

Council of Principal Investigators and Research Administrators
Monthly Meeting
January 16, 2025, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

MINUTES

Attendees: Mark Besonen, Faye Bruun, Tianxing Chu, Oliver Cruz-Milan, Heather DeGrande, Jennifer Epley Sanders, Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan, Valarie Franco, Jennifer Garza-Cuen, Jim Gibeau, Olga Gil Barrientos, Anna Gongora, Jordan Greer, Taoran Ji, Sining Kong, Yajuan Lin, Amy McClure, Ruby Mehrubeoglu, Mark Olson, Jessica Parra, Debra Plowman, Pablo Rangel, Mike Starek, Devon Steffan, Matt Streich, Trent Thigpen, Peggy Valdes

Alternates: Gina Concannon (for DeAnna Crites), Feri Billiot (for Feiqin Xie)

Absents: Tye Payne, Samuel Sugarek

Quorum present

1. Guest Speaker(s): *President Kelly Miller, President/CEO, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, (20-minute presentation, 10-minute Q/A).*

Dr. Miller came along with Mr. John LaRue, Chief Compliance Officer and Vice President for Institutional Excellence.

- TAMU-CC has hit \$50M in research expenditure.
- Texas University Fund (TUF)

To be able to get this fund, TAMU-CC needs—\$20M in research and 45 PhD/EdD graduates yearly over a 3-year average. Right now, the university is at \$50M and 37 annual graduates on average, so TAMU-CC will likely join soon.

–The university needs to focus on increasing research assistantships and support for graduate students. President Miller requested \$3 million for each year for graduate student support, received some funding for 3 assistantships, and plan to seek more resources through the system and a new strategic plan to help us join the TUF fund. And also, to provide support to this area, the Sage program is being redesigned and analyze how positions are distributed.

–As part of the budget analysis, the university is exploring waiving tuition for some PhD and EdD students to increase enrollment and gain formula funding, while considering the impact on existing programs and faculty needs.
- Facilities

Scott Meares will now work more closely on lab operations, addressing issues like unreported problems in science and engineering labs. He is also going to develop clear inventories to avoid unnecessary duplication of expensive equipment.
- The university is focusing on addressing the mental and physical health crisis in South Texas, particularly obesity, diabetes, and a shortage of nurses and mental health professionals, by supporting education and training for healthcare workers.
- The President also mentioned another request for \$8M to support graduate assistantships and tuition for port studies, in partnership with the Texas Transportation Institute.

Q&A

- The application process for recruiting international students is slow
International students need extra documentation, other documents like CVs or letters of recommendation could be requested later in the process to not hold up admissions. The university needs to set an earlier deadline for international students to allow time for government approvals and processing before the next semester.
- Facilities
Faculty members need to follow the proper process for reporting issues and getting approvals. There will be audits for some of these areas where people aren't reporting dangerous situations and they're out of compliance.
- Comments about EO GA-48
TAMU-CC can't interpret laws or executive orders on its own, but it is working with the system's Office of General Counsel to get guidance and can help individuals with specific situations.
The executive order is still in the process of being implemented, and once the system's procedures for reporting personal travel are finalized, TAMU-CC will communicate them, including requirements for notifying about travel to certain countries and submitting post-travel reports. The process for reporting travel will be delegated to supervisors through an automated workflow in Workday.
- There are concerns about how the executive order may impact collaborations and research purchases from certain countries.
- The university needs to improve the purchasing process by reducing red tape and simplify approvals to make decision-making faster and more efficient.
- There is confusion about whether to follow campus or system rules, but campus rules must align with the system's rules, and any stricter campus rules can be adjusted to match system guidelines.

Meeting called to order by Faye at 11:55 am.

2. Alternates, new members

- Anna Gongora, new member, Grant Administrator for COEHDS, COLA, CONHS, and SAMC
- Gina Concannon alternate for DeAnna Crites
- Feri Billiot alternate for Feiqin Xie
- Welcome back to Mark Olson who had a teaching commitment last semester.

3. Agenda was approved.

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

4. November 2024 Meeting Minutes were approved.

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

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

- I. Taoran provided Council with a copy of the Faculty Senate update for December.
- II. Olga will send a digital copy to Council and will share it in the SharePoint, too.

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

- I. The library still has \$8,000 left for the Open Access Publication Fund. When you submit to one of those journals, let the library know so they can pay the fees if your submission is accepted.

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. Jim will be in charge of giving the committee report.
 - ii. The new form for Facilities is almost done.
 - iii. Faye will ask Scott Meares to be our guest speaker for April.
- IV. Bylaws, Elections, Rules, & Procedures (Tianxing Chu)
 - i. Dr. Ahmed Kamara from COB is no longer a member due to a new role at his college—COB needs to look for a replacement for him.
- V. Graduate Recruitment & Retention (Ruby Mehrubeoglu)
 - i. The committee will start meeting again this semester. The new mission is to focus on new strategies for graduate recruitment and retention.
- VI. Roles and Responsibilities (DeAnna Crites)
 - i. The R&I matrix is still on hold until the AVPRI is hired.

8. Other Business

- a. R&I updates
 - Compliance
 - There is a new search for the AVPRI position.
- b. FDP updates (Mark Besonen)
 - The second meeting was held from January 13th to 15th.
 - There were many discussions, but key issues emerged, including research integrity, foreign influence, and a new research security standard that may require certifications for federal funding applications like NSF, though it's still being figured out how to implement it.
 - There have been issues with the new two-factor authentication system for NSF submissions, causing delays, especially since there are different types for administrators and researchers, so it's important to stay aware of this.
 - People weren't too nervous about the next administration, as funding will continue through March
 - Mark will share the notes, presentations, and slides from the FDP meeting when they become available.
- c. Executive Order GA-48
 - Governor Abbott's executive order from November 19th bans Texas state agencies, government-appointed entities, and higher education institutions from interacting

with certain countries that are on a federal list including restrictions on contracts, travel, and reporting personal visits to these nations beforehand and after the fact.

- We can't accept any gifts from these countries and need to be cautious with talent training programs.
- Employees will need to use Workday to report on personal travel to certain countries, even though it's unrelated to our work—the consequences for non-compliance are still unclear.
- OGC is gathering input from system members, including TAMU-CC, to prepare a response to the executive order.

d. Open Share

- TAMU-CC is hosting the Regional Science Fair with over 300 6th-12th graders on Valentine's Day and needs volunteers.
- The Student Symposium for Innovation, Research and Creative Activities (SSIRCA) will be held on April 25th, registration deadline is March 21st.
- Invent for the Planet is February 7th-9th, registration deadline is January 31st.
- Office of Research Engagement—Impact Multiplier Grant (IMG) application deadline is February 10th, 2025, internal for community engagement related programs. Awards: \$1,000 - \$7,500. Cards with info were shared during the meeting.

9. Adjourn: 12:29 pm.