

Research Council Meeting – Minutes
Bodek Lounge
5 November 2008
6:00pm

Summary of the Meeting

1. Approved minutes from Research Council Meeting 22 Oct 08
2. \$14,700 in travel grants was approved for the Fall Semester, leaving us with approximately \$13,300 to be spent in each Spring and Summer.
3. We have a \$6,000/semester budget for Academic Event Funding. Thus far, we have approved \$2,500 for this semester, so we have \$3,500 to spend by Dec.
4. We feel Health Insurance is a concern that should be tackled, but have not come to a conclusion as to who should handle it – schools, us, or the GA?
5. We would like to look into funding for advanced PhDs – each representative should email Jonathan the numbers of students enrolled in their school, by year of enrollment (ie, “first years”... “seventh years”) in three weeks, **by 26 November.**
6. We have decided that Grievance Procedures are a school specific issue and shall not be dealt with in the Research Council unless specific schools need our support.
7. We would like to make applications for Travel Grants and Academic event funding paperless; for the short term, Henry will make a writable pdf of both applications. For the long term, Jonathan will talk with the new VC Communications to ask him/her to make something which is web based and can be housed on the website.

I. Roll Call

Jonathon Lukens, VC Research
Heidi Khaled, Annenberg
LW as proxy for Carla Cué, SAS
Wenting Li, SAS
Stephanie Milk, SAS
Tim Shokair, SAS
Allison Sullivan, SAS
Leslie Anne Warden, SAS, Deputy VC

Jacqui Simonet, Medicine
Lee Solomon, Medicine
Corbit Brown - Nursing
Casey Bohrmar, SP2
Henry Friedman, Wharton

II. Approval of minutes

1. Lee motioned, Jacqui seconded, approved by all
 - a. A brief digression on the necessary courtesies due our beloved deputy vice chair as she takes minutes -OR- please speak slowly and wait your turn.

III. Update on travel grants/ academic events grants

1. Jonathan: Travel grant aps are still coming in. Last round (fall '08), we funded \$14,700 travel grants. We have about \$13,300 each period to give out; I went \$1,500 over as, based on previous years, not everyone submits receipts for reimbursement. Turned down 15 applications – they were either incomplete applications, people who went to summer conferences, or people funded last summer. Yet I'm still getting aps... if this [volume] is going to be an issue, we're going to have to come up with tight criteria for funding.

Jacqui – will these [the aps still coming in] go in to be funded for the Spring?

Jonathan – No, they were requesting funding for fall conferences, so we just can't fund them.

Jonathon – Academic events grants: we have \$6000/semester for academic events funding. I spoke with Christa; there was some confusion. We spent \$2500 last meeting, so we still have a lot of room for academic funding

Allison – Is there a deadline for these?

Jonathan – These are considered on a rolling basis. We just got an ap in here for 1000. There is no rep here, so we can talk about this now and make a decision or we can wait and ask for a rep to come in.

Heidi – What is their deadline?

Jonathan – They can come in next meeting, though I won't be here – the event is in March. (Passes out copies of the ap.) This will be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Jacqui – Is this something we funded before?

Jonathan – It's the first annual. My input: proposal is well written, we have more than enough room in the budget to handle \$1000.

IV. Agenda setting.

1. Jonathan: We need to figure out what we want our agenda this year to be, and because we started so late we have to be realistic about what we can accomplish. Suggestions left over from last year:

- a. Grievance procedures
- b. Funding for advanced PhD's

c. PhD exit survey

I'm Meeting with SASgov officials on Monday to see what their advocacy issues since they represent such a large number of doctoral students. One of their issues is a Student Health survey.

Henry – What are their issues?

Jonathan – We don't know quite yet since I haven't had the meeting. But the health insurance thing should be interesting, esp as several schools in CA just got rid of health coverage for their grads. Worth looking at because of the crappy economy – SP2 won't take in more PhDs next year. So as schools are looking to cut their budgets, we need to stay vigilant.

2. Health Care

Stephanie – Penn might be able to offer cheaper health care because they have a health system attached. This could make us very attractive.

Jonathan: That sounds good, but we don't know if they're using it.

Jaqui – They're not using their health network to give us discounts.

Henry – That's a really big deal, and I think SASgov will do things adequately and responsibly, but I feel that since this is something that affects everyone we should preempt this ourselves.

Jonathan: I should figure out who they're talking with and what they're thinking so that we can move forward.

Henry: Who makes this decision [regarding health insurance and what it covers]?

Leslie: SHIAC.

Corbit – Is this a trend in the other grand schools?

Lee: Is this happening anywhere out of CA?

Jonathan: We need to figure that out; just written up in the journal of higher education. The Cal schools might be using this as a way to get more money out of the state since grads are going on social welfare. It's something to keep an eye on, though I'm not afraid Penn will suddenly say we don't have health insurance.

Stephanie: How many student groups are looking at this? If SASgov and the Campus climate people are looking at it, should we consolidate?

Jonathan: I'm all for that

Henry: We could bring it up to the general assembly, even though this professional students would have to buy in to the plan.

Jonathan: Let me meet with the SASgov folks, get a better idea of what they're up to. I'll email something to everyone and if anyone wants to step up that would be spectacular.

Henry: The other issue is that the university paying for this?

Jonathan, Jacqui, Leslie: The specific schools.

Jonathan: The way it works, the University chooses a policy and the schools are mandated to pay for it.

3. Funding for Advanced PhDs

Jonathan: One of the other issues from last year – funding for advanced PhDs. This is a long term issue as we don't know the scope.

Leslie: We have SAS numbers.

Jonathan: Good! So then we just need the other schools to go back and get this data. We're concerned with the ones passed their funding who are lingering past in dissertation stages.

Jacqui: Not a problem for Med

Henry: Not a problem for Wharton.

Jonathan, Casey: It is a problem for SP2. Annenberg?

Heidi: We just had a series of meetings where we've worked it out. We get 2 semesters of cushion before they drop our stipend. At first we were going to have to pay tuition after 5 years if we didn't finish, but now we're good to 6. After that, no stipend but they waive tuition. Only a few people in those later years.

Jonathan: Can everyone get at least a rough estimate from each of the schools, so if we can see if this is a larger issue to handle or just SAS? Please email numbers by three weeks from today. A breakdown of students by year.

Jacqui: You're defining "lingering" as being here after funding?

Jonathan: We're trying to figure out their obstacles as well.

4. Grievance procedures

Jonathan: Grievance procedures – is SAS working on that?

Leslie: Yes they are.

Jonathan: I'll follow up on what they're doing. Is this a problem for other people?

Jacqui: Not really. There are so many avenues, we're so large, you can find someone to be on your side.

Lee: Less common, anyways.

Jacqui: What about SAS – is it a problem for a large number of students?

Leslie: It's a large problem for a small number of students. SAS was surprised we didn't have something on the books. I'm curious if other schools have actual procedures on the books?

Jacqui: Med does.

Henry: With Wharton, there've been problems with getting committees together, and with our programs being so small. The revisions to the PhD rules should help some of those problems.

Jacqui: Should we move forward with this?

(All, Practically in unison): This is school specific.

Corbit: Nursing has recently worked out its problems.

Jacqui: If your school is so small you feel you need a larger, university wide avenue, we could pursue that if that was necessary.

5. PhD Exit Survey data

Jonathan: PhD exit survey data. Met with Amy Guttman a few weeks ago – she changed the subject when it was brought up. She's not interested. Andrew has been around and around and has got nowhere. I'm not even sure these data exist. I'd like to keep pursuing it, to see if we can get a handle on it... we're taking stabs in the dark because we're so decentralized and figuring out core issues is hard.

Henry: Who did the survey? What office?

Jonathan: The Provost. They've been collecting it for 10 years and it's just sitting around, somewhere, in raw data format. Aside from that, they need to update this survey and figure out if it's worth anything.

Henry: the president might know nothing about it.

Jonathan: they know, because of NRC, a national ranking, whose data is being held back longer because the external review didn't approve it.

Jonathan: Any other issues coming up at school government meetings?

(no answer)

6. Making applications for funding from the Research Council Paperless

Jonathan: One of the other things I would like to work on – paperless travel grants. The way we do travel grants right now is a nightmare – all the applications need to be entered manually, they get lost. Maybe there's a way to do a fillable pdf which can be tracked into a spreadsheet?

Stephanie: Could we link it to the GAPSA website? Maybe they could just do an online form? Then we can foist off all the programming work onto the website person.

Tim: If you have a form and can write some code you can just dump it into an Excel sheet.

Jonathan: It's that whole writing code thing. Anyone have the skills?

(No volunteers)

Henry: Can we ask the communications person? It's obviously travel grants, but it can be applied to both research and professional students.

Jonathan: The only thing I can see holding this up is the letters of recommendation from the professors, but maybe we could just have the professors email us.

Corbot: How many applications were approved?

Jonathan: \$14584

Henry: A medium term fix would be a writable pdf, which would at least move it to electronic format.

Tim: If you have it in a text format rather than pdf, it should be easier to write code.

Lee: We could get people to input these things themselves.

Jonathan: We could do a pdf which would export to a spreadsheet, but I like Tim's suggestion better.

Jacqui: Writable pdf might be the easier fix for right now, and then we can deal with the Communications person.

Henry: I'll do that [make the writable pdf], it's fine.

Jonathan: It's be nice to make the academic requests paperless as well. For travel grants, we're getting a huge number of these. Perhaps departments are cutting back their funding?

Jacqui: The numbers are like last spring.

Jonathan: We had a lot of late ones as well, many of them saying departments are no longer funding.

Olga: A lot of programs don't have funding for travel anyway.

V. Adjourn