

University Research Council

Minutes of February 16, 2021 Meeting

Members Present: *Karen Arndt, Department of Biological Sciences; Velpandi Ayyavoo, Graduate School of Public Health; Ipsita Banarjee, School of Engineering; Dominic Bordelon, University Library System; Debbie Brake, School of Law; Clif Callaway, School of Medicine; Ryan Champagne, Assistant Director for Research Development, Office of Sponsored Programs; Yvette Conley, School of Nursing; Mary Crossley, School of Law; Brian Galla, School of Education; Esther Gal-Or, Katz Graduate School of Business; Mark Geraci, School of Medicine; Robert B. Gibbs, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences; Shelome Gooden, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research in the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Related Fields; Kent Harries, School of Engineering; Michael Holland, Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Research Strategy; Neil Hukriede, Department of Developmental Biology; William Layton, Department of Mathematics; Jeremy Levy, Department of Physics & Astronomy; Yu-Ru Lin, School of Computing and Information; Diane Litman, School of Computing and Information; Christina Mair, Graduate School of Public Health; Nadine McQuarrie, Department of Geology & Environmental Science; Elizabeth Monasterios, Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures; Erica Owen, Department of Political Science; Frits Pil, Katz Graduate School of Business; Rachel Robertson, School of Education; Shilpa Sant, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences; Jeremy Somers, Office of Research, Health Sciences; Steven Stern, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Alexandre Vieira, School of Dental Medicine; Christian Wildberg, Department of Classics; Jennifer Woodward, Vice Chancellor for Sponsored Programs & Research Operations*

Members Absent: *Rob Rutenbar, Senior Vice Chancellor for Research; Mark Lynn Anderson, Department of English; Jeremy Berg, School of Medicine; N. John Cooper, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research; William Dunn, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs; Shaun Eack, School of Social Work; Ray Engel, School of Social Work; Julie Fiez, Department of Psychology; Alexandria Harris, Graduate and Professional Student Government Board; Holger Hooek, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, School of Arts and Sciences; Heng Huang, School of Engineering; Sean Kelly, School of Education; Matthew Kropf, University of Pittsburgh Bradford; Kacey Marra, School of Medicine; Anne Robertson, School of Engineering; Margaret Rosenzweig, School of Nursing; Ravi Shankar, School of Engineering; William Wagner, School of Medicine*

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Mike Holland welcomed the Council members and called the meeting to order at 12:04 pm.

2. Jan. 2021 URC Meeting Minutes

The January meeting minutes had been circulated to the Council and were approved *nem con*.

3. Updates on Pitt Momentum Funds and Awards Showcase

Dr. Mike Holland gave an update on the Pitt Momentum Funds (PMF), noting that pitches have happened and selections have been made. He explained that, due to COVID, awards will not be rolled out at the Internal Funding Showcase this Spring, as they were last year. Rather than doing one big event, announcements will be made publicly in late March and a website will be created that includes 1-minute videos for each Teaming and Scaling award. An in-person event will be planned for the Fall, enabling the connection of awards to the kickoff of the 2022 solicitation cycle. Preparation is being done in case the event needs to be virtual.

Dr. Holland thanked the committee members who coordinated the review of all proposals and narrowed down selections: Mark Lynn Anderson, Karen Arndt, Velpandi Ayyavoo, Debbie Brake, Yvette Conley, Ray Engel, Brian Galla, Kent Harries, Neil Hukriede, Sean Kelly, Elizabeth Monasterios, Fritz Pil, and Alex Vieira. He then gave a brief overview of winners of the awards, noting 2 \$400K Scaling Award winners, 8 \$60K Teaming Grants, and 20 \$16K Seeding Grants.

Dr. Holland then explained that, now that there have been two cycles of PMF, he and the rest of the PMF team are looking at how things have worked and where there are opportunities for improvement. He noted that one area that they were not able to accomplish this year was to enable URC coordinators to propose moving applications to other levels if they felt it would be a better fit. He asked that committee members email him and Ryan Champagne with any input or suggestions regarding the PMF process.

Several committee members suggested that it would be helpful to have guidance regarding possible conflicts when, for example, reviewers are asked to review proposals from their own schools. It was noted that there were several reviewers that dropped out of their reviewer roles due to claimed conflict and that better guidance may help to avoid this in the future.

A committee member suggested that an in-person event would be a good way to kick off the next yearly cycle of awards solicitation. The committee member suggested that it would be good to keep the event in September, even after COVID is cleared.

4. Other Business

Dr. Holland stated that Pitt has been invited to submit candidates for the Packard Fellowships for Science & Engineering and that 3-4 people would be need to read application packages to help narrow down the selection of 2 nominees from 13

applicants. He asked that anyone who would like to volunteer to do this should email him and Ryan Champagne.

He followed up by noting that there are several more upcoming limited submission awards that they will be looking for help to review, including Sloan Research Fellowships, which are important early-career awards that make someone more likely to be in the running for several later-career awards.

After a question was asked regarding the status of the NIH Instrument Grant Program, Ryan Champagne explained that the program was just announced the previous week and has begun to field applicants. He noted that the internal deadline has been set for April 15, with the NIH deadline being June 1. He stated that anyone with questions about this can reach out to him.

After a question was raised regarding virtual conference platforms, it was noted that Acelevents virtual events platform is supported by Pitt IT and has help available through the helpdesk.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12:49 pm.