

Research Board Minutes

Date: October 15, 2020
Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
Place: Google Meets
Attendees: K. Atkinson, B. Chang, G. Edwards, S. Forrester, J. Freeman, L. Jacobs (Chair), M. Lemonde, S. Rahnamayan, L. Roy, V. Sharpe (Secretary), A. Slane
Guests: B. Dinwoodie
Regrets: C. Davidson, R. Ruttenberg-Rozen

L. Jacobs welcomed the group and noted that the research enterprise is alive and well at Ontario Tech.

1. Approval of the agenda

Approved by M. Lemonde. Seconded by S. Rahnamayan. Approved by consensus.

2. Approval of previous meeting's minutes

Approved by M. Lemonde. Seconded by A. Slane. Approved by consensus.

3. Report of the Vice President Research & Innovation

L. Jacobs noted that there is significant mobilization of the efforts made in a number of units across the university to put together Transformation LOIs. The range of the applications was impressive and principally for us as a newer university, this is the first round of the Transformation grants, and that the current government and funding agencies see that we are participating is significant. The grants are intended to be multi-disciplinary and that reflects well for us as a university as it fits us as our SRP is by research pillar not faculty. We were successful in the first New Frontiers competition and we're hoping for more success with the transformation LOIs and, even if not successful, it's important to note that the researchers have galvanized projects that are ground ready to pursue other funding opportunities. The results are expected in November.

L. Jacobs shared that the most visible impact on enrollment is among incoming PhD students. L. Roy stated that the international intake for the fall is down a little bit and it is believed to be due to students deferring their start to the winter term. He hopes that they do not defer beyond that. He noted that students will have to notify the SGPS soon about their Winter semester plans.

L. Jacobs provided an update on the Return to On-Campus Research Task Force (RTOCR TF) noting that members are beginning or have begun inspections of the labs that have reopened on campus and that the PIs are the principals responsible for maintaining health and safety within their labs. L. Jacobs noted that the university has joined with all of the other small research intensive universities to implement health and safety lab inspections to ensure that we are not getting lax in our SOPs and safety protocols. This is especially important in the event of a second wave. We would already have everything in place. There has not been a COVID case linked to our on campus research activity.

4. Report of the Executive Director, Office of Research Services

J. Freeman provided a presentation that included information on:

- Operational impacts of COVID-19
- Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund (CRCEF)
- Funding, Fall Grants Deadlines, and numbers of applications
- REB – looking to recruit a new Chair and Vice-Chair
- Animal Care Committee (ACC visit and inspection next year)
- Biosafety & Radiation Safety

- Partnerships – extending an offer today to a prospective IP Officer
- Undergraduate Student Research – J. Freeman seeking feedback on eligibility.

Discussion and outcomes:

- Researchers have to confirm that they have the funding. There is a requirement that the faculty member provides a top-up of funds (start up or other funds).
- NSERC doesn't require researchers to confirm that they are in the process of applying. J. Freeman noted that we don't have to be specific, and can use language such as "in the process of applying or have applied before"; as long as the project meets the criteria.
- SSHRC funds are not eligible unless the funded project is related to the new project.
- One of the goals is for more people to get NSERC funding. Will change the wording to include TFs with Dean's approval. B. Chang noted that there are many in FBIT who are not TTT thus they don't have supervisory experience. This would be a good step forward for them to get started. This grant is for student so if we have a good student we should be encouraging them. L. Jacobs supported B. Chang's comments and noted that often the teaching faculty are the conduit to our students. L. Roy noted that some teaching faculty are overworked and are not expected to take on a research role and that encouraging them to get involved in research could cause some tension. B. Chang clarified that this is not a requirement but rather for those that are self-motivated and noted that TFs would have to get their Dean's approval before engaging in research. L. Jacobs shared that the university has a pattern of some TF who have moved into TTT positions. Not a specific path – there is a phenomena of TF applying for vacancies for TTT positions and those TF being successful. Also TF from other unis being appointed here in TTT positions. It was noted that the Collective Agreement allows for 10% other which can be used as research.
- J. Freeman noted that supervisors have to sign off on the application. In the past, some only signed off on the students that they wanted, however some faculty members don't feel comfortable having a conversation with the students that they don't want so they just signed them all. She asked for feedback on how this should be handled. M. Lemonde suggested that supervisors meet with prospective students via videoconference to see if there's a fit so that the qualified students go forward and it's easier for the researchers to let down students that they aren't interested in. It was noted that in many faculties the Faculty Members rank the applications and the committee matches up the student to the project based on ranking or merit. Decision: Students required to obtain faculty member signatures and encourage Faculty committees to encourage ranking of the students who applied as well as encourage researchers to not endorse students they are not interested in. L. Jacobs commented that the faculty signature basically is saying this student meets the minimum requirement and would be acceptable to the researcher.
- J. Freeman stated that to remain competitive we need to keep the USRAs in line with the university system and thus we need to start to raise the top up as we agreed a year ago to be a bit more in line with minimum wage. With feedback from the Research Board we have been slowly increasing the top up. This is being brought back to the Research Board on account of COVID to get feedback on if you are in agreement with continuing to increase the top up as was planned or stay with the 2020 amount. S. Forrester noted that the NSERC funding to researchers doesn't seem to be increasing and noted his preference at keeping the top up at 2020 levels. S. Rahnamayan suggested that Faculty interest in the program may drop off if the top ups are increased. B. Chang agreed.
- L. Roy sought clarification as to whether there was agreement to increase the top ups and if the Research Board and faculty members' were advised. J. Freeman confirmed this. L. Roy noted that the increase may affect their ability to take on grad students. S. Forrester noted that he is happy to take on more students and questioned if the university can contribute some funds, perhaps the \$500? J. Freeman stated that if the university were to contribute it would be from the VPRI budget, that it already support the STAR awards and that the budget is maxed. The funds would need to come from the Faculty budget.
- G. Edwards noted that the current awards equate to a payment of under \$11 per hour and questioned how the university could expect any student to be interested in this program? J. Freeman noted that students participate for recognition, not money.
- L. Roy suggested that we symbolically increase the top up and provide messaging to this effect.

- J. Freeman noted that these amounts are the minimum top up and some faculty members give more. She noted that we can revisit it next year and stated that ORS will do another survey to see where we are within the university system.

Questions about the presentation:

S. Forrester asked a question about eligible expenses for CRCEF. J. Freeman replied that extraordinary expenses for shut-down and start up due to COVID can be eligible. She suggested submitting expenses to ORS and they will determine their eligibility. She noted that the ORF didn't give extra money but is giving extensions.

G. Edwards noted that the criteria for eligible expenses for the CRCEF is specific. He noted that if the cost has been paid by the Faculty, and not from their research funds, researchers cannot claim the expenses. J. Freeman noted that an email had been sent by ORS on Friday Oct 9 regarding CRCEF funds and that ORS wants to help faculty members to access these funds if eligible. L. Jacobs stated that Research Board members should encourage their faculty members to bring forward these costs so we can recover them.

L. Roy asked about slide 12 partner contributions. J. Freeman stated it is \$500. L. Jacobs noted that he is spearheading the project at a high level and that there have been significant developments such as the wastewater project which proved to be quite collaborative. There has been a lot of collaboration across the university and the province has taken a turn from where we were in March and April. There has been an indication that there would be something in the budget for projects such as these. The Ministry of Water and Environment now has assigned a senior project manager to oversee it. There are good signs that the province will fund it at 4 universities: U of Windsor, U of Waterloo, U of Ottawa and Ontario Tech University. He noted that U of Ottawa was in the news this morning as they released data that there is an increase in COVID-19 detection in wastewater in Ottawa, thus indicating a second wave.

5. Priority Setting for the Research Board 2020-2021

L. Jacobs shared 5 priorities for the Research Board for the upcoming year. He noted that they are not starting from scratch but rather some work has already begun. Last year for the SRP we created working groups. For the Data Management Strategy there is already a committee in place.

11:30 S. Forrester left the meeting.

B. Chang asked for clarification on the Research Metrics Dashboard; whether it is ranking individual researchers or the university? L. Jacobs clarified that it is for the university and how we project internally and externally that we are a highly research intensive university. He stated that the university has a \$180-190 million budget and that our research revenue isn't captured in that amount while teaching and learning and research are the top priorities of our university. 40% of Faculty Members' time is for research and therefore 40% of your salary is an investment in research which equates to approximately \$40 million in research activity - a very significant investment in the Durham Region.

B. Chang stated that it was noted by the FBIT International Committee that East Asian universities that are interested in partnering with us ask about our international ranking (QS and Times Higher Education), we currently aren't ranked in them, and this poses a difficulty with international collaborations. L. Jacobs noted that due to the pandemic the Research Infosource Research Rankings have been delayed and are expected in November. In an early release of select information to VPRs, we know that Ontario Tech has surpassed both Ryerson and York in research intensity and we are trying to capture these in some sort of dashboard. He noted as well that we are 2nd in Canada for Mitacs partnerships/funding.

11:37 B. Dinwoodie left the meeting.

S. Rahnamayan suggested that Ontario Tech needs to be put in the right ranking; not the undergraduate-focused ranking and that we need to compare ourselves with young universities that are research intensive. L. Jacobs agreed and noted that he has explicitly asked C+M to drop the language of primarily undergraduate and they have. They are now using research intensive. The President uses the language of blended learning and research intensive. By Tri Council rankings we are in the medium ranking (language created by Macleans magazine when they created these university rankings).

11:43 J. Freeman left the meeting.

6. Faculty Exchange

FEAS – Everything progressing smoothly.

FBIT – Nothing to note.

FESNS – Nothing to note. Faculty concentrating on teaching online.

FHSci – Faculty are busy with CIHR applications and trying to find out what's happening with the labs in event of a second wave. S. Dogra noted that there is a need to be prepared with a pandemic plan.

FSci – No report at S. Forrester had to leave prior to this item.

FEd – No report at R. Ruttenberg-Rosen is absent.

SGPS – L. Roy noted that he is looking forward to working on the priorities and creating partnerships that cut across faculties and involve undergraduate and graduate students.

FSSH – A. Slane reported that it is a busy grant time for FSSH with many graduate students and faculty applying for grants. She relayed faculty concerns with online teaching and learning and raised a question about how much PPE is needed and who would cover the costs as faculty are trying to integrate undergraduate students into their research projects. L. Jacobs noted that costs for PPE would fit the criteria for the CRCEF if used for research purposes; teaching lab costs would not be covered. The deadline to submit expenses is November 15.

7. Other Business

None.

8. Next meeting – November ~~19~~ 23, 2020, 9~~10~~:00 am – 11~~12~~:00, Google Meets

ACTION: Send suggestions on agenda items to Vivianne

9. Adjournment – 11:49 am.