**UNL Research Council**

**September 7, 2012**

**MINUTES**

***Present:*** Professors Albrecht, Awada, Azzam, Bloom, Burnett, Enders, Ferguson, Gonzalez-Allende, Ladunga, Sarroub, Shipley, and AVCR Hamernik

***Absent:*** Professor Ford

***Welcome New Members:*** Bloom welcomed members to the first Research Council meeting of the 2012-2013 school year. Introductions were held.

***Approval of Minutes April 27, 2012 Meeting:*** Motion made to accept the minutes as distributed. Motion seconded and approved.

***Introductory Comments/Plans for the Coming Year:*** Bloom reviewed what the role of the Council is and what plans are for the coming year. The information from the faculty senate indicates the Research Council encourages research throughout the university. The heavy lifting of what the Council does is to administer a number of internal funding programs that support research. Most of the programs have a deadline once a year in October. When applications come in, the subcommittees evaluate and allocate the funds. The November meeting will be discussion of the proposals and decisions on funding levels. During the spring of 2012, we spent considerable time attempting to formalize the evaluation process, with help from Deb Hamernik. We tried to standardize the forms for all programs. In the process, we also looked at the RFPs, we will consider revising the RFPs for fall of 2013.

The Research Council is also a way to get feedback from the Office of Research that we can pass onto the faculty we represent. When we receive input from VC Paul, we can in turn pass the information onto faculty. We can also take information/concerns to VC Paul.

Bloom said by virtue of his position as Chair of the Council, he is a member of Paul’s Research Advisory Board. This board discusses some of the bigger ticket items going on in research at UNL. Bloom said he met with Paul and Hamernik earlier this fall to talk about things the Council might get involved in. One thing that came up is the Social Science Initiative where they are encouraging faculty in different departments to collaborate. We will be inviting a member of the planning committee to our next meeting to provide an overview of the initiative. They also discussed what kinds of things are going on in departments across campus to encourage research, and how departments are mentoring their mid-career faculty to keep the enthusiasm going after tenure. Bloom is hoping the Council can have a discussion about what’s going on in some of the departments and what the practices are. If there are other missions or needs on campus that we want to pursue, please let him know.

Hamernik said there will be a symposium during the fall Research Fair, November 7th from 10:00-noon on Enhancing Research Excellence in Social and Behavioral Sciences. The Planning Committee is preparing to send out surveys outlining what they’d like to do in terms of social sciences.

Burnett said one thing that will have a long term effect is UNL joining the CIC, and what effect that may have on departments. Word is out that we should be asking Big 10 referees. Effectively this is going to be a factor within the next five years. Bloom said we should definitely discuss this and find out who our rep to the CIC is.

***Internal Grants for 2012-2013:*** One of our main tasks is to evaluate the proposals that come in for the different calls. Bloom gave an overview of the different programs and noted that he has assigned people to the different subcommittees. Returning members remained on the same subcommittee. As proposals come in, the subcommittees will meet as a group to discuss their proposals and make recommendations for funding. The deadline for all categories is October 12th. The spring deadline for Visiting Scholars, Symposia and Distinguished Lecturers is March 18, 2013.

***Budget 2012-2013:*** The budget for the coming year was discussed. The funds available to the Council come from various funding sources at the University of Nebraska Foundation. Our budget this year is ~$330,000, about a 10% increase over last year. Each category was increased by about 10% with the exception of the Interdisciplinary grants; they were increased to $120,000. Funding levels can be discussed again after the applications are in and we can determine if there is a need to reallocate funds in any category. Bloom noted that Paul is very interested in encouraging interdisciplinary research.

***New Evaluation Forms:*** The new evaluation forms were discussed. It became apparent after last year’s competition that there was a need for a more uniform means to evaluate applications. These forms should help quantify a bit more the relative weights we want to give each proposal, as well as guidelines for reviewing them. This year we would like to provide brief comments on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal, especially for new faculty. This will provide the applicant with a few thoughts on how they might improve their proposal. We are asking each subcommittee member to provide brief comments on each proposal.

Sarroub suggested that the comments be reviewed before they are sent to the faculty member. Bloom and Hamernik will review them prior to sending them. The evaluation forms will be posted on the Council website.

Hamernik will work on the suggested changes to the RFP between now and the end of the year and get drafts to everyone to review. We should focus on getting applications reviewed and then concentrate on updating the RFP.

Discussion was also held on the category where the subcommittee cut several of the budgets last year so they could make more awards. This brings up the point of whether or not the PI can complete the project and is it really fair to cut the budgets. Bloom said historically, the individual subcommittees have been allowed to make the decisions on how funds are allocated. He said he would prefer to fully fund fewer applications rather than have everyone redo their budgets. He would encourage the subcommittees to head in that direction. We are trying to fund quality proposals and the ones that have the best chance for success. Awada noted that we need to be careful cutting budgets; there was an instance where someone turned down the award because after their budget was cut, the amount they were awarded was not sufficient to do the project.

Albrecht suggested that the two chairs of the Faculty Seed Grant subcommittees meet prior to the full Council meeting to discuss their funding recommendations. Everyone agreed this was a good idea. The Faculty Seed grants are split into two subcommittees due to the volume of applications we receive for this category.

Discussion held on publicizing our deadlines. We will advertise in Today@UNL, the Scarlet, Research News and will send an email to chairs and heads. It was suggested that the email to chairs and heads re-emphasize that applications need to be written in non-technical terms so all disciplines can understand them. Hamernik noted the Council deadlines are also discussed with faculty at New Faculty Orientation.

Hamernik also said she recently sent information out about the FY2013 NRI (Nebraska Research Initiative) request for faculty research proposals. We are looking for proposals that represent new multi-disciplinary and/or multi-campus collaborations.

***Vice Chair for AY 2012-2013:*** Bloom said we attempted to elect a vice chair last April and we were not successful. The guidelines are that members in their second year on the Council are eligible to serve as vice chair and then go on to serve as chair the following year. Three members are willing to serve in this capacity. Ballots were distributed and voting was held. Loukia Sarroub will serve as vice chair for the 2012-2013 AY.

***Nebraska Lecture Series Update:*** Bloom updated members on the Council’s responsibility for the Nebraska Lecture Series. Historically, two lectures are presented each year. This fall’s lecturer is Stephen Baenziger, Agronomy & Horticulture, and is scheduled for November 1st in the City Campus Union. All Council members are encouraged to attend the lecture. Tim Gay will be the spring 2013 lecturer (date TBD). In the spring of 2013 we will review the list of current nominees and determine if there are nominees to forward to Paul, or if we need to release a new call for nominations. Paul has made it clear that he is interested in finding nationally prominent researchers who have significant profiles.

***Other Items – Remaining Meetings for First Semester:*** Peg will do a doodle poll for the October and November meetings.

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