University Committee Recommendations on the Organizational Status of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

The University Committee, on the advice of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Placement of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, calls for Faculty Senate endorsement on the three recommendations detailed below.

Recommendation #1 – Move the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) from the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration to the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Research and Graduate Education.

Currently, RSP is organizationally located within the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration (OVCFA) and a move to the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Research and Graduate Education (OVCRGE) is needed for the following reasons:

(1) The OVCRGE is the primary advocate and leader for the research interests and needs of UW faculty and staff researchers. As such, key functions of RSP – specifically, assisting faculty and staff researchers in accomplishing their funding and research goals as well as protecting researchers and the University from risks – can best be achieved by situating these activities within the primary research unit on campus, the OVCRGE. Close interplay between RSP and OVCRGE is thus fundamental to the short term and long term success of the UW-Madison research enterprise.

(2) Situating RSP administratively within OVCRGE will facilitate data analytics needed for strategic and tactical planning, including evaluating returns on investments, monitoring cross-time trends in grant success vis-à-vis peer institutions and tracking the content and diversity of research being conducted on the UW-Madison campus.

Research administration is an essential piece of research infrastructure. It encompasses a wide range of responsibilities from oversight on conflict of interest to Institutional Review Board (IRB) compliance to information security management to public access policies. External funding agencies further necessitate an infrastructure that is dependable, responsive and meeting the extensive and often rapidly evolving regulatory requirements, which come with grants (RSP works with over 3,000 federal and nonfederal sponsoring agencies, many with unique regulatory requirements). As OVCRGE is the focal point for all research activities on this campus and is closely linked with other nonfinancial compliance units, RSP will benefit from being placed administratively within the primary research unit on campus.

Recommendation #2 – Insuring a Smooth Transition and Continuing Effectiveness

In order to facilitate a smooth and effective transition to OVCRGE, the UC recommends that a transitional plan and timetable be assembled (presumably by RSP and OVCRGE) that would include milestones to be reported along the way. Relatedly, the prior move from RSP into OVCFA be reviewed for administrative steps taken at that time. It may also be of benefit to have a newly formulated transitional plan put before the University Research Council for discussion and feedback. During the initial transitional period – the coming year, for example – RSP should be closely connected with both OVCFA and OVCRGE. Such joint interaction is important for evaluating needed adjustments in operations and resource management, as well as for keeping Central Campus apprised of how to insure optimal functioning of RSP, which is fundamental to the research mission of the University. In the long term, As is currently done for OVCRGE Centers, RSP should be reviewed at regular intervals (e.g., 5 years), seeking input from campus researchers and importantly, campus administrators involved in all aspects of the research

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enterprise from grant applications through distribution of operating funds. It may also be of value to seek input from external entities (e.g., National Council of University Research Administrators).

**Recommendation #3 – Resource Considerations**

Given that insufficient resources were part of what prompted the prior move of RSP into OVCFA, the University Committee strongly endorses a clear campus commitment to meeting the resource needs of RSP going forward. At present, there are multiple staffing needs linked to the two major arms of RSP:

1. Providing services to campus researchers in submitting, understanding, and negotiating grant applications, and
2. Providing required reporting to the 3,000+ sponsoring agencies, federal and nonfederal. Included among these needs are positions for audit managers, federal and nonfederal accountants, data analysts, and staff to assist on the proposal submission side as well as to insure that PIs submit required reports on time.

To insure that these needs be regularly monitored, the periodic reviews of RSP (see preceding section) is to include updates on provision of resources and the extent to which such resources are or are not adequate to insure optimal functioning of RSP. A key message the Ad Hoc Committee conveyed and that the UC agrees with, is that providing proper resources for RSP needs to be recognized as an important part of the overall campus commitment to the research enterprise and its financial sustainability. Thus, appropriate support for RSP will help to reduce the burgeoning application and compliance burdens on researchers, which, in turn, will allow them to prioritize more of their time on the science, the achievements of which are central to campus success in future funding.

**Overarching Conclusion**

As a concluding point, the effective functioning of RSP is fundamental to the success of the research mission of UW-Madison, which in turn, is essential for the flourishing of the University as a whole. As such, the needs of RSP must been acknowledged and met, both now and in the future. Relatedly, there must be periodic review of RSP to insure that its many responsibilities are being carried out efficiently and effectively. The UC strongly believes all of the above tasks and objectives can best be carried out by placing RSP within OVCRGE.