**UNL Research Council**

**Nebraska Union, East Campus**

**January 10, 2012**

**MINUTES**

***Present:***  Professors Albrecht, Bloom, Ford, Gonzalez-Allende, Kamble, Marx, Sarroub, Shipley, Swearer and AVCR Hamernik

***Absent:*** Professors Ferguson, Hoff and Ladunga

Kamble hosted the Council for lunch preceding the meeting. Council members expressed their appreciation to Shripat for providing lunch for the group.

***Call to order:*** Swearer called the meeting to order at 12:40 p.m.

***Approval of Minutes, November 28, 2011 Meeting:*** Motion made to accept the minutes as distributed. Motion seconded and approved.

***Special Opportunity Fund:*** Swearer said we need to clarify what the special opportunity fund is and what we will support. Marx asked if we have a funding limit for the category. We should state in our policy a specific amount, i.e., $500 to $1,200. Discussion held on instead of putting a cap on the funding limits, request a solid justification for the amount being requested. Can these requests be funded through Dr. Paul’s office. Hamernik noted that VC Paul said he cannot provide extra funding for the Council; the funding will have to come from the existing Research Council budget. Discussion held on reserving a minimal amount each year for this category. It was decided to leave the category as is, and weigh the options when these applications are received. The Visiting Scholar/Symposia/Distinguished Lecturer subcommittee will continue to review these applications.

***Concerns/Inquiries Received Regarding Non-funded Applications:*** Hamernik noted that all of the award and declination letters were sent out. The declination letters are sent out first, and we received several email concerns/complaints. The first concern was from the director of a unit and they were concerned that the faculty member did not get funded. The faculty member has applied for several internal grants and has yet to be successful, but they have not received any feedback on their applications. Discussion was held on whether or not to provide feedback on applications. This will be challenging particularly when an application is written in technical terms and in great detail. Albrecht said when reviewing applications that are not in her subject area, she looks at the objectives to see if they are carrying out the objectives, and in the end, are they meeting the objectives. Hamernik suggested coming up with a score sheet to provide a general score on certain areas. She also indicated it would be helpful if we could put an example of a good funded proposal on our website.

Another concern was from a research assistant professor who wanted to know what percentage of funded applications went to research assistant professors vs. assistant professors. Peg ran the statistics and the information was provided to the faculty member. They felt we were discriminating against research assistant professors.

Discussion held on creating a one-page rating sheet for each category to rank and standardize proposals, and this could be provided if a request for comments is received. It was agreed we need to be careful to not overburden the Council. These forms could be given to each subcommittee to complete and then sent to the P.I. on the project.

Ford said the numeric system isn’t as valuable as bulleted points. The danger in providing this feedback is not being an expert in the field. Internal grants are very competitive and there is not enough funding available to fund everyone. We need to encourage the faculty member to apply again. Swearer asked how much feedback we want to provide. This could be a very onerous task and will take time if the feedback is going to be meaningful.

Swearer proposed we create a one-page sheet that subcommittee members would complete for each application that has the criteria outlined with space for comments. If we are going to generate comments we should send them out, not wait until we receive an inquiry. Albrecht said we could provide a consensus statement on each proposal and that can be done with one or two sentences. Sarroub said she is not comfortable putting criticism in writing. She would be more comfortable meeting with the faculty member. Swearer said the comments could be kept generic without criticizing. Swearer volunteered to draft a one-page form for review at the next meeting.

Hamernik said she also received many positive emails from faculty members who received funding.

***Announcements:*** The deadline for spring applications is March 19, 2012. The spring Nebraska Lecturer is Jo Potuto; date is yet to be determined.

***February Meeting:*** Peg will do a new Doodle poll.

***Other items:*** Hamernik noted that VC Paul commented he was not impressed with all of the budget cutting that was done for the applications last fall, particularly Grants-In-Aid. He would like to see a more strategic review. Ford said travel was cut from some budgets, but it’s more about breaking down the merits of each proposal. Faculty often times have access to travel funds from other sources. When you are a faculty member early in your career, there is something inspiring about receiving your first award as a research assistant professor; it gives them confidence to try again. Swearer asked that this feedback be passed onto VC Paul. Sarroub said she is concerned about cutting budgets because the applicants know what they’re proposing when they request funds. We have to keep in mind that we have a yearly competition, and they always have another opportunity to apply next year. We should err on the side of the faculty member knowing how much they need to complete their project. Hamernik noted that it was not just criticism from VC Paul; his senior team also expressed concern.

***Adjournment:*** There being no further business, motion was made to adjourn.