Research Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes
Friday, April 29, 2016
Faculty Center Conference Room JPL 4.04.12C

Board Members Present: Hamid Beladi, Hazem Rashed-Ali, John Zhang, Lloyd Potter, Miguel Yacamán, George Perry, Christopher Ellison, Floyd Wormley

Board Members Absent: Bernard Arulanandam, Gloria Crisp, Xiaohe Xu, Harry Millwater, Branco Ponomariov

Non Board Member Present: Carlos Aguirre

I. Welcome:

Dr. Beladi welcomes group
Decision made that if meeting warranted over summer, RAB will use Skype for Business. Decision also made to hold off on sending white papers to administration/others to allow for further refinement.

II. Yacaman: Proposal for Cluster Hiring in Material sciences

Dr. Yacaman describes the Materials Cluster and states that it needs to be emphasized along with the Cyber and Brain Clusters.

Discussion opens up about need for bringing in new faculty, and facilitate existing faculty in working together in an interdisciplinary fashion. Areas of focus for facilitating Cluster Hiring in Material sciences, include: Should we have this cluster at utsa?; ensure planning process for the hiring is set ASAP, and ensure the set aside plan for money is complete; determining whom should be included in the decision making process?; defining more explicitly what UTSA’s niche in this area is going to be moving forward;

RAB adopts Action Item for Dr. Yacaman to write a few paragraphs about how to best gain support of deans (other stakeholders); b) elaboration of the need for it to be a cross departmental effort by faculty (promotes interaction and collaboration); c) need to reach a balance between hiring for department, i.e., for teaching vs. hiring for cluster; d) delineation of why to focus on Materials Cluster as a winning strategy for UTSA to become Tier 1.—once there is a revised version, it can go through approval process and implementation via secured funding.

III. Yacaman: Data of funding from NSF at national level as an information to the members.
Dr. Yacaman presents NSF funding data: 124 universities take 81%, 700 universities only take 20%; 37 Texas universities take 80%. Presents information with the idea of being aware of how to improve UTSA’s ability to break through to the top funding bracket. Discussion ensures underscoring that we could improve relationships with agencies by utilizing VPR funds to either bring agency representatives to UTSA, or to conduct D.C. trips. Researchers/President/Vice Presidents can go to act as the face of UTSA.

IV. Wormley: 2020 Blueprint Summary

RAB member discuss the role of the RAB moving forward, focusing on how the advisory board fits into the overall strategic planning process for UTSA’s 2020 Blueprint. Key items under consideration for this role include: discussions about improving metrics (what is the RAB metric of performance as well?), who is monitoring, and oversight structure. Members talk about how RAB should give advice to leaders, and review issues related to research that need consideration to get UTSA to Tier 1 “where we want to go.” With respect to the 2020 Blueprint, RAB should help to assess results of strategic plan initiatives, and should engage the Human Resources Department (others) to help improve alignment/coordination, as well as metrics used for tracking efforts to achieve Tier 1 status.

Ideas for achieving this include: 1) Bringing Dean’s more closely into the discussion/oversight (see white paper on ensuring accountability); 2) further utilizing benchmarking to track key institutional indicators of performance, e.g., funding level, # of Ph.D.’s., including assessment of faculty performance (need to align metrics to evaluate strategic plan with the implementation), and; 3) Improved communication by leadership to faculty and staff of strategic plan goals, implementation activities, and results of initiatives (RAB members discuss using a survey of university faculty as part of continuously assessing morale, and making adjustments as needed). Group discusses how we also need to better articulate the impact of RAB via communication at top, middle, and bottom. Decision made that RAB should invite Deans and ADRs to next year’s first meeting.

Note: Dr. Wormley/Dr. Potter/Dr. Yacaman asked to update previous whitepapers under development about what steps the Deans have taken to implement accountability and on oversight/accountability of centers and institutes to incorporate new RAB discussion points/findings.

V. Approve Minutes from March 4, 2016

No action taken--postponed until next meeting.

VI. Next Meeting

To Be Determined

VII. Summary Action Items/Adjournment
1. RAB adopts Action Item for Dr. Yacaman to write a few paragraphs about: a) effort to gain support for Materials cluster via deans (other stakeholders); b) need for Materials Cluster to be a cross departmental effort by faculty (promotes interaction and collaboration); c) need to reach a balance between hiring for department, i.e., For teaching vs. hiring for cluster; d) Delineating why focusing on Materials Cluster is a winning strategy for UTSA to become Tier 1.—once there is a revised version, it can go through approval process and implementation via secured funding.