

MTU RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

January 20, 2009

Welcome: Roger Turpening is sitting in for James Wood who is on sabbatical this semester. Tammy LaBissoniere, Assistant Director of Sponsored Programs Accounting. Hillary VanSpronsen the University Senate Research Policy Committee representative.

Review Research Report to Board of Control

Dave Reed reviewed the September 2008 Board of Control research report information.

Federal Demonstration Partnership

A report and survey of the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) were provided electronically to the council via email for review prior to meeting.

- **REPORT: A PROFILE OF FEDERAL-GRANT ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN AMONG FEDERAL DEMONSTRATION PARTNERSHIP FACULTY**
A Report of the Faculty Standing Committee of the Federal Demonstration Partnership <http://thefdp.org/Faculty%20burden%20survey%20report.pdf>

SURVEY: POSSIBLE PROJECTS FROM FACULTY BURDEN SURVEY

Analysis of Faculty Burden Survey website link: http://thefdp.org/fbs_analysis.pdf

Michigan Tech was not a member of the FDP when the survey was conducted and therefore we did not take part in this process. Dave Reed asked council if Michigan Tech should conduct an in-house survey for similar information. The survey results would assist the administration with improving our faculty support. It was noted that the paperwork statistic of 42% time was shocking and seemed very high. Council expected an in-house survey would result in the same determinations that were already found in this survey. Instead we should utilize the solutions from the report to improve our faculty support system. Mentioned was the possibility of investigating other institutions to determine how they are supporting faculty. Dave thought perhaps a LEAN team process to focus on a high burden/ low administrative support area would be beneficial. The council would like for the report to be utilized by focusing on the internal issues and trying to resolve them on our campus. Additional support for assistant professors and continual improvement of the mentoring process for them would be beneficial. Education of faculty in processes and procedures is crucial. Dave asked the council to review the information and send any additional suggestions to Cathy Banfield via an email message. Joanne Polzien is working on finalizing an Internal Review Board Processes Report and will provide the council with information when finalized. Dave will continue follow-up with the council on this topic and will also provide additional FDP information when gathered.

Proposal Statistics

Julie Seppala provided a Lead Time Completed Proposals handout to the council. Internally there is a practice that strongly suggests proposals be submitted 48 hours prior to the sponsor deadline; 64% of proposals were submitted to the Sponsored Programs Office (SPO) with less than 48 hours until the sponsor deadline. Federal proposals which utilize the website <http://grants.gov/> for electronic submission need to be submitted to SPO in a timely manner to ensure they are successfully submitted as the staff often encounters complications during the electronic submission process. The council agreed the university goal is the establishment of an early internal deadline culture. Perhaps the focus should be in education and communication of these necessary practices to critical personnel. Dave Reed will schedule a meeting with the Deans Council.

Handling and correction of financial problems in grants due to staff errors

Soner Onder informed the committee of a situation in which he had two grants with similar index numbers. A discovery of graduate student payroll being charged to an incorrect index was found almost two years later at the close out period of one of the grants. He was on sabbatical during this time and found it very confusing to resolve this financial error. It was determined by his department chair that his incentive index would be the source of support for the graduate student to resolve this problem. His request to the council was the development of a practice for large scale project errors. The practice would assist in the resolution of financial errors and overdraws while protecting research incentive indexes from full expenditure error reimbursement. The resolution of financial errors dependent upon the type could be collaboratively resolved utilizing college and department funds as well as those of the principal investigator. While there are financial tracking documents in place such as account statements and payroll certifications, errors will still occur; hence some type of resolution practice is needed. The council discussed the need for better education regarding financial statements and departmental responsibility for designated support staff, especially those departments conducting millions of dollars of research annually. Coordinators are critical in management of grants. It was suggested that an insurance index could be created to provide funds for these types of situations. We could also investigate what other institutions are doing for these types of situations. Usually the common resolution is a proportional share of commitment based upon returns received (receivable issues usually). While it is understood that the principle investigator is responsible for the financial management of their projects the college and department receive considerable returns from large projects and should be willing to compromise in some situations. Training is provided by the Sponsored Programs Office during their Post Award Workshop that is held during spring semester which educates attendees on reading financial statements and financial management. It was noted that the University of Minnesota has a policy which requires certification of internal training for all staff. Dave Reed will evaluate the input received from the Council.