

Ad-hoc research committee follow-up report

Submitted May 6, 2015 by Kevin Williams, chair

The ad-hoc research committee met with the Provost, the Research Council Working Group, and other relevant administrators on April 24, 2015. After initial information was shared about the Office of Research, the Center for Research and Development, the WKU Research Foundation, and the Graduate School, several topics were discussed related to the report that had been submitted by the ad-hoc committee to the Provost and the SEC on March 31, 2015. The ad-hoc committee led the discussion topics and then others in the room shared ideas. Feedback from faculty and administrators alike who attended the meeting was that this was a productive discussion with several useful suggestions.

Topics discussed included:

- 1) Center for Faculty Development: Overall, the opinion of the CFD is positive and an increased role for the CFD in enhancing research is being considered. The CFD could help create a clearinghouse of faculty research interests to facilitate interdepartmental and intercollegiate collaborations. Furthermore, the CFD could help to serve as a conduit between the faculty and administrative units to help make decisions about internal funding allocations.
- 2) RCAP: Faculty are generally positive about the RCAP mechanism in principle, though currently the amount of funding requested across the university far exceeds the RCAP funds that are available through the Office of Research, which gets most of its funding from indirect (F&A) costs from external grants. There was general agreement that the ratio of funds requested to funds received overall is currently undesirable. The option of a “hybrid” approach between the competitive RCAP program and the old Faculty Scholarship Awards, which were for smaller amounts of money but were less competitive, was discussed. The RCAP awards may be more appealing to many in the sciences, for example, where larger awards are helpful and acquisition of competitive funding is important. The FSA awards were often more appealing to many in disciplines where small amounts of internal funding can lead to completion of research and creative activity and external funding is difficult to obtain.
- 3) FUSE: Whereas RCAP is funded primarily through the Office of Research, the FUSE awards are funded primarily from Academic Affairs, with colleges providing additional matching funding, some of which should be used for the mentor’s professional development. Positive feedback about FUSE was expressed overall. Several suggestions were discussed, including increased flexibility in the \$3000 for travel and supplies, elimination of a publication submission as an expected “deliverable”, and softening of the language for what constitutes a “regional presentation”. All of the above suggestions have already been implemented into the award letters for the FUSE grants that were awarded this spring.
- 4) ARTP: Our March 31 report mentioned the need to reassess the role of the Applied Research and Technology Program and to clarify that role to faculty, as many faculty members are unaware of the organization of the centers that are part of the ARTP. As mentioned in the Provost’s report to the President (e-mailed to the faculty on May 5, 2015), the role of ARTP is currently being reconsidered with fiscal oversight likely to come from the home colleges.
- 5) Incentivizing research: A couple of ideas were discussed in terms of incentivizing and/or rewarding research. One suggestion, which originated from several colleges, was to increase our public promotion and celebration of research through press releases, web site updates, and university publications (for example, WKU Spirit). Since existing public relations personnel and mechanisms can be utilized, this suggestion will require little to no additional financing and can improve the visibility of research and creative activity on campus. We also discussed a desire for

increased budgets for faculty travel to conduct or present research; many of the administrators present felt that it was preferable to keep travel funds at the college level to the extent possible, as centralizing it in Academic Affairs would reduce the flexibility of how those funds could be used.

- 6) Research Council: As mentioned in the Provost's report to the President, a Research and Creative Activities Council will provide advice and counsel to the Provost and Interim Associate Provost and be a primary conduit with the faculty. In addition to the Associate Deans of Research from each college, a faculty member from the University Libraries and an at-large faculty member appointed by the senate will serve on the RCAC.
- 7) New administrative structure: On a trial/interim basis, there was a suggestion to create an "Associate Provost of Research and Creative Activity". This new position would be responsible for many of the internal responsibilities of the Office of Research, such as being the official Compliance Officer, communicating with the Office of Sponsored Programs, and working with faculty to improve research opportunities as outlined in the Provost's report. As recently announced, Larry Snyder will assume this new position on July 1, 2015. The Center for Research and Development will continue to be overseen by the Senior VP of Finance and Administration. The Provost will continue to develop relationships with external agencies and be involved with other tasks as his report outlined. The Provost expressed a desire to keep the Research Foundation president separate from the Office of Research; currently, the role of President of the RF is held by a dean (Cheryl Stevens, OCSE).