Senate Research Committee Meeting Minutes  
February 16, 2015; 3:00 PM  
522 Centennial Hall  

Attendees:  Amber Amari, Justin Brightharp (SGA), Brenda Chapman, Sarah Cook, Dabney Dixon, Laura Fredrick, Baotong Gu, Joseph Hurley, Paul Katz, Unil Perera, Sushil Prasad, MaryAnn Romski, Rose Sevcik (Chair), Mary Stuckey, Jim Weyhenmeyer, and Leslie Wolf

Absentees: Pam Barr, Tim Bartness, Andy Butler, Joan Cranford, Beth Jones, Paul Katz, Shelley Linens, Carrie Manning, Vincent Rehder, Don Reitzes, Ed Rigdon, Bill Robinson, Laura Salazar, Lionel Scott, Anna Stewart, Kelly Stout, Jelena Subotic, Kris Varjas, Dan Weiskopf, Yichuan Zhao, and Alan Ziobrowski

Minutes:  Rose Baldwin

1. The January 17, 2015 minutes were approved with a minor amendment.

2. Dr. Chapman delivered on the following URSA updates and handouts were provided:
   a. The iRIS-IACUC module is scheduled to begin pilot testing next month and full implementation is planned for the beginning of the next fiscal year.
   b. Fiscal year to date, there were 187 IRB expedited studies submitted and 164 approved. Currently, 23 protocols are pending approval. The overall approval rate is 87%. The expedited review board continues to progress well, as we seek to fill the vacant assistant director position.
   c. For the second quarter, the Office of Research Integrity had assessed 34 laboratories, and the goal in the inspection was to ensure laboratory standards are in adherence with relevant regulatory compliances. Findings were summarized ranging from no findings to high priority findings. These inspections, also have aided in upholding regulatory compliance with USDA inspections.

3. Dr. Fredrick described the assistance that she offered a faculty member in her department who experienced significant technical issues with the IRB protocol management system. Erroneously, the system had omitted critical pieces of the protocol when it was presented for review. Completing a resubmitted application was highly cumbersome and Dr. Fredrick stated that we need to have a contingency plan in place for such circumstances. Dr. Chapman noted that there are backup servers to recover lost data, and that she will investigate the issue further and requested that Dr. Fredrick email her the protocol number. Dr. Romski commented she has experienced system glitches of missing information related to CITI trainings and Dr. White intervened in order to correct them.

4. Dr. Packman provided an overview of the new OMB uniform guidance that replaced OMB circulars’ A21, A110, and A133, effective December 26, 2014. Procurement is working on integrating the new Circular’s procurement standards with state standards to ensure alignment with the federal guidance by the start of FY17. Examples of advantages and disadvantages of the uniform guidance were provided. In a few years, it is anticipated that certifying effort reporting can be conducted via payroll software, as long as GSU has recognizably strong internal controls within our financial system. Computing devices, publication costs, and certain administrative charges may now be considered allowable direct cost expenses. Voluntary cost sharing is no longer accepted by federal sponsors. Additionally, it is proposed that uniform progress reports will be instituted across all federal agencies. Dr. Weyhenmeyer discussed the recent GSURF audit and it substantiated good standings in fiscal management and accountability comparison to previous fiscal years. With a growing research portfolio, it is essential to be extra vigilant with the increased compliance and to avoid putting the institution at risk.
5. Dr. Weyhenmeyer reported on the 2014 per diem rates for animal care and proposed rates. A handout was provided. The VPR Office provides $1.3 million in total subsidy for the downtown and LRC locations. Current subsidy rate for downtown facilities is at 54% with a preferred target rate of 50%. LRC is at 77% with a preferred target rate of 60%. Moreover, the animal census is expected to experience significant growth soon, due to a new faculty member joining the university with a large animal population. Proposed numbers are significant as we make every attempt to alleviate constraints with increased research activities. Existing grants will be grandfathered in with previous rates and only new grants will experience the change. In past reviews, several large investments have been made ranging from building improvements to new equipment such as ventilation cages. A third vivarium will be added to accommodate the expanded animal population.

6. Dr. Katz raised a concern with the bridge’s security at access points and the importance to avoid a security breach between the two buildings and lobby. Dr. Weyhenmeyer responded that the proper security will be in place.

7. Dr. Weyhenmeyer reported FY15 award activity for the second quarter officially closed at $52.7 million dollars in total grant and contract activities. A handout was provided. In the previous year, it closed at $39.9 million dollars. Year-over-year this represents a $14 million dollar increase. In the past 3 years, the awards portfolio has changed from a split of 50/50 between federal and nonfederal to a nearly 70 percent in federal and 30 percent in nonfederal.

8. Dr. Dixon addressed concerns and challenges associated with audit compliance upon reaching $100 million dollars in research funding. Dr. Weyhenmeyer stated the importance to have additional scrutiny with the growing research activities and effort reporting is one area to critically monitor.

9. Dr. Weyhenmeyer reported that the F&A rate for July 1, 2015 will change from 48.0% to 50.5% and the following fiscal year the rate will increase to 51.5%. Dr. Dixon mentioned that GPC has a different rate in comparison to our rate, and Dr. Weyhenmeyer replied that the rates for the two institutions will remain separate for the foreseeable future.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 23, 2015 at 3:00 PM in 522 Centennial Hall.