to avoid potential issues during the spring semester.
 - The university needs to address the lack of backup personnel and understaffing in central offices, ensuring that responsibilities can be delegated and handled effectively.

9. Adjourn: 12:39 pm.

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