

Research Committee

Minutes

Date: May 24, 2023
Time: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Place: Google Meet
Attendees: T. Christou, J. Freeman, L. Jacobs (Chair), A. Leach, C. McGregor, R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, S. ShahbazPanahi, V. Sharpe (secretary), N. Wattie
Guest(s): A. Mohany (Item 6)
Regrets: S. Brown, C. Davidson, S. Forrester

1. **Welcome**

L. Jacobs welcomed everyone and commenced the meeting.

2. **Approval of the agenda**

Approved by consensus.

3. **Approval of previous meeting's minutes**

Approved by consensus.

4. **Report of the Vice President Research & Innovation**

L. Jacobs noted that the university has had a lot of activity including a lot of research success such as a successful Tier 2 CRC for FSSH and the candidate will join July 1. She is the first Ontario Tech graduate to become a CRC. This is very good news and something for which we can all be proud.

Other good news from the CRC program is the successful renewal of the Tier 2 CRC of Khalid Elgazzar. Special recognition and thanks for all the Faculty in both faculties who participated and all of the ORS team, especially Laura Rendl and Jenn Freeman.

We continue to broaden our research funding and although there has not been formal notification yet, we know that we will receive a million dollar grant from the Weston foundation on tech in homegrown agriculture. L. Jacobs noted that we have so many successes in spaces like these that there are too many to list and they make us so that we are not dependant on tri-council funding.

S. ShabazPanahhi asked if we know the status of NSERC DG successes. L. Jacobs noted that we've had about a 48-49% success rate. At the Deans of Engineering Council held at Waterloo, it was noted that Engineering was slightly below that although the dollar amounts were higher, but the numbers of successes were lower.

L. Jacobs provided an overview of [the Government of Canada Report of the Advisory Panel on the Federal Research Support System](#). He noted that the Tri-Council presidents are not supportive. He noted that it will likely be neutral or beneficial to us. This new agency may house the Canada Research Chairs program.

T. Christou noted the report of the Advisory Panel has had a huge impact on Graduate Studies and should provide funding to graduate students. Strong moral framework behind the report.

5. Report of the Executive Director, Office of Research Services (ORS)

J. Freeman provided a presentation that included information on/about:

- ORS Hiring – Research Contracts Officer (in process) and Manager Safeguarding Research (future)
- Funding Statistics and success rates: NSERC DG and DDG: 42%; NSERC RTI 44%; NFRF 20%; SSHRC PDG 50%; CIHR Project Grant 29%.
- New Funding Results – currently under embargo - New Tier 2 Canada Research Chair in Systemic Racism, Technology and Criminal Justice, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Starting July 1, 2023. Question for future is about how to capture and demonstrate funding that graduate students bring in when it is not managed by VPRI/ORS.
- Recently launched funding opportunity: NSERC Discovery Horizons
NEW change to applicant eligibility for 2024 - Individuals participating in a Discovery Horizons grant as an applicant or co-applicant cannot hold both a Discovery Grant and a Discovery Horizons grant. LOI deadline: June 16, 2023. Full application (invitation only): October 18, 2023
S. ShahbazPanahi asked if there is a way to give feedback to NSERC regarding the Discovery Grant program. J. Freeman noted that ORS staff participated in a webinar today and it was brought up and that it is exclusionary. The common comment is that we are trying to advocate for a change to the eligibility restrictions.
- Fall Grant Competition Results - Success rates for Ontario Tech are hovering around the same although in some areas applications are down. Trending down in Tri-Council funding. CIHR shows a profound decrease however this is an error in recording that is being corrected. More funding numbers coming in.
- Undergraduate Research - 2023 STAR and NSERC USRA Program - 101 students applied for the 2023 program. Research projects begin on May 8 for either 14 or 16 weeks. NSERC has approved the shortened 14-week term again this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. 3 awards are on alternate timelines that begin a few weeks later to accommodate student or Project Supervisor requests. Awarded 32 NSERC USRAs. Awarded 9 Ontario Tech STARS. 1 additional award is outstanding for the Faculty of Science, which is in the matching phase. Total of \$362,000 in award income for our students. 1 CIHR USRA and 1 SSHRC USRA exclusively for self-identified Black student researchers will be carried over to the Fall semester and re-launched. Note that minimum wage in Ontario is set to increase to \$16.55/hr on Oct. 1, 2023. We will increase to match minimum wage. Join us in August at the Undergraduate Research Awards Recognition Event. Details to follow.

6. Proposal for the creation of the Aerodynamic and Climatic Adaptation Research (AeroClimar) Centre

L. Jacobs introduced Atef Mohany and noted that this proposal is multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary. A. Mohany introduced the proposal for this research centre and noted that the idea is to capitalize on the infrastructure we have on campus such as ACE. He noted that by working together in a Research Centre we can attract more funding. The proposal was presented to FEAS Faculty Council last month. They are open to collaboration with other colleagues at the university and in the GTA. The key budget aspect is to try to apply for large grants to attract more funding from industry and tri-council. Hence the small amount of budget to attract a grant writer. Each participant is committing funding from personal grants from each individual.

L. Jacobs asked if there are particular universities in which you can see collaborations happening. A. Mohany noted that they'll intend to work with U of T Aerospace Institute which was created by Bombardier and mainly to research aerospace, noting that they can complement each other without competing.

C. McGregor noted that this type of research centre and collaboration is long overdue, stating that Ontario Tech has an amazing facility that allows us to conduct unique research.

L. Jacobs noted a correction to the budget with regards to the grants writer. The proposal is showing a budgeted revenue of \$25k from VPRI but that's actually a joint contribution between FEAS and VPRI. He noted that this correction needs to make this correction before the proposal goes to Academic Council.

ACTION: V. Sharpe to update this wording in the proposal budget before sending to Academic Council.

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R0. Ruttenberg-Rozen stated that she can foresee the Education Faculty being supportive of this proposal.

L. Jacobs noted that in the budget there was a revenue model that included building courses. A. Mohany noted that this is a need in the industry and that courses can be developed and certificates issued. L. Jacobs stated that having a research centre run these courses provides quality assurance.

T. Christou asked if they have thought of targets of involvement with graduate students. A. Mohany stated that the involved faculty have about 30 graduate students and about 3 post-doctoral fellows. As the funding comes from collaborating with industry and government agencies they should be able to add additional graduate staffing. As well there will be opportunities for experiential learning.

J. Freeman echoed comments that it is great to see this initiative come forward and noted a few things to highlight including

- that someone from Finance may flag that there needs to be a line that indicates that there will not be a deficit
- expenditures can only run with funds that have been received, in lock step with grant funding received
- any deficits will have to be covered by the FEAS Faculty
- if looking to seek larger funding they may want to start looking at EDI as that is a key part of a lot of the larger applications
- important to have a data management plan
- plan to safeguard research

Recommend setting them up sooner than later.

N. Wattie noted some thoughts on how Health Science has researchers and students researching biomechanics and ergonomics so they would be interested in working together from design to testing. A. Mohany agreed and provided examples of how Health Sciences can be involved.

C. McGregor noted thoughts regarding a variety of ways her research could work with this new research centre as well as many of her colleagues.

S. ShahbazPanahi questioned the budget line for grant writing noting that the 5 proposers are well-seasoned, well-published and asked if the grant writer would be a technical person and what qualifications they would have. A. Mohany noted that the research centre will be going for grants that are over 1 million. He noted a need for a technical person with expertise in the area who will look for opportunities and will help to write the grants with the team so that they can apply for multiple grants every year.

Motion: To accept the proposal, with the change to the budget as noted earlier, and recommend its approval to Academic Council.

Discussion:

S. ShahbazPanahi noted that he has reservations with regarding the budget for grant writing. He supports the proposal but has reservations about funding this as the proposers already have a lot of expertise and experience with writing successful grants.

C. McGregor noted agreement with this point but acknowledges that there is a lot of heavy lifting with templates etc. She is fully in support of the proposal and using budget for a grant writer.

R. Ruttenberg-Rozen noted her support for the grant writer.

J. Freeman noted that information will need to be clear on what the grant writer can and cannot do as we have grants officers in ORS who are unionized. She echoed S. ShahbazPanahi's point that it is a specialized skill.

L. Jacobs noted that J: for feedback to go to AC – the position should be written as a project manager/grant writer.

No objections to the proposal were noted. The Research Committee voted in in favor of recommending to Academic Council the creation of the Aerodynamic and Climatic Adaptation Research (AeroClimar) Centre.

7. Annual Reports of Research Institutes, Units, and Centres

The following reports were provided for information

- A. Digital Life Institute
- B. Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research
- C. Age with Dignity Campus of Care and Best Practices Research Centre

The following reports were not received and are deferred to the next Research Committee meeting:

- A. Institute for Cybersecurity & Resilient Systems
- B. Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism
- C. Centre for Small Modular Reactors (CSMR)

8. Annual Reports of Research Groups

The following reports were provided for information

- A. Biomolecular Research Group
- B. Forensic Science Research Group
- C. Power Electronics and Drives Applications Lab (PEDAL)
- D. Public, Active, Clean and Equitable (PACE) Mobility Group
- E. Smart Transportation Electrification and Energy Research Group (STEER)

9. Faculty Exchange

- Health Science – Master's of Health Science program review has just been completed. Looking for an update on promotion and marketing of research that L. Jacobs mentioned previously. L. Jacobs noted that in VPRI there is someone who is going on leave as of June 1 and there will be someone to second and part of her responsibility will be stakeholder engagement. Possibly in place by June 15.
- Grad Studies – Ontario Council of Grad Studies last week. Proud of our grads!
- FEAS – comments on decreases of Discovery Grants and questions what the university is going to do about it. The Faculty continue to be interested in advocating for international students funding and tuition offset. L. Jacobs noted the continued need to advocate for this.
- Education – nice momentum in the faculty in terms of research and there are 2 new hires who will be an excellent addition to the faculty.
- FBIT – number of grants have been seeking extensions due to covid so are not applying for new grant funding.
- FSSH – new CRC, awaiting SSHRC Insight Development Grants. Same as FBIT re: extensions. Surprised to see the SSHRC Insight numbers and it's something for FSSH faculty to work on.

10. Other Business- None.

11. Next meeting – to be scheduled for September 2023

12. Adjournment – 2:00 p.m.