University Research Facilities Policy

Alterations or requests for access to University Research Facilities may have implications for other on-going or prospective research activities. University Research Facilities encompasses all research areas throughout the University, including shared research facilities like the Clean Room and the Animal Care Facility. For this reason, it is important for the University research community to cooperate with the Vice Provost for Research in overseeing and coordinating all activities that involve the use, maintenance, renovation, technology updates, and staffing of all University Research Facilities.

Decisions by the Vice Provost for Research regarding University Research Facilities will be made in consultation with Deans, Chairs, and Principal Investigators, with strong consideration given to minimizing the disruption of ongoing, daily operations of these facilities. Other University offices — including the Executive Vice President, the Controllers, the Executive Director for Academic Budget, Policy, and Planning, and the Vice Provost for Faculties — will be included in the decision-making process when appropriate.

Policies and procedures regarding more common issues involving University Research Facilities are described below.

I. Allocation of Space, Alteration of Space, Charge-Back Systems

a. Allocation of Space
The research space needs of prospective junior and senior faculty hires must be brought to the attention of the Vice Provost for Research, who will consider them in the context of existing and future activities of current Boston College researchers. The Vice Provost for Research will consult with the appropriate Dean and determine if needs can be accommodated.

Any discussions with prospective hires that take place before this determination is made, or that do not accurately reflect the decision by the Vice Provost for Research, may not be honored by Boston College.

b. Alteration of Space
If the research space needs of prospective faculty hires require alterations of University Research Facilities, Capital Projects Management should prepare estimates regarding the scope of work and the associated cost. These estimates must be reviewed and approved by the Vice Provost for Research in consultation with the appropriate Dean, before an offer of employment is made.

All renovations require final approval by the Vice Provost for Research before the hiring of architects and engineers or the start of construction. Ongoing research efforts that need to be relocated due to approved space alterations will be coordinated with the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and must follow the guidelines in the Academic Alteration and Renovation (A&R) process.
c. **Charge-Back Systems**
Researchers will help offset the cost of maintaining and staffing shared University research facilities. Specific contributions will be determined by the Vice Provost for Research in consultation with the appropriate Dean and administrative and faculty representatives, and will be reviewed regularly in consultation with the university research community.

**II. Upgrades in Existing Technology/Instrumentation and Requests for New Technology/Instrumentation**

a. All upgrades and relocation of technology or instrumentation in University Research Facilities must be reviewed and approved by the Vice Provost for Research in consultation with the appropriate Dean, even if the facility is used almost entirely by a single Department. Review and decisions by the Vice Provost for Research will include review of funding and budget constraints.

b. Requests for funds for new instrumentation must be presented to the Vice Provost for Research. Institutional cost sharing requests for grant proposals for instrumentation must also be directed to the Vice Provost for Research.

c. The staffing of University Research Facilities must be reviewed and approved by the Vice Provost for Research. This includes upgrades in staff positions and changes in staff responsibilities.

In making decisions in all of the above areas, the Vice Provost for Research will consider views from the University Research Council (URC).
University Research Facilities, Procedures

The University Research Facilities policy calls for the coordinated efforts of seven offices in implementing three of its provisions – (a) allocation of space, (b) review and approval of alterations, and (c) design of charge back system (See attached Decision Tree). The seven offices include:

- Provost
- Executive Vice President
- Controllers
- Executive Director Academic Budget, Policy, and Planning
- Vice Provost for Research
- Vice Provost for Faculties
- Appropriate Dean

The other provisions of the policy – (a) upgrades in and/or repairs to technology or instrumentation, (b) new instrumentation that enhances facility capabilities, and (c) staffing – involve the review and approval of only the Office of the Vice Provost for Research. Coordination with other University offices is simpler for these provisions.

Due to the different levels of coordination required, the two sets of provisions will be considered separately below.

I. Allocation of Space, Review and Approval of Alterations, and Design of Charge Back Systems

While there are some procedural variations, the first set of provisions hold in common the need for parties with an interest in a particular aspect of University Research Facilities to: (1) contact all other parties about their specific concerns and (2) for all parties involved to preserve contact with all other parties in all communication. Examples are instructive.

a. Allocation of Space

The University Research Facilities policy calls for department chairs to review needs of new junior and senior hires with the Vice Provost for Research. The appropriate Dean is also asked to confer with the VP for Research. In implementing the University Research Facilities policy, the VP for Research and/or the appropriate Dean will copy and otherwise communicate with the six other parties listed above to ensure a comprehensive review of these faculty research-related requests. The goal is to interrelate the allocation of space with 1) the Merkert Master Plan, 2) the Higgins Master Plan, 3) the Capital Budget process, and/or 4) the annual submission of School Plans. Examples of questions that may be raised include the following:

i. Does the request for allocation of space fit within the master plan for Higgins, Merkert, or another building? (Provost and Executive Vice President)
ii. Are we taking account of the full range of hires in making individual space allocation decisions? (Vice Provost for Faculties)

iii. Is the project reflected in the capital budget? (Academic Budget, Policy, & Plan)

iv. Is the project detailed in the School Plan, submitted for the fiscal year of the project’s implementation? (Academic Budget, Policy, & Plan)

b. Alterations

Requests for alteration of shared facility space (e.g., construction of an operating room in the Animal Care Facility) will involve coordination of Capital Projects Management (CPM) and the Vice Provost for Research in advance of an employment offer. Importantly, these plans must take into account CPM timelines that tend to be long. To help ensure timely sharing of information, The Vice Provost for Research Office will, by communicating with all interested parties named above, be asking for additional input of planning, financial, academic, and management points of view. The Vice Provost for Research will share all decisions to amend or proceed with requests based on input received from other offices. Progress reports will be shared as requested.

c. Design of Charge Back Systems

The Vice Provost for Research is charged with working with the appropriate Dean and administrative and faculty representatives in designing and improving charge backs on the use of shared university research facilities. The Center for Centers plays a key role in requesting and reviewing business plans that make good financial sense for the proposed charge back system and for the University. Implementing the University Research Facilities policy further requires the Vice Provost for Research to communicate with all interested parties named above when establishing a charge back system. The Controllers, Budget Offices, and Executive Director for Academic Budget, Policy, and Planning will have need for revenue estimates. The Executive Vice President will need to know and understand the growing complement of charge back system and their respective revenues and subsidies, where required.

II. Upgrades in Technology/Instrumentation, New Instrumentation, and Staffing

Whereas all interested parties on Set I plans for provisions will benefit from the active contribution of suggestions, cautions, and guidance, implementation of initiatives in Set II will be shared with others largely for informational purposes. As above, examples are instructive.

a. Upgrades in Repairs to Technology/Instrumentation

All proposed upgrades require the review and approval of the Vice Provost for Research in collaboration with finance and budget colleagues. The availability of funding, either externally through grants or internally through designated funds (e.g., Integrative Science), is key. By providing copies of all requests on an informational basis to all parties named at the start, the Vice Provost for Research
can help all to understand the changing context of research instrumentation at Boston College. The Vice Provost for Research will author an annual or bi-
annual report for limited distribution to help all key Boston College decision makers know and appreciate the changing landscape of technology and instrumentation used in research at the university.

b. **New Instrumentation that Enhances Facility Capabilities**
The Vice Provost for Research entertains all requests for technology enhancement of an individual facility. As above, funding sources, both external and internal, are key. Open communication to all interested parties will help the university community take account of the forward rate of technology advancement at Boston College.

c. **Staffing**
This activity is highly delimited. The Vice Provost for Research will copy only those with a direct need to know regarding new hires or changes in hires within University Research Facilities. The Center for Centers and the Executive Director for Academic Budget, Policy, and Planning will both receive copies as a result of their respective responsibilities for supporting the efficient operation of University Research Facilities and approving and tracking staffing plans.

III. **Conclusion**

The rigors of implementing the University Research Facility policy require a flexible and comprehensive approach. Hierarchical decision trees and decision flow charts have been avoided in favor of requiring open communication between all interested parties regarding University Research Facilities requests, decisions, and implementation actions. Experience may well find that the implementation of the policy as outlined here will itself produce highly useful feedback that will further inform the policy and its future implementation.