

**Council of Principal Investigators and Research Administrators**  
**Monthly Meeting**  
**February 20, 2025, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm**

**MINUTES**

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

**Alternates:** Kesley Banks (for Matt Streich), Anabel Hernandez (for Peggy Valdes)

**Absents:** Anna Gongora, Yajuan Lin

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Quorum present

**1. Guest Speaker(s):** *Dr. Ahmed Mahdy, Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, (20-minute presentation, 10-minute Q/A).*

Dr. Mahdy discussed the Federal landscape, executive orders, and the graduate enterprise.

- The main focus for the Administration is ensuring that students are leaving with the proper training and education.
- Texas University Fund (TUF)
  - Aims to help public universities in Texas by providing transformative research funding. TAMU-CC sees this fund as a top priority that could lead to more faculty, research opportunities, startups, and graduate assistantships to grow and improve research.
  - To be able to get this fund, the university needs to meet these criteria—\$20M in research and 45 PhD/EdD graduates yearly over a 3-year average. Right now, TAMU-CC has met its research funding goal but needs to increase the number of research-related graduates to become eligible.
  - The university is working with faculty and leadership to set both short-term and long-term goals for improving research programs, ensuring quality education, and addressing declining enrollment to maintain a successful pipeline of graduates.
  - Short-term goals focus on the programs that will get us to the finish line: graduate more doctoral students that are in the pipeline and enroll new students.
  - The university is working on improving pay and funding for graduate students, particularly master's students, and is exploring ways to increase state funding to support this, including possible tuition coverage and other financial assistance.

Q&A

- Are we hoping the master students pursue a PhD?

Our main short-term priority is getting into the TUF. Masters can be a feeder for that but we are focusing on programs that will get us there most quickly.

- Will there be new doctoral programs?  
Yes, adding new doctoral programs is part of the mid-term/long-term strategy. The university is actively working on expanding its offerings.
- Many faculty want to hire more PhD students, but they're hesitant due to uncertainty about funding, making short-term growth challenging. How is the university going to help?  
The university is considering adjusting the curriculum, possibly adding online options or refining feeder programs, to help students graduate on time and attract more students. If the faculty have the funds they should consult with R&I about hiring students—R&I will support grant applications and continue moving forward without waiting for everything to be settled.
- College of Sciences has adjusted the startup packages for new faculty to support PhD students with salary and tuition for three years instead of postdocs.
- R&I is working with COS to fund recruitment efforts to attract students, especially for master's programs.
- There was a question concerning moving the "University Seminar" out of COLA and requiring faculty to teach the UNIV 1101 seminar, and that this change might reduce scholarship and research activities, like grants and publications.  
A full response was not available, but the situation will be discussed with the provost.
- Some researchers are unsure about using funds from certain grants, like Department of Education grants, and are seeking advice on how to manage this.  
This is handled on a case-by-case basis—it is recommended to consult with R&I. Federal grants are usually reimbursable.

**Meeting called to order by Faye at 11:34 am.**

**2. Alternates, new members**

- Anabel Hernandez alternate for Peggy Valdes
- Kesley Banks alternate for Matt Streich
- Jim Lee, new member, from COB—replacing Ahmed Kamara

**3. Approve Meeting Agenda**

- Approved with moving the 'Open Share' to first item after the library updates.
  - **MOTION: First-Amy, Second-Mark Besonen, All in favor**

**4. January 2025 Meeting Minutes were approved.**

- **MOTION: First-Ruy, Second-Debra, All in favor**

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

- Faye thanked Taoran for providing us with a copy of the Faculty Senate update for January.

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

- New Open Access agreements with Wiley and Springer Nature, covering Springer Hybrid journals (excluding Nature titles). These agreements allow eligible authors at TAMU-CC to publish open-access articles for free, saving them the typical \$3,000 fee.

- II. The library still has \$3,600 left for the Open Access Publication Fund—maybe for just one or two publications for this year.

## 7. CPIRA Committee Updates

- I. Research Administration Development & Training (Jordan Greer)
  - i. CPIRA mixer will be held on Tuesday April 22<sup>nd</sup> during R&I month.
- II. Operations & Communications for Sponsored Projects (Matt Streich)
  - i. No updates.
- III. Facilities (Jim Gibeaut)
  - i. Scott Meares will be our guest speaker during May 2025. Send in any questions you want Scott to be ready to answer.
- IV. Bylaws, Elections, Rules, & Procedures (Tianxing Chu)
  - i. Dr. Jim Lee is the new representative from COB.
  - ii. The last census data from R&I didn't capture whether RELLIS PIs or faculty were included.
  - iii. For the next census, we need to ensure R&I accurately capture all PIs, as the data provided is crucial for determining eligibility, including whether faculty at RELLIS.
- V. Graduate Recruitment & Retention (Ruby Mehrubeoglu)
  - i. No updates.
- VI. Roles and Responsibilities (DeAnna Crites)
  - i. No updates.
  - ii. The university is moving to a new travel and PCard system at the end of March, which will replace Concur and combine travel and purchase cards into one card for everyone who uses them.

## 8. Other Business

- a. R&I updates
  - Compliance  
New search committee for the AVPRI position. Dr. Bruun serves on the committee as the CPIRA representative.
- b. CPIRA website  
Olga is now the CPIRA webmaster and is in charge of updating the website—let her know if anything needs to be changed.
- c. Open Share
  - Science Fair  
Debra thanked the Council for helping recruit volunteers for the Science Fair, which was a big success with around 250 volunteers and 800 students, and smooth judging. The Science Fair committee is sending around 90 projects to the State level.
  - SSIRCA  
The Student Symposium for Innovation, Research and Creative Activities (SSIRCA) will be held on Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, looking for students to participate in research poster presentation.

- Guest speakers
  - Jaime Nodarse Barrera, from Institutional Advancement, will be the speaker for March. She will talk about MARCOM.
  - Susan La Torre will be our guest speaker in April—she works with international students.
- Emburse Expense
  - Training for the new system will be in March, with initial training for everyone followed by approver training, and we must switch to the new cards before May since Concur will no longer be available.
  - New cards will be distributed in March and everyone needs to switch to them before May, as Concur will no longer be available.

**9. Adjourn: 12:05 pm.**

**MOTION: First- Heather, Second-Jim Gibeaut, All in favor**