

Boston College University Research Council

Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2008
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Waul House

Members Present:

Kevin Bedell, Vice Provost for Research
Arnold Shore, Associate Vice Provost for Research
Joanne Scibilia, Office for Sponsored Programs
Catherine Ives, Office of Technology Transfer and Licensing
Hiram Brownell, Psychology
Patricia Doherty, Institute for Scientific Research
Charlie Hoffman, Biology
Amy Hutton, Accounting
Tim Kelly, Undergraduate student, A&S
Kris Kempa, Physics
Lucas Lindsay, Graduate student, Physics
Devin Pendas, History
Thanh van Tran, Graduate School of Social Work
Christopher Wilson, English
Barbara Wolfe, Connell School of Nursing

Absent:

Steve Erickson, Research Integrity and Compliance
Dean Hashimoto, Law School

1. Arnie opened the meeting by explaining that each University Research Council meeting agenda will have three purposes. They are: Research Policy Formulation and Review, Research Policy Implementation and Other Research Matters. Arnie asked for URC members to be involved in research policy development in an active way. Arnie explained that implementation of research policies may involve developing new business processes and obtaining input from other offices at BC.

Arnie distributed a draft version of the Effort Reporting Policy and Revision to the Conflict of Interest Policy and asked URC members to send comments to Steve Erickson.

2. Conflict of Interest

Kevin began the discussion by explaining that BC has a Conflict of Interest Policy that requires all University Officers, Deans, Directors and other employees as designated by the President to sign a Conflict of Interest Annual Disclosure Statement. Faculty and staff members who are not required to complete an annual disclosure statement are individually responsible for notifying the Provost or appropriate director, vice president and the Vice President for Human Resources, respectively, should an actual or potential conflict of interest arise.

3. Conflict of Commitment

While there is currently no formal University policy on Conflict of Commitment, it is becoming an issue that needs to be addressed and managed. Conflict of Commitment may occur when an employee holds another position or conducts activities outside the University that may interfere with his or her primary University responsibilities. A conflict may not exist in every instance, but disclosure of the outside activities is important.

Kevin stated that with the creation of spin-off companies by research faculty, the focus of conflict of commitment is currently on research activities, but will soon be considered university-wide. Other universities have conflict of commitment policies in place. How should BC adopt a policy on conflict of commitment for the entire university? Should it be made part of the Conflict of Interest Policy?

URC members raised the question of how to define a full work week or the one day of consulting that is allowed at BC. How do you measure significant financial interest? How do we manage the conflicts? Right now, consulting activities are not captured on the Conflict of Interest Form.

4. Effort Reporting

Joanne informed the URC that right now we have a process for certifying effort on sponsored projects that is in compliance with Federal regulations. However, there is no formal policy. So far, BC has not had any audit findings in this area; however, other universities have had serious findings that resulted in significant cost disallowances. OSP has discussed effort reporting requirements at workshops that have been attended by administrative staff. However, it is important for faculty and other researchers to understand the purpose of effort reporting and the importance of accurate certification of effort distribution.

URC members suggested the use of “best practices” or “rule of thumb” to education researchers about effort reporting.

5. Future Topics

Arnie outlined topics/policies that will be discussed in the future:

- Animal Care Policy
- Human Participation Policy
- Export Control Policy
- Data Retention Policy: We have this policy, but an update is needed. Also it must be determined who will cover the cost of retaining the data.
- Intellectual Property Policy: This policy is currently being revised.

6. Research Policy Implementation

Homeland Security:

Kevin informed the URC that we have invited the FBI to a meeting with the VPR Group in March and after that he hopes to invite them to meet with the URC. Kevin said that there are a lot of issues that have to be addressed such as: compliance with Homeland Security policies; managing and reporting chemical usage; deemed imports; sensitive but unclassified contracts and suspicious contacts.

Cost Sharing:

The policy has been written and processed for approval. Testing of the business process is underway. Implementation is anticipated in January.

7. Other Matters

RIG/REG:

Volunteers for membership on this subcommittee are needed. Please contact Kevin.

Faculty Day Research Awards:

A brief discussion took place and questions were raised about the faculty research awards. It was determined that we would continue with these awards, but find better ways to promote the award and get people to attend the award ceremony. It was suggested that the criteria for winning an award should be reviewed. It was also suggested that more awards of a greater amount should be made. Another suggestion was to identify a new venue or hold a reception for honoring the awardees.

Non-monetary support of Faculty Research:

Catherine told the URC that BC does not have a unique way of recognizing inventors. Catherine said that there are about 10-20 inventions a year. She suggested giving plaques or having a special reception or placing an announcement in the BC Chronicle to recognize inventors.

Faculty Compliance Responsibilities:

This is to be discussed at the next meeting.