

University Research Council  
Minutes of April 21, 2020 Meeting

**Members Present:** *N. John Cooper, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research; Mark Lynn Anderson, Department of English; Karen Arndt, Department of Biological Sciences; Velpandi Ayyavoo, Graduate School of Public Health; Debbie Brake, School of Law; Ryan Champagne, Grants Development Coordinator, Office of Sponsored Programs; Yvette Conley, School of Nursing; Julie Fiez, Department of Psychology; Brian Galla, School of Education; Robert B. Gibbs, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences; Kent Harries, School of Engineering; Stephen Hirtle, School of Computing and Information; Michael Holland, Vice Chancellor for Science Policy and Research Strategy; William Layton, Department of Mathematics; Elizabeth Monasterios, Department of Hispanic Languages and Literatures; Frits Pil, Katz Graduate School of Business; Anne Robertson, School of Engineering; Jeremy Somers, Office of Research, Health Sciences; Steven Stern, University of Pittsburgh Johnstown; Stephen Weber, Department of Chemistry; Alexandre Vieira, School of Dental Medicine; Jennifer Woodward, Vice Chancellor for Research Operations*

**Members Absent:** *Rob Rutenbar, Senior Vice Chancellor for Research; Heidi Ann Scharf Donovan, School of Nursing; William Dunn, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs; Shaun Eack, School of Social Work; Raymond Engel, School of Social Work; Shelome Gooden, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research in the Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Related Fields; Alexandria Harris, Graduate and Professional Student Government Board; Holger Hoock, Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research, School of Arts and Sciences; Neil Hukriede, Department of Developmental Biology; Sean Kelly, School of Education; Matthew Kropf, University of Pittsburgh Bradford; Kacey Marra, School of Medicine; Margaret Rosenzweig, School of Nursing; Susan Sereika, Department of Health and Community Systems*

**1. Welcome and Announcements**

Dr. John Cooper welcomed the Council members and called the meeting to order at 12:00pm.

**2. February 11, 2020 URC Meeting Minutes**

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

**3. MyDisclosures on Pause and COI Disclosure Deadline Deferred**

John Cooper reported that the rollout of *MyDisclosures*, the new electronic conflict disclosures system, has been paused and the customary April 15 deadline has been deferred. No new date has been set yet for the rollout, but it will happen as research ramps back up. The deferral applies to both Pitt and UPMC disclosers, and Dr. Cooper wrote on March 23 to *MyDisclosure* contacts in schools, in administrative units, and on other campuses, to inform them of the deferral.

There was a comment that we may want to wait only until the semester is over, rather than waiting until everyone is busy again ramping back up. In response, another comment was made that it might be good to do this while everyone is home with a bit more free time to complete disclosures. It was noted that it could also help bring back, in some way, a sense of normalcy. Most people who commented agreed with this comment.

There was a comment from the Johnstown campus that they would probably want to opt into the *MyDisclosures* pilot under the changed circumstances.

#### **4. How the Ramp Down went**

Dr. Cooper noted that the research ramp-down seemed to go more smoothly than might have been expected. The biggest issue was persuading some people that their work was not being deemed “essential”. Labs and departments had been asked to identify those who were doing essential work, especially work needed to maintain animal colonies and laboratory infrastructure, and those lists were then reviewed by ADRs. The Provost’s Office took the lead in developing processes to ensure that graduate students or other trainees could only be identified as essential if they were truly willing to be so designated.

#### **5. Essential Research Personnel and Building Access including Transition to ATO**

Mike Holland described how the Authority to Operate system is intended to allow a particular permitted person authorized to operate in a particular permitted space. Space is primarily defined at the building level, though there is some information being built into the system at a more granular level. That can be helpful if we need to pull access to a space that needs to be cleaned until it is cleared by EH&S, while the rest of the building is OK. He noted that we have developed a web app that allows schools/etc. to request access, which then flows through appropriate channels for review. He noted that we will be able to compare approved access lists to swipe data and departments will be able to take action (revoke access, update status). He expected that we would be in position to have an easy to use process for building access soon. The audit function will help when we begin to ramp up to make sure we are doing so in an orderly fashion.

Dr. Holland noted that it is very likely shift work will be needed as we ramp up, as the 1-person-per-1000sqft guideline is a significant limit. He noted that we will not be restricting labs based on density numbers, but that this is an exercise to help us think about what needs to be done.

It was noted that restricted numbers could make researchers nervous, as they are worried about lack of productivity on grant supported research while labs are closed/restricted. Jennifer Woodward stated that the Office of Sponsored Partnerships is working with senior leadership to look at these funding issues, but that there is no guarantee there will be additional money if a grant is used up.

## **6. Momentum Fund spend period**

It was noted that the period of performance for awards under the momentum program will be extended for those who need it. At a minimum we will extend through end of calendar year 2021. Dr. Cooper stated that all will get this extension, regardless of how close they are to spending their allocation.

## **7. Ramp up**

Dr. Cooper explained that planning for ramping back up is being spearheaded by several different teams—Vice Chancellor David DeJong is leading the effort on employees returning and a second group, led by Provost Ann Cudd and Dean Jimmy Martin, is looking at academics and students. The third area, led by Dr. Rutenbar, is dealing with research—pulling together committees from health sciences, lab sciences, libraries, STEM areas, and those who need performance/rehearsal spaces, etc. There will of course be some overlap in these groups and they are being formed this week. No timeline for their work or for the return to campus has yet been established.

A question was raised about whether the July 1 start date for new research awards will be taken into account, since being unable to guarantee that research will start on July 1 may result in an award going preferentially to someone who can guarantee a July 1 start. Jennifer Woodward asked to be sent an email with more information, as this was not an issue that had been raised previously.

There were several notes from committee members regarding issues they think will need to be looked at:

- New protocols for cleaning may have huge impact on certain labs (antimicrobials in use, etc.).
- We will need to think about human research participants coming into labs in Psych research.
- Availability of PPE will need to be taken into account.

- High-risk groups and those who may not want to come in.

**8. Other business**

It was decided to leave May's URC meeting on the calendar for now, as we may still want to have a meeting then.

**9. Any other business**

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1:13 pm.