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Faculty Research and Development Committee  
Minutes

College of Liberal Arts Minutes and Reports

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9-26-2019

### **Minutes, Faculty Research and Development Committee, Thursday, September 26, 2019**

Faculty Research and Development Committee

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**Faculty Research and Development Committee (FRDC)**  
**Meeting Minutes: 9/26/19**  
12:30-1:45 p.m., Bush 123

Attendees: Katie Sutherland (Chair), Denise Cummings, Nick Houndonougbo, Jenn Manak, Jie Yu, Nancy Chick, Chris Fuse, Devon Massot (meeting minutes taker), Robin Gerchman

Katie Sutherland calls meeting to order at 12:30 p.m.

1. **Meeting minutes.** Previous meeting minutes were just sent out to the committee, so approval is postponed until next meeting to give everyone a chance to review.
2. **Chris Fuse on FAC's Grant Review Process.** Welcome to Chris Fuse who is joining us for today's meeting to share information with the committee on how FAC has handled the grant review process in the past.

Katie informs the committee that 4 faculty are eligible to apply for FYRST grants this year (2 at Associate Professor level, and 2 at Full Professor level). In addition, there were 8 Critchfield grants awarded last year. This gives us an estimate as to what to expect this year.

Chris explains how FAC approached this. Many faculty applied to both FYRST and Critchfield. While the process was supposed to be blind, it was obvious who had submitted. The FAC had a long ethical discussion about whether this was OK. The toughest thing was relying on divisional expertise to determine what was appropriate within different fields. It was hard for someone outside a particular field to understand if what was being proposed was appropriate.

Chris states that for the most part, FYRST grants were fairly straightforward. Usually a lot of pre-planning and thought goes into these. When it came to Critchfield or the other grants, the FAC found that proposals often lacked sufficient detail. This was particularly true in the fall round, especially from those not seeking funds for sabbatical. Chris clarifies that it's an open call process with priority given to those going on sabbatical the following year, but others can still apply in the fall round. However, Chris would encourage those who are not going on sabbatical to wait/re-apply the next cycle. Katie states we have to be careful with funds awarded in the fall to ensure enough funds are available in the spring. Chris states that they had enough money in years past, so that wasn't an issue.

Chris states that some proposals were unreasonable. For example, some provided over-inflated budget estimates. In these cases, members of the FAC would do the work of looking up more reasonable costs, adjust the budget/award accordingly, and provide that information to the applicant. Chris advise the committee to not be afraid to be surgical if folks are asking for too much.

Chris states that the FAC also focused on how often folks had applied for grants over the past 6 years. The expectation is that faculty should be using these grants to seed projects and then seek external funding for their continuation. Chris suggests getting a breakdown of grants awarded over the last 6 years from the Dean's office. If the committee notes that an applicant has received multiple grants over the years, we can then ask the Dean for those specific proposals to determine if the College has been funding the same project repeatedly.

Katie asks for clarification on the blind review process. Chris states that FAC had a fairly extensive discussion on this and agreed that while a blind review process is great, we are too small of an institution to see this work effectively. There are only a small number of faculty doing certain work in a certain field, so a blind review process is not reasonable.

Katie asks if faculty voted on the blind review decision. Chris isn't sure but remembers a long set of discussions. The intent of the blind review is to be reasonable and not biased, but we're dealing with 150 faculty. Katie agrees and states that it makes much more sense to know what faculty have published. Chris agrees that it changes how one reviews and ranks a proposal (i.e., the last time this person received funding, it resulted in X# of publications, etc.).

Nick asks what the process is to change the blind review requirement. Chris recommends that if it wasn't voted on, we should bring it before the faculty to notify them of the change. FAC didn't know how to fix it either, but Chris agrees that we need to change it. A blind review process simply can't work as intended at such a small institution such as Rollins.

Jenn notes the fact that we're using new rubrics to make the review process more objective and that this should be made known to the faculty.

Chris suggests that for Critchfield grants specifically, we might want to make changes to the questions asked to help ensure responses are more specific, straight-forward, and clear. In the past, answers were not detailed enough. Chris also states that departmental folks on the FAC would often offer input and clarification in these cases, but that should not be relied upon and gives an unfair advantage to some.

Katie states that our plan for the current cycle is to review all proposals and determine who should be recommended and at what level. This information should be given to Katie 2 days prior to our next meeting so she can compile. This process allows strongest proposals (with no concerns) to move forward and then allows for more discussion for those proposals not in the top tier. Chris agrees that this aligns with what FAC has done and saves time. He recommends having everyone rank and recommend but not determine the level of funding. They found that junior faculty who weren't familiar with grants and funding didn't know how much to cut. The collective wisdom of senior faculty helped with that process. Katie agrees with this.

Jenn asks if we want to use a rubric for this round of proposals. Katie would prefer we develop one as we move through this first round. Let's start with how it's been done and determine how we can make it better. By reviewing this way first, we can determine what criteria rises to the top and develop a rubric from that.

Katie thanks Chris and reminds the committee that he will join the upcoming 11/7 meeting to talk about SFCS guidelines.

Katie reminds the committee to send ranked lists to her by 10/8.

- 3. Discussion of final grant report reviews and new rubric.** Committee members were asked to share thoughts on the final grant reports they reviewed and scored using the new rubric provided by Jenn and Nancy.

### Suggested changes

Katie asks how we might make the rubric more applicable, since it was clear for some reports (based on the type of grant) that progress made towards teaching or scholarship may not be applicable, yet the rubric requires a score for each. Jie asks if it is required for faculty to demonstrate contributions in each of the 4 stated areas (teaching, scholarship, academic community, and service), because several people had at least one area that they listed as not applicable to their proposed project. Because of heavy weight placed on each area in the new rubric, this may be unfair. Jenn states that Mike Gunter and Nolan Kline's reports provided great examples of how one can respond to impacts to teaching or service, even though these were technically research projects. Nick asks for clarification on how we should score if someone's project has no impact in one of these areas. **The committee agrees that the report should be modified if certain sections aren't required for each type of grant.** Devon states it was nice to see some faculty take the time to articulate an answer for each of the areas even if it wasn't technically required or part of the original intent of the project vs. saying 'not applicable.' Denise points out that faculty really should work to articulate how these areas come together as this is necessary for FEC/tenure and review. Impacts to teaching shouldn't necessarily be dismissed as part of a report for a research grant, but the weight and detail on the rubric should be changed. **It is agreed that we could change rubric to consolidate the 4 areas into one for weight/scoring purposes.**

Jenn notes that it would be helpful to have a similar rubric for the Critchfield proposal reviews. Katie prefers that we read and rank those at this point, as has been done in the past.

Robin asks what the repercussions are for the reviewed reports. Katie states there are none at this time, as this is a totally new process. Robin asks if we will make the rubric available to faculty so they know how they will be scored. Katie responds that we will, once we build and finalize it. Nancy notes that we may need to examine the clarity and effectiveness of the current report form and grant descriptions. **Katie agrees that once we have the rubric finalized we might change the grant descriptions.**

**Jie suggests setting a minimum/maximum number of words per section.** Some reports had very detailed descriptions under Progress to Date. Others had 1 sentence. Others had nothing.

**Katie states that she hopes we can change the rubric to put more weight on the Progress to Date section,** since that's really the point of the report. Also, the report form has the heading Progress to Date twice. Some found that confusing and didn't realize they needed to enter something in that section. **Denise agrees that the Progress to Date wording in the report was unclear and we should make this more explicit.** Jenn states that it should also be made clearer that the budget needs to be itemized.

**Katie also suggests removing 0 as a score option and using only 1, 2, and 3.** Also, as a final report, faculty should not refer to or rely on mid-year reports when reporting on progress to date. **Jenn suggests changing the reports so that the final report asks more substantial questions than the mid-year.**

Devon asks what we will do for those reports that were deficient. Katie states that we won't do anything at this point, as faculty did not know we were scoring these.

**Nancy suggests that we determine whether there needs to be a separate form for each grant.** If the intent and descriptions of each grant are different, then the reports should reflect that. **Robin suggests a workshop for junior faculty to outline what is expected. Denise suggests providing examples of successful proposals and reports.**

Nick asks if it is possible for someone to submit their mid-year as their final report. Katie says currently they are required to submit both, **but we should consider changing those requirements and allowing folks to submit their mid-year as their final if work is completed at that time**, so their final reports don't mirror their mid-year.

Katie reminds the committee that we will review proposals in our next meeting. Please make it clear whether you recommend funding or not. We will have two meetings on the same day to make this process fair (as recommended by Chris).

Katie reminds Devon and Nancy they are not voting members. Jenn asks if faculty can seek help from Devon and Nancy for developing their proposals. Katie states yes, and that faculty can also seek help from any committee member.

Katie asks the committee to be thinking about questions and rubrics for reading and evaluating future reports and proposals as we read through the first round of grant proposals. Our aim is to build a rubric for testing in the spring. Jie and Nick offer development of an Excel rubric with individual worksheets for scoring/ranking each proposal.

Meeting adjourned: 1:35 p.m.