



REPORT OF THE 2018-2019 RESEARCH OVERSIGHT POLICY COMMITTEE (RPOC)

DARIEN WOOD (COS), ON BEHALF OF RPOC

RPOC MEMBERSHIP

- Shalanda Baker (CSSH and School of Law)
- Jerry Hajjar (COE)
- David Luzzi (SR Vice Provost for Research)
- Alex Makriyannis (BCHS)
- Nick McGruer (COE, Fall Chair)
- Sheila Puffer (DMSB)
- Darien Wood (COS, Spring Chair)
- Rashmi Dyal-Chand (School of Law), SAC liaison

HIGHLIGHTS FROM PREVIOUS RPOC REPORTS

- 2016-2017
 - “...there is a systemic problem with effectively managing grants due to a reporting structure where **the administration and finance of the grants are decoupled**”
- 2017-2018
 - “The committee notes that the **bicameral** nature of ORAF with pre and post award functions remains a serious impediment to its proper functioning, i.e., serving the funded. This is particularly challenging when the post award function technically does not reside in the realm of ORAF but in finance ”
 - “The committee notes that ‘**Banner**’ system is now outdated, and the university has to begin the process of either its upgradation or preferably find a replacement ”
 - “The increasing **backlog** at all levels in ORAF functions need most urgent attention. These functions cover a wide milieu such as signing contracts, **NDA’s**, setting up accounts etc.

CHARGE #1: NU-RES OPERATION

- **Charge:** The RPOC shall collaborate with the Senior Vice Provost for Research and his designees in NU Research Enterprise Services (NU-RES) to develop a set of recommendations regarding
 - (a) enhanced **communication and synchronization** between the pre- award, finance and compliance areas of the unified Research Administration group,
 - (b) faster **response to faculty**, particularly in the areas of contracts with corporate sponsors (including subcontracts) and compliance,
 - (c) **facilitation of necessary personal interaction** while maintaining the efficiency of the mandatory University Prior Approval Form, and
 - (d) **development of metrics** to monitor effectiveness of pre-award and post-award processes, and present the plan to the Senate by December 2018.

CHARGE I – PROCEDURES AND FINDINGS

■ **Procedures**

- The SVPR served as a member of the committee
- invited as guest Jeff Seo, the new Interim Vice-Provost for Research Administration (VPRA) to provide regular reports on “NU-RES” (Research Enterprise Services).
- The RPOC saw demonstrations of the new “ePAWs” software system and met with developers.

■ **Findings** (see written report for more): NE-RES is attempting to:

- consolidate and limit the number of email communications between NU-RES and research faculty
- streamline the review of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs)
- More efficiently route UPAFs and provide better instructions and training
- Implement Electronic Proposal and Awards Workflow System (ePAWs)

CHARGE I: RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Efforts should be continued to further streamline the communication between NU-RES and faculty investigators.**
- **Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) should generally be classified as low-risk to expedite their approval.**
- **Future phases of ePAWs should incorporate the ability to track expenditures on existing research accounts.**
- **Systems should be explored to make invoicing on grants more timely and transparent.**

CHARGE 2: SEED FUNDING

- Charge: The RPOC shall undertake a study of the current process for university-level seed funding of faculty research with a focus on the priorities, expected outcomes, and actual outcomes, and, if appropriate, make recommendations to enhance this set of processes
 - Procedure: The RPOC gathered partial data on seed funding but did not have a complete picture from which to draw conclusions.
 - Recommendation: The topic of seed funding should be addressed by next year's RPOC.

CHARGE 3: UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

- **Charge:** The RPOC shall undertake a study of the current mechanisms to foster faculty mentored undergraduate research, and, if appropriate, make recommendations to enhance this set of processes.
- **Procedures:**
 - interacted with personnel from the Provost's and Chancellor's offices to acquire and organize information about university-level initiatives supporting undergraduate research
 - Gathered data from each of the colleges about College support for undergraduate research

CHARGE 3: FINDINGS (SEE WRITTEN REPORT FOR MORE)

- The Office of Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (URF) offers over 200 undergraduate research-related awards each year to undergraduate students and their faculty advisors.
 - range of the awards typically \$1,000 to \$5,000 each.
 - total of approximately \$385,000 from the Provost's office, and additional \$50,000 through the Honors Program.
- The URF has been expanding the scope of what is deemed research so as to include all colleges
 - Creative endeavors are considered.
 - Includes group projects and service research projects with community partners.
- In January 2019, launched a series of new courses and would like to encourage students to register for these in semesters where they are conducting research.
 - The courses will typically not be charged tuition.
- Direct college support for undergraduate research varies substantially from college to college

CHARGE 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The RPOC can work with URF to spread the word to faculty and students to encourage them to register for the new courses to track research activity.**
- **The URF will consider the pros and cons of establishing a centralized database of opportunities to match students and faculty; perhaps this can be broken down by department**

CHARGE 4: RESEARCH AT NON-BOSTON HUBS

- **Charge:** In collaboration with the Provost's Office, the RPOC shall review research policies specific to NU hubs outside Boston, including policies to incentivize faculty to carry out research at non-Boston hubs.
- **Procedures:** Subset of RPOC met with key members of the NU senior leadership team (Provost James Bean, Philomena Mantella, David Luzzi, and Jeff Seo) to obtain information about the current status and plans for academic research to be conducted on the Northeastern satellite campuses.

CHARGE 4: FINDINGS (SEE WRITTEN REPORT FOR MORE)

- University has longer-term goal of encouraging academic research to be conducted on all satellite campuses in addition to the Boston campus -- Northeastern using its global network to become a Global Research University
- Satellite campuses originally established as teaching campuses and thus were not designed to accommodate research activities
 - Seattle is currently the only satellite location where some academic research is currently underway
- Research at satellite campuses would be funded through the Boston campus.
- Deans of the satellite campuses report to SVP for LLN and run their own operations but do not have any academic oversight
 - Colleges make decisions about academic programs.
- Provost Bean encourages tenured faculty members to spend a semester at a satellite campus and envisions opportunities for faculty rotation across campuses.
 - NU's Khoury College of Computer Science encourages faculty to rotate to Seattle
 - a couple of dozen CSSH faculty have expressed interest in going to London.
 - At the San Francisco campus there is one computer science faculty member who is working 20 percent for NU and 80 percent for Google. There are plans to hire more faculty in the Bay Area with such split
 - Senior leadership are comfortable with letting research activity develop organically throughout the campus network and collect feedback from early participants

CHARGE 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Deans of Colleges and Unit heads in the Boston hub make faculty aware of opportunities for research and related collaboration with NU hubs outside Boston.**
- **Deans of Colleges and Unit heads in the Boston hub make efforts to invite colleagues from NU hubs outside of Boston to College and Unit meetings to discuss research efforts and related endeavors at NU hubs outside of Boston.**
- **The Provost explore the development of research incentive programs to incentivize collaboration between: (a) Boston hub faculty and faculty at NU hubs outside of Boston, and (b) across NU hub faculty situated at different NU hubs outside of Boston**