COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE RIVERSIDE DIVISION
MAY 22, 2007

To be received and placed on file:
During the 2006-2007 academic year the Committee on Research (COR) conducted business via email, met twice before this report was filed, and expects to meet at least two more times before the end of the academic year.

COR’s primary activity was significantly expanding the resources and programs it administers in support of faculty research activities and then administering intramural grant competitions, both old and new. In consultation with the Chair of the Riverside Division, COR proposed an expanded intramural grant program that required a vast increase in the COR budget. The administration immediately supported the proposal in principle and eventually agreed to increase the COR budget substantially and permanently, and to transfer funds supplied by the Office of the President (UCOP) to support the Regents’ Fellowships for junior faculty, which will now be administered by the Academic Senate. With these augmented funds, COR undertook three projects.

The Committee increased the funds allocated to the Omnibus Grants program (Academic Senate Research Grants) by 25 percent over last year’s budget and raised the maximum award from $2700 to $3000. Policies regulating conference travel maximums were also revised, allowing support for two conferences instead of one and setting caps based on the geographical location of the conferences. COR is in the process of reviewing the Academic Senate Grants for the current academic year. Results are expected early in June.

Regents’ Faculty Fellowships and Faculty Development Awards will now be administered by COR, which has also augmented the awards from COR funds. The COR intends to make a total of 25 awards in the amount of $4,000 each. The deadline for applications is May 25, 2007. Results are expected by the end of June.

The COR initiated a new fellowship program, COR Research Fellowships, which is intended to assist tenured faculty to develop new major research projects and compete for extramural funding. The Committee on Research will award ten fellowships of $10,000 each. Application deadline was May 1, 2007. Results are expected by the end of May.

The Committee on Research also reviewed a number of proposals and reported its findings and summaries of the discussions of its members to the Chair of the Riverside Division.

The COR reviewed the proposal for the School of Public Policy. The minority of members of COR who responded to this request gave the proposal their enthusiastic support in principle, while posing questions about the proposed practices. A summary of the comments from the committee were forwarded to the Chair of the Academic Senate. COR also reviewed the revised proposal, with a majority of members considering that the concerns raised in the original proposal were adequately addressed in the response. COR supported the final, strengthened proposal.

The COR was asked to review the Systemwide Review of the Universitywide committee on Research Policy (UCROP) Report “Institutional Review Boards IRB) at UC: IRB Operations and
the Researcher’s Experience”. The Committee reviewed the systemwide proposals and endorsed both, with comments which were forwarded to the Chair of the Academic Senate.

The Committee on Research responded to a request to review the proposal for the Establishment of the Department of Media and Cultural Studies. The Committee unanimously (among those who replied and considered the issue relevant to COR’s charge) supported the proposal to create the Department of Media and Cultural Studies. Members of COR were particularly impressed with the strength of the faculty in this area and with the demonstrated student interest in the proposed departmental major, even before its formal creation. The Committee’s support was reiterated when it reviewed the revised proposal.

At its April 2007 meeting, the Committee on Research discussed a proposal to institute a process of granting publication subventions to Senate members, especially junior faculty members. The Committee unanimously agreed with the proposal’s assessment of the problems caused by the common practice whereby first-rate academic presses require substantial sums from authors before proceeding with the publication of manuscripts that have already been accepted. The Committee also unanimously agreed that this practice has desperate consequences both for individual members of the Academic Senate at UCR and for entire fields. COR added its voice to the chorus of calls for a solution to what is an extremely complicated problem. A summary of the discussion and set of issues for further consideration was forwarded to the Chair of the Academic Senate.

The Committee on Research also discussed the two-part “Draft Proposal on the Relationships Between (Pharmaceutical) Vendors and Clinicians.” All members of the committee present were generally sympathetic to both sets of proposed restrictions but thought that regulations should be part of a more general policy governing faculty-vendor relations. The Committee opposed a proliferation of field-specific regulations. A summary of the discussion was forwarded to the Chair of the Academic Senate.

The Committee considered the Regents’ Proposed RE-89 (“Policy Restricting University Acceptance of Funding from the Tobacco Industry”). COR opposed adoption of RE-89. Members concurred with the oft-repeated arguments against the proposed policy: namely, it would constitute an infringement of the academic freedom of individual members of the faculty; it would create a precedent that could initiate a slide down the “slippery slope” of restrictions on other funding sources sponsored by industries whose products or corporate behaviors may be deemed objectionable; and since the University’s policy on integrity in research already requires those engaged in research to adhere to the highest standards of intellectual honesty, it is unnecessary.

The Riverside Division was represented on the Universitywide Committee on Research Policy (UCORP) by J. C. Laursen, a member of COR. The UCORP Vice Chair was J. Wudka, COR’s chair in 2005-2006. When Professor Laursen was unable to attend UCORP meetings, the Chair substituted.

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