

COMMISSION ON RESEARCH

September 10, 2008

325 Burruss Hall

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Members Present: L. Coble, D. Cook, D. Dean, S. K. De Datta, C. Dawkins, R. Hall, T. Herdman, B. Huckle, T. Inzana, D. Jones, R. Kapania, D. Leo (for R. Benson), K. Miller, , B. Siegle, R. Veilleux, P. Young, P. Zellner

Members Absent: T. Fox, R. Grange, S. Martin, R. Walters

Invited Guests: J. Ridinger, S. Muse, H. Odendaal, T. Schroeder, C. Montgomery

- 1. Approval of Agenda:** A motion to approve the agenda was offered by D. Cook and seconded by L. Coble and carried.
- 2. Approval of the minutes for CoR meeting April 9, 2008:** The minutes were previously approved via email by the 2007-08 commission. B. Huckle shared with the commission that all minutes are posted on the following website after approval by University Council: <http://www.governance.vt.edu/comcor/cor.html>.
- 3. Presentation on policy document regarding removal of Lead Investigator from Sponsored Projects:** The President of the Faculty Senate Hardus Odendaal presented a document to the commission outlining a proposed policy that has been developed in coordination with the Commission on Faculty Affairs for removal of Lead Investigator from a Sponsored Project. There is currently no policy documenting this process. The Research Misconduct Policy differs from this proposed policy in that it addresses ethical matters and misrepresentation of data. The purpose of the new policy is to protect faculty members and to have a fair appeals process. It would protect the university and the PI from failing to address issues that do not fall under the misconduct policy. These two policies are loosely tied but not related.

The removal of a Lead investigator may need to be considered upon request from a sponsor or under unusual circumstances identified by the university such as of incapacity, misuse of funds, failure to comply with university and sponsored programs' policies or state and federal regulations, or significant conflict of interest that has not been appropriately disclosed or managed. The document details the process by which under these circumstances a Lead investigator can be removed. The Vice President for Research is directly involved first and will involve the department head, dean or senior level manager. A written statement must be given to the Lead investigator informing them of the shortcomings and the justification for the potential removal. Then starts the process of appeal. A process such as this does not currently exist at the university. The university has the authority to remove a Lead investigator, but does not have a written policy which also may not be to the benefit of such a faculty member. There would also be an ad-hoc appeals committee appointed by the Provost in this case and the members of this ad-hoc appeals committee would be

comprised of non-administrative faculty members: one member from the Faculty Senate Review Committee, one member from the Committee on Faculty Ethics, and one member chosen by the Provost. The determining decision is the Provost's, however if the decision of the Provost does not agree with the recommendation of the ad-hoc appeals committee, then the Lead investigator has the right to appeal to the President. The President's decision is final.

Each step in the process would have a time-limit to prevent delay and allow the research to continue. The sponsor must also be informed; removal can not occur without the consent of the sponsor. Reassignment of project leadership would occur in consultation with the sponsoring program manager.

H. Odendaal requested that this document be carefully reviewed and considered by the CoR and that they incorporate their suggestions/changes to the policy. B. Huckle requested that commission members reflect on what was discussed, and then send comments to the CoR listserv. H. Odendaal recommended the CoR try to finalize this policy. Then it will be returned to CFA for another review. It will then go to the Faculty Senate for a second reading, and then to University Council.

4. **Human Resources Restructuring:** J. Ridinger reported to the commission on the Human Resources Restructuring which is part of the Virginia Higher Education Restructuring Act. Relative to Human Resources it provides for two human resource 'systems' for staff. There are two groups of staff: classified staff and university staff. The Board of Visitors will be developing a policy for university staff. They could approve the same policies under the state system, or there could be different policies. Classified employees would have the opportunity to move to university staff every two years at least or more often than that. The retirement system, the healthcare program, workers compensation, and the grievance program would remain the same for classified and university staff. That leaves compensation, classification, performance evaluations, leave, employment layoffs which could potentially be changed.

A resolution was developed to change the performance evaluation system from the 3 point scale to a 4 point scale. Another resolution redefines administrative and professional positions and allows eligible staff in paybands 5-7 to convert to administrative and professional (A/P) status.

S. Muse commented that part of the impact on researchers will be this may allow them more flexibility in recruiting experienced people. This change also means that the starting pays will be more competitive with the market. There may however be a disadvantage to the normally required 1 month posting for A/P versus 1 week for staff postings for recruitment. A committee is looking at how to improve the recruitment process. It will change the number of special research faculty, but the change will be minimum.

5. **Appointment of representative for review of Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research (VCCER):** B. Huckle explained that one of the defined roles of the CoR is to participate in the review of research centers that are recognized at the

university level. There is a set of criteria defined in university policies that state what those are for the formation and the maintenance of the center. T. Inzana has requested that a member of the CoR be appointed to participate in the VCCER review this year. B. Huckle asked if there was anyone who would like to volunteer to participate in this review. D. Leo volunteered to be the CoR member of the review team.

- 6. Overview of Virginia Tech's Research Performance & Representation by CoR in limited submission processes:** R. Hall agreed that he would give these two presentations to the commission during the next meeting due to the time shortage.
- 7. Discussions of Substitutes:** B. Huckle discussed the importance of all units being represented during the CoR meetings and encouraged members to identify someone to sit in for them if they were not going to be available.
- 8. Potential Future Agenda Items:** S. Muse recommended to the CoR to submit agenda items for this year to be discussed during future meetings. C. Dawkins stated that he would like to submit two agenda items: one for the CGIT center review, and a proposal to merge the Metropolitan Institute and the Center for Housing Research. B. Huckle acknowledged these two future agenda items.
- 9. Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned at 4:58pm.