

COMMISSION ON RESEARCH

March 17, 2010
260 Durham Hall
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

Members Present: J. Ball, L. Coble, J. de la Garza, R. Hall, T. Herdman, W. Huckle, T. Inzana, D. Jones, J. Jones, G. Kadlec (for D. Cook), B. Laing, S. Martin, K. Miller, R. Siegle, R. Veilleux, P. Young

Members Absent: R. Benson, S. K. De Datta, D. Dean, R. Jensen, T. Fox, S. Samavedi

Others: K. Ball, W. L. Daniels, P. Hyer, S. Muse, C. Montgomery, R. Walters

- 1. Approval of Agenda:** A motion to approve the agenda was offered by L. Coble and seconded by D. Jones and carried.
- 2. Approval of the minutes for CoR meetings February 10, 2010:** A motion to approve the minutes was offered by S. Martin and seconded by J. Jones and carried.
- 3. VT Research Corporation:** R. Walters reported on the developments of the VT Research Corporation. He explained that the growing trend is more contract-based research and the university would like to have some additional flexibility in seeking these contracts. We currently operate under OMB Circular A-21 guidelines, which limit our flexibility. In October, 2009 the President sent a memo with instructions to form a research corporation to support the university's focus on larger, multi-disciplinary contract research. The corporation has now been established. R. Walters explained that we currently have a non-stock Virginia corporation operating under 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. A Board of Directors has been established with R. Walters as the chair and Ray Smoot, Dwight Shelton, Erv Blythe, and Joe Meredith as the other board members. He explained that the bylaws call for one at large faculty member to be on the board. He said that the Commission on Research would be asked to nominate three faculty members, one of which would be selected for a three-year term. Nominees should have experience in group efforts and interdisciplinary work. R. Walters requested that three names be forwarded to him.

Post Meeting Note: B. Huckle announced that he would follow-up with R. Walters on more guidance on what skill-sets and most value-added characteristics, which would be appropriate when considering nominees.

- 4. Task Force on Special Research Faculty:** R. Walters circulated a document outlining the membership of the University Task Force on Special Research Faculty. B. Huckle is the representative for the Commission on Research. R. Walters explained that there are many issues that face this rapidly growing group of faculty members and thus this committee was formed.

S. Muse reported that the task force will be convened soon and welcomed suggested topics for discussion and deliberation. The charge is to have a report to R. Walters by the end of the calendar year.

- 5. Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research (VCCER) 5-year Review:** W. Lee Daniels served as the chair of this review committee and presented the report findings to the CoR. The review committee consisted of W. L. Daniels, Greg Adel, Eric Westman, Mike Ellis, and Herbert Wheary, an external, non-voting team member from Dominion Resources. The reporting period covered is from 2003 – September, 2008.

The VCCER was established from a legislative mandate that frames what it does, but it also simultaneously is a University Research Center. W. L. Daniels explained that the legislature relies heavily on the center for a number of things such as the maintenance of a large database on coal production and energy transmission. They also have very extensive group research and outreach collaborators to support their substantial international and regional outreach efforts. W. L. Daniels explained that the financials were outlined throughout the document, but the center received approximately \$1.1 million from the university over the 5 year reporting period. Approximately \$7 million of external funds were brought in; \$4 million was retained as Virginia Tech dollars and \$3 million was distributed to subcontractors that were administered by the center. Annual research expenditures have grown from \$81,000 in 2003 to \$1.1 million in 2008. W. L. Daniels reported that the center is nationally recognized for carbon sequestration and sustainable mining programs. The center has also had other initiatives that occurred after September, 2008. However some of those were initiated during the reporting period and thus such items are reflected in the report, such as a \$500M+ proposal to the Department of Energy.

An on-line survey of the clientele group was conducted and very positive reviews were received of the center and the center director, Michale Karmis. W. L. Daniels reported that the center does have a low number of journal publications and historically a low number of PhD students, although the number has increased since 2007. The committee unanimously reached an overall conclusion that the center is fully meeting its goals and mission. The amount of total research revenue is very strong. W. L. Daniels reported that the committee recommended the reauthorization of the center and the reappointment of the director for another five years with the continued university support of the FTE for their classified and part-time faculty positions.

B. Huckle requested the Commission to move and accept the report and reappointment of the center and director. This motion to approve was made by T. Herdman and seconded by R. Veilleux, and all were in favor.

- 6. Update on MII and CHCI Reviews:** T. Inzana reported that the MII review committee met with the Director Richard Turner and that surveys are currently being conducted. T. Inzana reported that CHCI review committee met and the materials have been provided to them to move forward with conducting the surveys and interviews.

7. Federal Contract Compliance Draft Faculty Handbook Language: P. Hyer reported on matters dealt with during FY '10 regarding federal contract compliance. P. Hyer gave some background on how this issue has evolved after a federal audit of Yale and Duke. A task force was developed to review the areas in which Virginia Tech was most vulnerable. One of the most pressing areas of concern was academic year faculty members who are on three full months of summer funding solely from a sponsored grant or contract, but who are still engaged in other academic work.

At CoR's last meeting, a policy change was discussed to address the issues with the research extended appointments in an effort to try to spread some of the sponsored cost throughout the academic year, creating salary savings that could be shifted to the summer, resulting in a mixture of institutional funding and sponsored funding to meet the institutional work effort. Other areas addressed included effort certification and timely reports.

P. Hyer distributed a three-piece document to the CoR that included the proposed Federal Contract Compliance resolution, draft language for the faculty handbook, and the suggested revisions of policy 6200, Policy on Research Extended Appointments. P. Hyer explained that for documentation for records, audit, and for faculty members, there were several places in the faculty handbook that could benefit from including this policy language. A section detailing the overall expectations in effort reporting have been included in Chapter 6, which is research-related policies and information. A section in Chapter 2 titled Summer Appointments has been included describing the employment conditions for all faculty to address how summer vacation is treated for those faculty who have sponsored funding.

The third section of the handout addresses the concerns regarding summer vacations opportunities and expectations. The proposed revisions to Policy 6200 reinstates annual leave for research extended appointments. P. Hyer explained that this would assure the faculty members vacation time and still be in compliance. They would earn at the same rate as those on 12-month appointments, however there will be no pay-out option.

K. Ball noted that vacation is emerging as the biggest faculty concern regarding the proposed changes. Instead of asking faculty saving three months of summer from their research funding, they have been asked to "bank" some of that time during the academic year, thus using those salary savings for pay back in the summer. K. Ball felt that the term "banked" as currently written in the policy should be clarified. P. Hyer stated that this practice would solve the problem of doing academic work during the summer, however work done on the sponsored project during the academic year cannot be counted toward summer effort on the project.

P. Hyer stated that faculty members must have assurance of sufficient funding from sponsored grants or contracts to support the cost of salary plus full fringe benefits for the equivalent of one, two, or three months of the proposed research-extended appointment. It was suggested that it would be easier to administer if funding from Overhead or Various accounts were allowed for use in covering minor deficits in sponsored funding. Educational and general funds (such as departmental salary

budget, E&G start up funds, or internal grants) may not be used to support a request for an extended appointment.

K. Ball felt that a more flexible research conversion process would help improve the faculty's support of this policy. L. Coble felt that the university should explore the cost of converting all AY positions to CY appoints should be further examined.

8. **Adjournment:** A motion to adjourn was made by T. Herman and seconded by L. Coble and the meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.