

MINUTES

Commission on Research
December 12, 2024
3:30-5:00 p.m.
Zoom

Present: Nicole Pitterson (presiding), Gibran Ali, Thomas Archibald, Ella Atkins, Thomas Bell, Alberto Cano, Robert Emmett (for Leanna Blevins), Joseph Gaeddert, Ron Gibbons, Randy Heflin, Jackson Hoch (for Jonathan Petters), Laurel Miner (for Dan Sui), Barry Miller, Albert Pan, Esther Park, Jorge Reyes, Karen Schnatterly, Ryan Stewart, Michelle Theus, Quinn Thomas, Sophie Thompsen, Esra Buyuktahtakin Toy, Caitlin Woodson

Absent with Notice: Dan Givens, Benjamin Knapp, Corinne Noirot

Absent: Manish Bansal, Andrew Krum, Daniel Pauly, Elizabeth Sicking

Guests: Regina Allen, April Myers, Melinda West

Research and Innovation Support: Kim Borkowski

Nicole Pitterson called the meeting to order at 3:32pm. A quorum was present.

1. Adoption of Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to adopt the agenda. The motion carried.

2. Announcement of approval and posting of minutes of November 14, 2024

Nicole Pitterson noted that these minutes have been voted on electronically and can be accessed on the [Commission on Research Sharepoint](#).

3. Presentation

Regina Allen, Director of the Institutional Biosafety Committee Program and Institutional Biosafety Committee Administrator, gave an overview of administrative updates to two policies related to the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC). Policy 13030, Recombinant and Synthetic Nucleic Acid and Biohazard Research, has been streamlined to align with the policy pyramid and adhere to mandated and required federal, state, and local guidelines, regulations, policies and laws. Additionally, edits were made to office and role titles, as well as updates reflecting changes in NIH Guidelines. Policy 13050, Virginia Tech Life Sciences Dual Use Research of Concern Policy, has substantial changes to align with the new government policy, including a title change, updates to office and role titles, and removal of information found in VT and IBC standards, procedures and guidelines. These updates are currently in administrative review, and the policies will be shared with the COR following that review.

Randy Heflin, Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Innovation, presented a draft statement on anti-bias research at Virginia Tech, which was crafted by Leanna Blevins, Associate Vice President for Health Sciences Academic Affairs, as a follow-up to the commission's discussion topic last year on how to promote anti-racism at colleges and universities. Randy read the statement

and opened the floor for feedback. The Commission was generally supportive of the statement, and recommended that the scope reflect support for the process and practice of research rather than the subject, and that the message be supported by additional language and storytelling. The statement discussed was:

The Commission on Research is committed to promoting research practices that are inclusive and combat inequities and racism. We honor different and unique identities and promote and nurture an accessible, welcoming, and respectful environment for all participants, staff, students, and faculty and for all members of the research community.

The Commission in favor of adopting the anti-bias statement which was crafted by Leanna Blevins, and recommended the Office of Research and Innovation create a webpage that includes that statement as well as additional supporting resources.

4. Other Items

Nicole Pitterson provided an update on UC 2024-25A Resolution to Form a University Mission Initiative (UMI) Committee to Recommend Updated Policies for Funding Doctoral Research at Virginia Tech. The resolution was read at the December 2, 2024 University Council Meeting and comments were made related to sponsorship of the UMI and how it aligns with University Council bylaws. Justin Lemkul is editing the resolution based on the comments and is entertaining further comments from the COR. A shared document of the current resolution with comments will be sent to COR members for feedback and sent to Justin for consideration to include in the second version and submitted in time for University Council second reading in February 2025.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 4:14 pm.