Research Committee Minutes

Date: May 24, 2023
Time: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.
Place: Google Meet

Attendees: S. Brown, C. Christou, J. Freeman, L. Jacobs (Chair), A. Leach, C. McGregor, R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, S. ShahbazPanahi, V. Sharpe (secretary), N. Wattie

Guest(s): H. Hangan, A. Mohany (Item 6)

Regrets: 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 including 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 all to be proud of.

   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 and Jenn.

   We continue to broaden our research funding although not formal notification yet, that we will receive a million dollar grant from the Weston foundation on tech in homegrown agriculture.

   So many successes in spaces like these that there are too many to list and makes us not dependant on tri-council funding.

   More substantive to come in the meeting today is the proposal for a research centre in FEAS.

   Shahram – do we know stas of NSERC DG successes? Les – about 48-49% success rate. At the Dean’s Council or Deans of Engineering Council held at Waterloo, Engineering was slightly below that although $ amounts were higher, numbers of successes were lower.

   Ted – report of the Advisory Panel – huge impact on Graduate Studies. Les brought is up at SLT and Academic Council. Is amajor report that came out a couple of days before the budget. It was unusual bc they convened the cttee in Dec and reported it within about 8 weeks which is a very quick turnaround. Les spoke with the chair of the committee – drift of the rept – 1 – some thinking that the fed gov has subtly decided that tri-council isn’t a great instrument for their innovative research investments. Tri-council doesn’t deliver results on what their priorities are. New initiatives that are very diverse and fragmented. Hard to keep track on all that is coming from the Fed Gov.

   Report – they should scale back tri council activities and limit them to investigator-lead research. More focused ....................... [Insert Les’ comments]

   Insert Ted’s comments –
Add Ted’s to future agenda item

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)
- New 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.
- 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

- Fall Grant Competition Results - Success rates for OT – 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: 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.
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- SS: NSERC horizon – defies logic. When you have DG you are peer-reviewed and can apply for higher grants – so why .......... can you give feedback that this is against promoting excellence? The ones who didn’t get it are eligible and those that got it are ineligible.... JF: yes, staff participated in a webinar today and it was brought up and that it is exclusionary. Anyone whose DG expires in 2024 they may be able to apply. Some nuances to it. This is how they’ve set it up to manage applications. Common comment and we are trying to advocate on that.

6. **Proposal for the creation of the AeroClimar Research Centre**

Les introduced Atef Mohany. He noted that it is multi-disciplinary. Work together to
Idea to capitalize on the infrastructure we have on campus such as ACE. By working together in a Research Centre we can attract more funding. Starting with 5 colleagues. Presented to FEAS Faculty Council last month. Open to collaboration with other colleagues at the university and in the GTA. Budget key aspect is to try to apply for large grants to attract more funding from industry and tri-council. That’s why we indicated a small amount of budget to attract a grant writer. Committing funding from the director and personal grants from each individual.

L. Jacobs asked if there are particular universities in which you can see collaborations happening? A. Mohnay – Uof T aerospace Institute -created by Bombardier and mainly to research aerospace. We can complement each other without competing.

C. McGregor – this is long overdue. We have an amazing facility that allows us to conduct unique research.

L. Jacobs – correction to budget – re: grants writer – budgeted revenue $25k from VPRI – that’s actually a joint contribution between FEAS and VPRI. Need to make this correction before it goes to AC.

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

RRR – Foresee Education Faculty being supportive.

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. LJ having a research centre run these courses it provides quality assurance.

T. Christou – wondering if you’ve thought of targets of involvement with graduate students. A. Mohany – faculty have about 30 graduate students and some pdfs. See atef’s comments

J. Freeman – great to see this come forward. Things to highlight – 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 you are looking to seek larger funding you may want to start looking at EDI. That is a key part of a lot of the larger applications. Another things 1 – having a data management plan and 2 – safeguarding research. Jenn’s comments. Recommend setting them up sooner than later.

N. Wattie – Health Science has researchers and students researching ………… – potentially strong collaboration with Health Science. A. Mohany – yes, Health Science can really work collaboratively with this centre.

C. McGregor thining about accommodations and data streaming. The software to injest the ………… and retrospective. Have been speaking with ACE about ingesting the data live. Other interesting areas are volumetric ?biometric vr. Cyber security aspects for research areas. ATEF: All aspects: Design manufacturing and testing

SS – budget line for grant writing – well-seasoned, well-published – is this person going to be a technical person? What qualification for this person? AM – going for grants that are over 1 million. Technical person with expertise in the area. How to look for opportunities – we will be the initiator for the grants but someone to help us to - going to be applying to multiple grants every year.

Motion: to accept the proposal.

Discussion:

SS: I have reservation for budget for grant writing – still support the proposal but have reservations about this as they have a lot of expertise.

CM: Agree with your point but recognize that there is a lot of heavy lifting with templates etc. Fully in support of the proposal and using budget for a grant writer.

RRR: I can see the need for a grant writer to help navigate these spaces.
JF: will really need to be delineated between what the grant writer can and cannot do as we have Grants Officers in ORS who are unionized. To SS point it is a specialized skill. To cm point, this position may need to be broader to include if the project is funded to facilitate post award. LJ: for feedback to go to AC – the position should be written as a project manager/grant writer.

RRR – grant writers usually take a cut and that’s not accounted for in the budget. LJ – that’s not something the university could do.

TC – Grant writer/project manager is a great idea but concern about consistency and equity while other units are begging for funding. Is that allocation to this centre the biggest need to the university?

CM – in FBIT we are starting to have different initiatives that create overhead for the Faculty and then that overhead can be used in other ways for the Faculty. Goal is for them to become self-sustained.

LJ – very few research centres when he came. In the past research centres were funding by the uni operating budget and when the money ran out the centres would fold. New model – 1 – had to be sustainable and 2 – not draw on operating funds. Commitment from the Dean was that he would divert overhead revenue for the first couple of years to get this started. ($25,000 commitment). Overhead is not equitably distributed across Faculties as they are generated by funding brought in to that Faculty.

Les’ comments about ACE.

RRR – U of T adjudicates their centres and I was asked as an external to adjudicate.

Objections: none
In favor of rec

7. Annual Reports of Research Institutes, Units, and Centres - for information
   A. Digital Life Institute
   B. Institute for Disability and Rehabilitation Research
   C. Institute for Cybersecurity & Resilient Systems - deferred
   D. Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism - deferred
   E. Centre for Small Modular Reactors (CSMR) - deferred
   F. Age with Dignity Campus of Care and Best Practices Research Centre

8. Annual Reports of Research Groups – for information (fix formatting)
   G. Advanced Networking Technology and Security (ANTS) Research lab – not provided
   H. Biomolecular Research Group - provided
   I. Business Analytics & AI Research Group – not provided
   J. Database Research Group – not provided
   K. Forensic Science Research Group - provided
   L. MaxSiMhealth Research Group – not provided
   M. Power Electronics and Drives Applications Lab (PEDAL) - provided
   N. Public, Active, Clean and Equitable (PACE) Mobility Group - provided
   O. Smart Transportation Electrification and Energy Research Group (STEER) - provided
   P. Sport and Physical Activity Research Collaborative – not provided
   Q. Youth Research Group – not provided

9. Faculty Exchange
Health Science – Master’s of Health Science program review has just been completed. Looking for an update on updates on promotion and marketing of research that Les mentioned previously. LJ: we have someone who is going on leave as of June 1 – we have 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 DG – what are we going to do about it? Faculty continue to be interested in advocating for international students funding and tuition offset. LJ – there is a continued need to advocate for this.

Education – nice momentum in the faculty in terms of research. 2 new hires, excellent presentations and whomever is hired 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.

Theodore Christou
12:43 PM
Report of the advisory panel federal research support system
Jennifer Freeman
12:48 PM
success rates: NSERC DG and DDG: 42%; NSERC RTI 44%; NFRF 20%; SSHRC PDG 50%; CIHR Project Grant 29%.
Jennifer Freeman
12:52 PM
The eligibility restriction for Discovery Horizon is to reduce the number of applications. They received an overwhelming number in the first two years of the pilot.
Jennifer Freeman
1:16 PM
Shahram: Additional information about eligibility restrictions. NSERC said that they wanted to have the DH to be an avenue for researchers who conduct interdisciplinary research. So this is the approach that they have decided to take. They also mentioned that this approach aligns with the two other agencies.
Jennifer Freeman
1:38 PM
In my experience a grant writer will cost more than 30K
It is typically 20-30K for one large grant.

f.y.i...IDC policy for centres: For projects that are administered through a University Centre/Institute, 25% of the Indirect Costs will be allocated to the University Centre or Institute. The balance (75%) of the Indirect Costs will be allocated according to the formula above, with the exception of the PI portion, which would remain with the Faculty Dean.
You
1:56 PM
Note that Research Groups are not required to submit annual reports and have been invited to submit them. Not all chose to.
I will follow up with the Institute for Cybersecurity & Resilient Systems, the Centre on Hate, Bias and Extremism, and the Centre for Small Modular Reactors to have their reports for the September meeting.