

**Utah State University
Research Council Minutes
January 24, 2008 - 3:00 p.m.
Champ Hall**

RESEARCH COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Clifford Skousen
for Doug Anderson
Jeff Broadbent
Byron Burnham
Nat Frazer

Jagath Kaluarachchi
for Scott Hinton
Mary Hubbard
Gary Kiger
James MacMahon

Mac McKee
Doug Ramsey
Paul Rasmussen
Jim Dorward
for Carol Strong

INVITED GUESTS:

Jeri Brunson
Ray DeVito
Melanie Domenech-
Rodriguez

Steve Hansen
Irene Jorgensen
Anna McEntire
David Paul
Russ Price

Sara Rule
David Stein
Teresa Seeholzer
Lorraine Walker

ACTION ITEMS

1. **Approval of Minutes of November 29, 2007** (Jeff Broadbent)
Lorraine Walker requested the minutes be amended as follows:

- Page 1, Discussion item 2, line 1: Insert "For example, historical autism ratios"
- Page 3, Discussion item 3, Paragraph 4, line 3: Years referenced will be adjusted to reflect 2008/2009 instead of 2007/2008. Additionally, June 30, 2008 will be amended as June 30, 2009.

Doug Ramsey motioned to approve the minutes with the noted amendments. Steve Hansen seconded the motion; motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSIONS

1. **Welcome & Introductions** (Jeff Broadbent for Brent Miller)

2. **Presentation: Parenting Intervention Research with Spanish-speaking Latinos/as in Cache Valley** By: **Melanie Domenech-Rodriguez**
- **Introduced By: David Stein, Department Head - CPD**

As a prevention scientist, Dr. Melanie Domenech-Rodriguez's work focuses on parenting, particularly intervention research with Spanish and Latino families. The USU team works with families where preventive measures are identified to assist parents in recognizing challenges and problem areas in their homes where potential negative outcomes can result. Tools and ideas are shared with families based on proven results that can change behavior and improve the home environment.

Behavioral, emotional and social development, academic achievement, and substance use all show proven correlation to parenting practices and are critical to child development. For the past seven years, this research has centered around the following dimensions: 1) Test Behavior Observation, 2) Investigate Qualitatively, 3) Adaptation Manual, 4) Administer Intervention, and 5) Evaluate Results. Some concerns discussed early in the research were whether or not parents and families would participate, especially those who are undocumented families.

As the research progressed, fifty families did respond and continued to support the research throughout the pilot phase. Families were given problem solving skills and were monitored as the new concepts were implemented. Melanie commented that another interesting outcome was that if mom's parenting practices are poor, father's parenting practices become a critical factor in protecting the children from negative outcomes.

As the research progressed, focus group findings showed that academic achievement and education was a top priority to these pilot families. Also important to them is communication, increase of respect, and the use of behaviorally effective metaphors. Next, adaptation language was integrated to help teach the concepts. This included consistency in language that leads to rapid learning, and visuals help support the learning process.

Dr. Domenech- Rodriguez summarized her presentation by giving a status report of this research. Fifty families participated in the pilot phase of the research with an additional 75 families who are now participating. Even though many of these families have undocumented family members, they trust the project researchers and continue to be involved. Overall, observations have proven very positive as relationships within families and interface with local schools has been strengthened through this project.

At the conclusion of her presentation, she highlighted the team members and mentors who are extensively involved in this research. She commented that grant agencies have been very supportive throughout this research along with funding support from USU New Faculty Research Grants.

3. **Graduate Student Health Insurance Update** By: Byron Burnham

The deadline for vendor RFP submissions is January 24, 2008, at 5:00 p.m. Dean Burnham commented that each proposal will be reviewed and given due-diligence by the committee. At this stage of the process, it is anticipated that subsidized premiums will cost ~ \$ 1200.00 a year/per graduate student to be funded by students (\$200.00) and University (\$1000.00). The committee hopes to identify a provider within the next 2 weeks. Family options will also be part of the vendor selection process; however, family premiums will not be subsidized by USU.

It is expected that graduate student health insurance will be implemented by Fall Semester 2008. As the fiscal year for 2009 begins on July 1, 2008, vendors were asked to quote pro-rated coverage for additional months should a graduate assistant's employment begin prior to school starting in the fall.

4. **Utah Center of Excellence Update** By: Ray DeVito

Ray reported that the Governor's Office for Economic Development (GOED) has implemented significant changes to available COE funding for FY2009 as follows:

- No new university centers will be awarded in the next fiscal year, but existing centers may apply for yearly renewal.
- Available funding will be targeted to companies who are a licensee under a university within the state.

USU's one center in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department will be able to participate in the FY2009 funding proposal phase. Ray commented that many questions remain with this funding decision as the program now resembles a Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) concept. USU, U of U and BYU commercialization representatives hope to be able to meet with the GOED office, Utah Science Advisory Council (SAC), and the Director of Utah's COE in the next few months to discuss the pros and cons of this change. These new changes to the COE proposal process are firm for FY2009, but Ray was hopeful that additional options would be considered for FY2010.

5. **Credit for Co-Investigators on Joint Projects** By: Irene Jorgensen & David Paul

The Research Council asked that USU's reports associated with its sponsored program efforts be adjusted to more accurately reflect the contributions of individual faculty members. Current University practice has been to allocate credit for an entire research project only to the project's principal investigator. This results in under reporting research awards and proposal information as well as research expenditure data for some colleges and over-reporting in others. This reporting method can negatively impact the colleges as program support to the individual college is prorated based upon the amount of indirect cost generated by the college in relation to the other colleges.

David Paul clarified that the Sponsored Programs Office is responsible for the monthly sponsored projects proposal and award reports and the Controller's Office prepares research expenditure and other financial related documents.

Irene noted that Controllers has the capacity to set up multiple accounts for each awarded project and this would allow expenditures to be more accurately reported. In order to implement the process though, a research team needs to identify in advance of account set up what portion of an award should be allocated to each member of the research team. F&A would also be allocated based upon the account set up.

To stream line the process, USU will be transitioning to a web-based portal that will allow proposal and award changes along with updates in a timely manner. David noted that the SP01 form will be modified to include a field where investigators can designate when a budget split is necessary. SPO hopes to have the new platform in place by the end of this fiscal year. In the interim, PI and Co-PI's can still request for split budgets and have multiple accounts assigned to a project after the award.

Irene noted that Banner has the capacity to report at the grant level (all project costs), 2) fund level (one or multiple funds), or 3) organization level (unit responsible). These levels give the PI and Co-PI flexibility in reporting options.

6. **Fixed Price Contract Procedures** By: Irene Jorgensen

Irene distributed a copy of the Fixed Price (Contract/Grant) Residual Amounts Procedure and outlined proposed steps the controller's office would like to implement in an effort to close out fixed price contracts in a more timely manner. This procedure includes an overview of the Cost Accounting Standard 9905.501 (Appendix A of OMB Circular A-21). A portion of this standard states that on sponsored projects, "consistent application of cost accounting practices will facilitate the preparation of reliable cost estimates used in pricing a proposal and their comparison with the costs of performance of resulting sponsored agreement." To assure USU complies with the standard, a process is needed where USU can review awards with significant variance between that which was estimated and actual costs.

When fixed price contracts are awarded, Irene noted that USU is obligated to complete the deliverables regardless of costs incurred during the duration of the contract, thereby subjecting the university to risk. As proposals are submitted on these types of contracts, some are padded to cover incidental costs that occur in the last period of the contract. Once the project completion date occurs, steps outlined in the procedure would then be implemented to assure consistency in handling residuals.

Comments/Observations/Concerns:

- James MacMahon --- If USU's Research Office approves a 15% overhead return on a proposal, the department who receives the grant is then impacted disproportionately if the Controller's Office assesses a 40% return on residuals.

He agreed there are costs to each department, but how we enforce this penalty is a concern.

Lorraine Walker --- In the past, there have been some cases at USU where a PI had received a contract/grant with unrestricted and undesignated funding, however, USU facilities were used. In this scenario, the dean has the option to deduct full F&A as part of recovering research costs. As the policy and procedure steps were considered, processes at institutions across the country were reviewed. Finding showed that many of them do not allow any of the residual to go back to the PI, but rather into a central general fund for reallocation. USU's procedure is an effort to offer a balance to all comparisons which were reviewed.

James MacMahon --- Some residual case examples are extreme and should be dealt with appropriately, but should the majority be lumped together in this procedure. Is there a better way to proportionally handle residual balances?

Jeff Broadbent --- Welcomed feedback and recommendations of how to treat cases where a PI has negotiated a contract/grant with no overhead rate, and/or the agency doesn't allow overhead rates.

James MacMahon --- Agreed there should be a process and policy that is equitable, but it's the disproportionate amount that is negative to PIs. The University has the decision to accept or reject a proposal if no overhead is included, but once the Research Office approves a proposal, residuals should be equally distributed and consistency to the standard could still be achieved.

David Paul --- When budgets for fixed price contracts are included in proposals, it is expected the amount will be totally expensed. Overhead costs are real, and it would be reasonable for the University to deduct full overhead on the amount not expensed. He commented that most of USU's fixed price contracts are "industry" related and USU's standard practice is to charge the vendor indirect costs on these types of contracts.

Lorraine Walker --- The extreme occurrences with residual balances are fewer in number than the majority. She commented that one benefit with implementing this procedure is the PI would have to provide the justification form, including dean and department head signature, if the residual amount 25% greater than then funded amount. Adding this step would increase awareness so that departmental funds were not subsidizing those projects.

James MacMahon --- Commented that he understood the goal USU is trying to achieve, but this procedure might not be the best way to resolve potential problems.

Jeff Broadbent --- Concluded the discussion by noting sensitivity to faculty's perception of the policy. The goal is to assist faculty with projecting appropriate budgets so large surpluses do not result as well as compliance to the federal guidelines. The impact of F&A rates will be reviewed and another update on this subject will be provided at February's Research Council. Jeff thanked those that participated with him on the committee to draft the policy which included: David Cowley, Lori Selby, David Paul, Irene Jorgensen, Lorraine Walker, Beth Smith, and Cecelia Melder.

7. **2008 Research Matters Update** By: Anna McEntire

Colleges were asked to provide an updated list of faculty research achievements. Anna thanked everyone for their participation and distributed a copy of what has been submitted thus far. The list has not been finalized yet so changes and/or additions will continue to be accepted over the next few weeks. The list will be reviewed and narrowed down over the next several weeks to identify which achievements will be selected for the 2008 publication.

8. **Other Issues/Updates & Upcoming Calendar Events** By: Jeff Broadbent

- **National Children's Study:** In the November 2007 Research Council, Richard Roberts' (guest presenter) referenced and invited all colleges and centers to participate in upcoming meetings that would explore opportunities with adjunct studies associated with this research. Meetings were held on 12/4/07 and 1/22/08 and progress continues. All are invited to participate in these meetings and if additional information is needed, contact Richard Roberts for additional information.
- **Growing Research at USU:** Jeff stated that he is scheduled to summarize the Research Focus Group's Strategic Plan and recommendations at the next Executive Committee Meeting on Wednesday, January 30, 2008. It is hoped that the RFPs for new seed programs can be issued soon so that funding options would be available on July 1, 2008.
- **R537 - Reimbursed Overhead Policy:** This policy requiring state agencies to allow a 10% F&A rate on all state contracts was approved many years ago by the Utah Board of Regents and supported by the governor. Many state agencies do not recognize the policy. Fred Hunsaker attended the last Utah Business Affairs Council and reported that all of the state's institutions for higher education voiced support for enforcement of this proposed policy. The next step will be for the Commissioner's staff to gain acceptance of this policy at the State level in order to implement this policy.

- Nominations are now being accepted for USU Researcher of the Year, Undergraduate Mentor of the Year, and Undergraduate Researcher of the Year
 - January 24, 2008 --- Research on Capitol Hill
 - Dean Mary Hubbard commented that the deans and department heads would like to attend this event, however, a scheduled workshop on campus created a conflict. Jeff relayed that the event is scheduled a year in advance and is on the USU calendar. The VPR office will be sure to notify all offices and departments in 2009 so that we reduce the chance of scheduling conflicts.
 - James MacMahon commented that USU should also consider student participation at the Federal Science on the Hill event. Many key individuals from the House Science Committee participate and this event could showcase USU's students as well.
 - January 25, 2008 --- Sunrise Session
 - February 28, 2008 --- Research Council
 - March 31st – April 4th, 2008 --- USU Research Week
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Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Minutes Submitted By: Teresa Seeholzer, Research Council Secretary