Research Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes
Friday, March 4, 2016
Faculty Center Conference Room JPL 4.04.12C

Board Members Present: Hamid Beladi, Hazem Rashed-Ali, Xiaohe Xu, John Zhang, Lloyd Potter, Harry Millwater, Branco Ponomariov, Floyd Wormley, Miguel Yacamán,

Board Members Absent: Bernard Arulanandam, Christopher Ellison, Gloria Crisp, George Perry

Non Board Member Present: Mauli Agrawal, Kathryn Funk-Baxter, Beth Manning, Carlos Aguirre

I. Welcome

Dr. Beladi welcomes RAB members to the first advisory meeting of the year and indicates that the next one will be sometime in April.

Dr. Beladi emphasizes that during his last meeting with Dr. Romo, the President asked about the status of efforts to improve accountability. Dr. Beladi reminds the RAB members to do whatever is possible to focus on this issue.

Discussion opens up about RAB members having shared the accountability message with deans/chairs, but that the RAB does not have the power to enforce since it is only advisory in nature. Dr. Beladi brings up the fact that the RAB had written a White Paper on this topic previously. Group discusses how accountability falls upon the Provost to tell Deans to enforce/implement accountability measures. Question raised about whether the RAB should request that the President give the RAB the authority to ensure implementation of RAB finding/white paper recommendations.

Group adopts action item which will ask Deans to provide a list of the steps they have taken to implement accountability. Dr. Potter will draft a one page letter that will be sent to the deans requesting information on what accountability steps have been taken. Dr. Romo will be copied.

II. FY17 Budgeting of Faculty Salaries

Dr. Beladi introduces Beth Manning, Director, Research Financial Administration, Office of the Vice President for Research.

Manning shares plans for implementing a new faculty salary budgeting approach in FY 16-17 which will better allocate faculty salaries between research and teaching functions. The approach begins with the annual review when the split between research and teaching functions is recorded. Then, at mid-year an analysis is made between what was recorded and what were the actual research and teaching expenditures. Adjustments are made on this basis. Example provided: Manning explains that at the time of review let’s say you estimate 50% research. When mid-year review occurs, it is found that faculty member only engaged
in 25% research. This would indicate a significant difference at the mid-way point. Based on this finding, a DVT could be completed and funds reallocated.

Dr. Yacaman brings up discussion about UTSA moving to R1, and the need utilize funding to hire more people. Dr. Beladi states that this issue should be advanced by the Provost. Discussion ensues about making a commitment to hire new tenure-track faculty as a research growth strategy, particularly in STEM areas, as well as in the hiring of non-tenure track faculty. Strategy could be to maintain current non stem faculty levels while expanding STEM faculty hiring for a certain time period (then return back to hiring non-stem faculty).

Group discusses what it will take for the UTSA to move to the next level. Thought reiterated that Provost should be involved in and/or take a leadership role on this issue. What is needed is systemic change to reach $100 Million.

Question raised about whether there is a need to create a one-page white paper to circulate. The white paper could touch on how to reward faculty that are significantly impacting research expenditures. Discussion ensures about how to compensate the truly prodigious faculty—need for further discussion about faculty reward structure; placement of the provision in faculty contracts centered on reward compensation. Dr. Beladi states that this issue could be sent to a subcommittee for examination.

Dr. Xu asks how graduate students are accounted for in UTSA research expenditures. Manning states that we try to capture graduate students as research expenditures, but indicates that Dr. Agrawal and Dr. Funk-Baxter can help to clarify if the new system will allow graduate students to be reflected as research.

III. Research Infrastructure Support

Dr. Beladi introduces Dr. Funk-Baxter

Dr. Wormley reviews three areas of support where additional infrastructure improvements could help UTSA transform from a commuter school into a Tier 1 research institution. These are: 1) Department/college financial support to maintain adequate staffing levels during pre/post award of grants; 2) Research Service Core Support, and; 3) Center/Institutes Support:

1. **Department/college financial support to maintain adequate staffing levels during pre/post award of grants**: Additional personnel would help to improve the pre award and post award financial management of grants. With PeopleSoft, PI needs support from trained personnel to provide additional guidance when needed. RAB discusses how to pay for additional staffing. Question raised about whether it should it be a separate institutional budget line item?

2. **Research Service Core Support (staffing, which should be supported, and who decides?)**: Dr. Wormley describes how most costs for Research Service Cores fall upon the college
budgets, which is a drain on college resources. While F&A helps to offset costs, the
dollars are stretched thin. He raises the question about whether the institution should
support all Research Service Cores instead of it falling on college budgets. If
institutional, who would make the decision about which ones to keep and which ones to
close? Idea brought up about needing oversight structure/advisory committee to make
funding decisions about Research Service Cores. The advisory committee could ensure
Research Service Core goals are met and maintain control of operations.

Dr. Xu brings up that another issue is that the Research Service Cores need additional
staffing. Discussion opens up about ensuring that the right personnel are hired, and that
new hires must have sufficient skill sets, such as proficiency with PeopleSoft, to reduce
potential accounting errors flowing upstream to the Research Service Core when they are
partially grant funded. Should consider increasing pay rates to attract quality personnel
and increase retention.

Dr. Agrawal states that we need to base decisions about how to move forward on
improving management and operations of Research Service Cores through colleges
cconducting a careful analysis of Research Service Core/staffing needs. Since available
funding is limited, UTSA could first consider hiring college level business managers to
improve efficiency and help oversee operations, with other positions to follow.

The Analysis of needs/list of needs generated should include an examination of what
people soft skills are required. Utilizing this information, UTSA would be in a better
position to build capacity through determining what positions to fill and how to allocate
funds. Dr. Zhang states that UTSA should consider implementing annual reviews of
Research Service Cores, and eliminate those that are not meeting expectations. Dr.
Wormley recommends that an independent person/entity could be tasked with carrying
this annual review.

3. **Center/Institutes Support**: Centers need additional resources to accommodate growth and
build capacity toward achieving R1 status, including:

   - Personnel obtaining additional training on PeopleSoft to build knowledge, which
     leads to grant accounting errors. Again, there is a need to systematically
determine what the center personnel needs are, and how UTSA should allocate
funds to ensure appropriate staffing level;
   - Space is at a minimum and centers. Need additional planning and/or tools to find
viable long term locations that are sufficient to meet adequate staffing
levels/center operations;
   - Improve operational effectiveness and efficacy through additional/restructured
institutional oversight.

Dr. Beladi opens up discussion about whether the VPR should take over the oversight of
centers and institutes. RAB talks about creating an objective entity managed by the VPR.
The entity would review centers and institutes to ensure they are following UTSA system
rules. Those that are not meeting expectations would be eliminated. This group would
take responsibility for writing report.
Dr. Agarwal states that presently oversight of the centers and institutes falls on the Dean’s Council (Centers and Institutes don’t report to VPR). Also, all final decision about the status of centers and institutes are made by the Academic Affairs and Provost.

RAB group discusses whether the board should recommend that oversight of centers and institutes should fall under the VPR. RAB decides VPR management is the best organizational oversight structure.

**RAB calls for Action Item recommending that the centers and institutions across UTSA fall under the auspices of the VPR. Dr. Wormley will create a 1 page rationale describing the background, justification, and benefits for UTSA following this organizational oversight structure for centers and institutes.**

Dr. Potter calls for an action item to form a subcommittee that would articulate need for additional staffing/challenges, oversight, PeopleSoft training needs for personnel, and space planning considerations; and make recommendations.

**RAB adopts Action Item for Dr. Wormley/Dr. Millwater to create a 2 page report on need for additional staffing, PeopleSoft training requirements, and space planning considerations. It will be circulated and sent to the Research Council.**

IV. Restrictions on Travel to Mexico

Dr. Yacaman opens up a discussion about the need to streamline steps required for approval before traveling to Mexico. Dr. Beladi shares with the RAB that Mexico has now been taken off of the high risk list and will no longer require prior approval from the committee. Now when traveling to Mexico, faculty will only have to obtain approval from the dean of their college. The chair of the travel committee would also have the ability to sign off on any memo which came down to their committee.

V. Approve Minutes from November 20, 2015

Minutes unanimously approved.

VI. Next Meeting

To Be Determined

VII. Dr. Millwater update on IT infrastructure

Dr. Millwater gives update based on list provided to RAB during meeting. He feels that the most important progress made to date includes: emphasis on building out central computer facility (cluster) and supporting faculty and students on its usage (looking to consolidate this function) the hiring of 2 permanent research IT positions provide to OIT (most important in
his opinion); the hardware position being filled by Jeremy Mann (over 20 years of experience); the Vizlab being repositioned as a “one stop shop,” solely for research computing, and; collecting and analyzing the software needs of the colleges, particularly licensing (in process of rolling out report).

Discussion held about increasing the utilization of the Vizlab moving forward, the different design elements/purposes for the lab, and how to continually provide adequate funding and strategically ensure the center remains viable—upon full implementation of IT Infrastructure plan, usage rates should increase as it is transformed into a multi-purpose center and marketing informs UTSA community. The Vizlab space will also begin to provide training, further consolidating it as a one stop within the institution.

RAB talks about creating an IT infrastructure oversight/advisory committee which can continually provide input to the administration about needs and areas for improvement. A representative from each of the colleges could serve on the committee, and a director could be hired to dedicate time and resources toward improving operations and the strategic direction of the Vizlab.

**Summary of Adopted Action Items:**

1. RAB adopts action item which will ask Deans to provide a list of the steps they have taken to implement accountability. Dr. Potter will distribute via 1-2 page survey for Colleges. Responses will be compiled and a report will be forward to Dean’s Council. Dr. Romo will be copied;

2. RAB adopts action item recommending that the centers and institutes across UTSA fall under the auspices of the VPR. Dr. Wormley will create a 1 page rationale describing the justification and benefits for UTSA following this organizational structure.

3. RAB adopts Action Item for Dr. Wormley/Dr. Millwater to create a 2 page report on need for additional staffing, PeopleSoft training requirements, and space planning considerations. It will be circulated and sent to the Research Council.