

University Senate Research Committee Meeting
20 May 2016
1:00 PM
156 CL

In Attendance: K. Barlow, E. Chasens, H. Donovan, K. Erickson, M. Glass, M. Goodhart, P Morel, M. Porter, P. Smolinski, M. Redfern, M. Spring and F. Wilson

Self-introductions were given by the people in attendance.

It was noted that minutes of the April 2016 meeting were sent by email. It was asked if there were any corrections or comments on the document and none were offered. It was stated that these minutes will be sent to Lori Molinaro.

Action Item: The minutes will be sent to Lori Molinaro for posting on the Senate web site.

Michael Goodhart invited three faculty members to come and discuss issues of academically based community engagement that were discussed at a faculty roundtable discussion in September 2015. A summary report on this round table discussion on Academically Based Community Engagement: An Idea Exchange will be sent with the minutes. These were Heidi Donovan (Director, Office of Community Partnerships, Health and Community Systems), Michael Glass (Instructor, Urban Studies Program) and Maureen Porter (School of Education). They were each asked to present their activities in community based research and the challenges that they face. This was an opportunity for the Research Committee to be made aware of these issues and to ask questions. A free discussion ensued, which is summarized below.

M. Glass stated that he is in the Urban Studies Program and has an interest in the city. He teaches a research methods class that gets students engaged with a community partner. This is beneficial for both the students and the community partners. He stated that some of the challenges are that there is no incentive for Non-Tenure Stream (NTS) faculty to perform these studies and that there is a general lack of faculty engagement. In addition, projects may require IRB review which does not recognize NTS faculty as valuable mentors for undergraduate students. M. Redfern expressed surprise at this and stated that this should be brought to the attention of G. Huber so that he can investigate with the IRB. M. Glass stated that a central University site that faculty could go to for advice would be helpful. For example, there are questions about indemnifying faculty and students working in the field. M Redfern stated that a Corporate Engagement Office is being set up and that they are talking about community engagement

H. Donovan stated that community research programs need funding streams. She said that relationships with community organizations are fragile and programs need to demonstrate long term good for the organization. This may require many years of lead up time. She has performed benchmarking at other universities and the results suggest

that the most successful programs (Penn and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis) do have a centralized center that helps faculty conduct this kind of research.

F. Wilson stated that the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg has established the Center for Applied Research (CFAR). The Center accepts research projects that typically involve funding undergraduate students for the studies. Projects support civic and community organizations and local government that need help in conducting research studies. In these cases the community groups pay for the services provided. These projects generate reports that can be useful to the community groups and may eventually be published. The projects teach students research methods and can lead to employment for students.

H. Donovan stated that reimbursement for community based projects is needed to create sustained relationships and to support scholarly projects.

M. Glass stated that it is often it is not clear who in the University controls approaching nonprofit organizations and foundations to support community based research projects.

One concern is that tenure stream faculty are discouraged from performing community based research as they are pushed to consider this to be service rather than research. The strong feeling of M. Porter is that there is a need to differentiate community based research from service. Her department is engaged in international service programs in Peru (among others). While students are providing some service to the communities they engage with, they also perform research about the experience of service learning and on the topics of the service.

F. Wilson pointed out that a research university should also do community service.

M. Glass stated that community organizations need a university contact in order to initiate communications on potential projects.

H. Donovan stated that the University needs to provide more recognition of community scholarship. M. Spring stated that some recognition should also be given to community partners. A certificate may be appropriate. Also, a University report to the community should be published documenting research activities.

M. Redfern stated there may be a need for a centralized university entity for community based research and to define the function of this entity. He asked to be sent examples of these research activities. He stated that consideration should be given to what capacity is needed to be added at the University and at what decision-making level should this be added.

H. Donovan said that community based research should be more visible as scholarship and count towards tenure. There is a course on leadership and community learning and community based research has strong student demand.

H. Donovan said that benchmarking should be done with other universities on community based research. Typically the best programs (University of Pennsylvania and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis) have a centralized office for coordinating relationships with the community. Also, programs should follow principles of having consistent engagement, serve a vulnerable population and have an academic basis. The program should be tied to research and publication.

M. Porter stated need research infrastructure to make program sustainable and there is student demand for community research.

In other business, M. Redfern stated that the Research Subcommittees continue to work on preliminary drafts for policies. Development of the policies has taken longer than expected. The drafts will be sent to the Chancellor and Provost for review. The proposed policies will also undergo legal review. Once the comments have been considered by the drafting committees, the drafts will be shared with faculty governance committees.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Minutes submitted by: Patrick Smolinski and Penny Morel