

# Research Council

Minutes for meeting of March 4, 2024, 4:00 p.m.  
Zoom Meeting

Chair: Dr. Linda Walters, Vice-Chair: Dr. David Luna

**1. Call to Order** at 4:00pm

**2. Roll call** was replaced with noting people as they entered the Zoom meeting. In attendance were: Walters, Luna, Schoenfeld, Miller, Gesquiere, Shillingford, Yalim, Giurgescu, Turgut, Eadens, Neal, López Castillo, Johnson, Okumus, Weremchuk, Bochenek, Welch, Kent-Walsh, Harrington, Listengarten, Brisset, Coffee, Guldi, Yu, Larson, Norris, French, Sonmez, Ge.

**3. Approval of Minutes.** Minutes from 2/19/24 meeting were approved.

**4. Recognition of guests.** Winston Schoenfeld (Interim Vice President for Research)

**5. Announcements:** No announcements were made.

**6. Old Business.** No old business was discussed.

**7. New Business:** Schoenfeld presented three topics.

Topic: Research Space Allocation

UCF is in need of research space, especially with the projected hiring of faculty in the near future. The Provost has charged the Research Space Allocation Taskforce composed of faculty and administrators.

This charge is not to develop policy that allocates space based on research funding. Rather, it seeks to establish guidelines for unit leadership (deans, etc.) to respond to space shortages. Outcomes and impact are important metrics, not just funding dollars.

This will not be a unified/centralized system with the same metrics for everyone. Task force will provide guidelines (not rules) to ensure equitable assessment, based on a holistic set of assessment criteria.

Collaborative and shared spaces will be supported.

The guidelines will refer to assessment of space utilization, not productivity of individuals.

One of their goals is to align research space with the type of research conducted/the nature of the work.

New hires would not be immediately subjected to space utilization assessments.

The first draft of the guidelines is nearly completed. On March 14, it will be shared with the faculty senate and with the Research Council.

Welch: How agile/flexible will the document be?

Schoenfeld: The idea is to make sure units take care of their own issues and it is expected that they will have flexibility at the local level.

Walters: How soon will the Faculty Senate have this draft?

Schoenfeld: This Friday (3/8). The idea is to distribute the draft early for comments.

Kuebler: What exactly is the space shortage?

Schoenfeld: about 180,000 sq. ft. in the next 4 years.

Bochenek: What about multidisciplinary space?

Schoenfeld: Value will be placed on those. They understand that training labs, or labs used in teaching do not generate funding dollars but will be supported.

Bochenek: Consideration is needed regarding new faculty in shared versus dedicated labs.

Schoenfeld: Shared space that is well maintained will probably be appreciated by the faculty as long as it does not preclude them from having their own dedicated space.

Guesquiere: Is the space shortfall due to new faculty hiring? How will hiring be funded?

Schoenfeld: There is an operational excellence fund of \$20 million in two cycles (a total of \$40 million) for new faculty and staff, including startup funds.

There is some underutilized space that could be used. The shortfall in space can be filled from 3 sources:

- New buildings (but getting new facilities is a 5-year process)
- Converting non-research space to research space
- Reallocation of underutilized research space

## Topic: State Foreign Influence Regulations

In Fall 2023, new guidance was created with language about employment agreements with people from the 7 countries of concern. There is uncertainty regarding GRAs and GTAs. Those positions are considered agreements and cannot be done with people who have a domicile in any of the 7 countries, as follows:

- If they permanently live there and are non-US citizens, they cannot have GRA/GTA appointments.
- If they are citizens of any of the 7 countries but their current domicile is outside the 7 countries, then they can have an agreement.
- Rule does not apply to US citizens with domiciles in those countries.

These rules also influence faculty hiring.

Miller: Describes a problem with a candidate for PhD program. It is an Iranian citizen who does not live in Iran but listed a parent in Iran as the emergency contact.

Schoenfeld: Please contact the College of Graduate Studies or Ashley Guritza at UCF Global.

Johnson: Does this also apply to Masters students?

Schoenfeld: The challenge in this case is that Masters students may roll into the PhD program and it is difficult to manage whether they may be paid later on as GTA/GRAs.

Rule does not prevent us from accepting students. The problem is about entering an employment agreement as GTA/GRA.

If there are further questions, reach out to the College of Graduate Studies.

## Topic: SEED funding and Equipment Programs

There is general agreement that SEED funding program is valuable. There is no clarity about being able to support it because of budget issues. Schoenfeld will include program in his OR budget, but does not know whether it will actually be funded. Budget draft is due on 3/15. He will set aside about \$500,000, with the expectation that the Provost's office will match.

The Research Council could provide guidance on what is the optimal size of SEED awards. \$7,500 may be too small to be helpful. Also, Research Council could provide guidance regarding the mechanism to assess projects, matching mechanisms, timing of

solicitations for proposals (Spring or Fall?), length of award period (1 or 2 years?), and whether there should be different programs, with different funding levels, across Colleges.

Regarding the Equipment funding program, UCF needs to have a mechanism that puts into place the infrastructure to get new equipment, which may be necessary for external funding proposals. Also, it is necessary to provide upgrades to existing equipment.

The Research Council could provide guidance about the optimal size of the awards, and the number of funded proposals.

Walters: Consideration should be given to relatively small proposals for small items that are, however, essential to conduct research. Also, sometimes matching is not possible or is difficult to obtain.

Schoenfeld: Agrees on both items. Matching can be a bottleneck.

Both the SEED and the Equipment programs are critical for an R1 institution.

## **8. Other Business:**

Johnson: Faculty Web Pages may have problems. Johnson's page included inaccuracies and does not know who created it (AI-generated content?). This is a public relations problem that affects UCF researchers' image. Johnson's page is not accessible any longer.

Schoenfeld: Agrees this is a problem. Will pass on issue to Central UCF Communications office.

## **9. Adjournment at 5:03pm.**