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UNM Faculty Senate

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Criticisms of the Current Structure at UNM

Criticisms from within

“Too many committees to watch” – OPS

Over the past several years, there has been an attempt to pare down the number of FS committees from its record high of 21 or so, down to 16-19. There is always resistance to eliminating a committee, and generally based on good reasons, since, in the end, many of the eliminated committees are reconstituted.

Last year, the Operations Committee decided to split the task of overseeing the FS committees between the various OPS members, each taking the responsibility of being a liaison to several committees. While this has improved the communications between OPS and the committees somewhat, only the President gets any course release and that position already comes with a great deal of time commitment. Generally, there is little communication between the liaisons and the committees except for cases where there is a looming problem (recently, the University Press Committee, Admissions and Registration, etc.).

“Each committee has too much to do with not enough people” - Chairs

Let's take the Research Policy Committee as an example of a committee with a reasonable reputation. The Research Policy Committee Charge states:

“The primary role of the Research Policy Committee shall be to encourage and support research and its funding at the University of New Mexico, including all its established units. The functions of the committee shall include, but not be limited to: initiating, formulating, recommending, and reviewing policies regarding sponsored and unsponsored research, and intellectual property; recommending University policy regarding the distribution of overhead and institutional grants; reviewing with the chief administrative officers for research the research budget of the University prior to and during its final development, and informing and making recommendations to the Faculty Senate regarding this budget; recommending policy concerning the use of the Faculty Research Fund and reviewing and making recommendations to the administration through the Faculty Senate regarding the budget of the Faculty Research Fund; formulating policy regarding the establishment, major modification or termination, and periodic review of research centers, bureaus, institutes, or other related organizations, reviewing and making recommendations to the central administration and the Faculty Senate on proposals regarding these bodies, and participating in the periodic review of these centers; evaluating, formulating and recommending policy concerning research support services provided by computer facilities, libraries, contract accounting, research administration, and other support organizations; making recommendations to the central administration when the appointment of the chief administrative officers for research is being considered; making recommendations to the Faculty Senate on matters of grant research, contract research, patent and copyright policy, and policy on commercialization of intellectual property affecting directly or indirectly the faculty and University as a whole; consulting with the Faculty Senate on formulating the charge of the Intellectual Property Committee as called for in the

University Intellectual Property Policy; recommending candidates for the Annual Research Lectureship; meeting with the academic deans formally at least once each year to discuss current problems and exchange information concerning research; and consulting with the chief administrative officers for research regarding implementation of policies.”

The charge is specific, codified and extensive. Recent chairs of this committee have used the term daunting to describe the charge. And yet, the composition of the committee is also codified as:

“(Twelve faculty members, appointed by the Faculty Senate in consultation with the Committee chairperson, selected primarily from colleges and departments generating sponsored research: including three from the College of Arts and Sciences, two from the College of Education, two from the School of Engineering, one from the College of Fine Arts, one from the Library, and two from the Health Sciences Center. One graduate student member nominated by the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA). Ex-officio members include the chief administrative officer for research on main campus, the chief administrative officer for research at the Health Sciences Center, and the Director of the Science and Technology Corporation at UNM. The attorney from the University Counsel’s office with primary responsibility for research matters shall attend committee meetings and provide legal advice to the RPC. The terms of office shall be for three years, set up on a staggered basis so that the terms of at least three members will expire each year. A member may be appointed for a second three-year term. The chair is elected by the Committee and normally will serve a renewable two-year term. The committee annually elects a Vice-Chair to serve in place of the chair in her/his absence. In addition to Committee appointees, subcommittee membership will be augmented with other faculty, administrators, and graduate students as required for specific subcommittee tasks.)”

The RPC spent most of last year trying to overview its charge, and decide on which items to act. The committee felt overwhelmed with its responsibilities...

Hard to fill committees - OPS

The Faculty Senate President-elect is generally charged with working with the University Secretary’s office to fill the committee openings. Every year, it is difficult to find people to fill all of the available openings. It is clear that this is not entirely a problem of procedure. Many faculty just don't see sitting on these committees as the most effective use of their time. They are much more willing to sit on "Task Force" type bodies that have a limited scope, duration and charge, with a well determined outcome.

Criticisms from the outside

Why Wasn’t the Faculty Senate at the Forefront of the Research Study Group?

In Feb., 2007, then Provost Dasenbrock created a Research Study Group:

“I am appointing a Research Study Group, with membership listed above, and requesting that this Group, chaired by Carlton Caves, Professor of Physics and Astronomy, lead a study to analyze the current system spanning the birth to the closeout of a sponsored project. The current system should be compared to best practices in other institutions.”

One of the recommendations of the RSG was the creation of the Executive Research Advisory Council.

**Executive Research Advisory
Committee (ERAC)**

Objectives

- Accountability of research administration
- Communication with main-campus research community

Powers and responsibilities

- Request and receive reports on OVPR plans and status of research initiatives and of sponsored-project administration
- Participate in preparation of OVPR budget and formulation of OVPR priorities
- Request and receive reports on performance measures for research administration
- Review and assess effectiveness of unit research support
- Participate in annual performance reviews of senior research administrators
- Submit reports to EVPs for Academic Affairs and Administrative Affairs

Many of the objectives and powers and responsibilities completely overlap with the charge of the Research Policy Committee. This begs the question “Why wasn’t the Research Policy Committee tapped to either perform the functions of the ERAC, or, at least to form the ERAC?”

The two key players in forming ERAC were asked this exact question. Reed Dasenbrock’s reply was:

“The key issue for me is the pace of decision making. The faculty senate and related committees simply don't work at the speed at which real decisions need to be made. A lot of work went into committee simplification the past couple of years; with what result, I don't know. But without a leaner and faster structure, even those administrators who want faculty input will create their own groups. The research policy committee was working the whole time I was provost on the IP policy for the university, so another major task was obviously not in the cards.”

“Of course, if as an administrator I want the appearance of input but not the substance, then I will also create my own committees, hand pick the members, and guide the result. The difficulty is differentiating between the two cases.”

And from Carl Caves:

“The Research Policy Committee had been marginalized. It dealt (and deals) with small-bore issues of research policy and things like small internal summer research grants. These are not the questions that are important for the faculty who get large-scale research funding, nor are they the important issues for the VPR. The VPR, I believe, viewed the RPC as a convenient group to handle these things that really were too trivial for his concern.”

“Going hand in hand with 1 is that the RPC's membership represents the entire faculty---perhaps appropriate for a Senate committee---which is mainly interested only in these small-scale research

questions. These are not the issues that are important to the faculty who get large-scale research funding---these are concentrated mainly (but not entirely) in the sciences and engineering---nor are these the really important questions for a VPR.”

“The RSG wanted a committee that represented not just the faculty, but also the staff who interface with research administration. We made the three Associate Deans for Research automatic members because we felt that they were the natural representatives of faculty research interests. If you look carefully at the RSG report---and this would be a good thing to review---the current ERAC is not what we proposed, both in terms of responsibilities and make-up. In particular, we explicitly ruled out any members from the central research administration. On the other hand, the committee we proposed is probably not a typical Faculty Senate committee in terms of responsibility and membership.”

In summary, Faculty Senate Committees:

- work slowly
- are marginalized
- deal only with small-scale issues
- have set (inflexible) membership