Senate Research Committee Final Report

Members of the committee, Faculty Senate year 2016/17: Griesshammer (chair), McDonnell (Executive Committee liaison); faculty (voting): Briscoe, Casey, Cutler, El-Ghazawi, Engel, Goberdhan, Harizanov, Hsu, Imam, Kouveliotou, Kusner, Lambert, Larsen, Lunsford, Roche, Tyagi, Sarkar, Woolstenhulme, Zhou; postdoc: DeNieu (voting); ex officio (non-voting): Deans Vinson (CCAS), Dolling (SEAS), VP Research Chalupa, Merrigan (Sustainability).

The committee met seven times during the 2016/17 session (05/10/2016, 09/02/2016, 10/07/2016, 11/04/2016, 01/13/2017, 02/03/2017, 03/31/2017) and held email discussions.

The chair also had five informal "tea&biscuit" meetings with VP for Research L. Chalupa.

Summary of the Meeting on 10 May 2016

The committee fixed the meeting calendar for this season and discussed its purpose: Monitor every research relevant development at GWU; be consulted and advise in a timely fashion before decisions about structural changes are made (Faculty Code IX.B). That includes changes in indirect and fringe rates; new budgeting for graduate students; revamping CIFF funds; etc. The committee organised in Teams to cover specific topics:

- HR (Visa/Hiring/Background checks/...);
- PI budget issues: Indirects, GTA budgeting,...;
- Pre-award: Cayuse, 5-day rule,...;
- Post-award: ibuy/reimbursements,...;
- CIFF, centers, institutes ,...;
- Patents, human trials, etc.

Since the restructuring of Pre- and Post-Award responsibilities increases the role of the Schools' Research Committees, members were asked to act as liaisons for closer coordination with them. The impact of the newly announced IDC rates was discussed as well. These were finalised without consultation of this committee, and information of faculty and OVPR staff left much room for improvement. The committee decided to re-invigorate the information exchange with all research-relevant sections of the university administration. We finalised a list of questions and issues in preparation for a meeting with VP for Research Chalupa, sent to him on 27 May.

Summary of the Meeting on 2 September 2016

We prepared for the upcoming meeting with VP for Research Chalupa.

We welcomed the opportunity to increase the committee's diverse experiences, adding Dr. Michael DeNieu as representative of non-tenured researchers. He is a member of the GW Postdoc Association and was elected at the September meeting of the Senate.

The Chair informed the committee that GW's Research Compliance Officer consulted the Chair of the Senate's Executive Committee and the Chair of the Research Committee about an ongoing investigation of an academic-integrity issue, in compliance with GW's policies. Both discussed and concurred with the Research Compliance Officer's recommendations and actions.

Summary of the Meeting on 7 October 2016

The committee met with Prof. Chalupa, the Vice President for Research and an ex-offico member of the committee. The meeting was highly informative for both sides and spirited at times, showing the deep passion for research and commitment to advancing GW's research stature, a passion which we all share.

Based on 15 questions sent to VP Chalupa prior to the meeting, we covered a broad range of topics in a fact-finding, information-gathering approach, for example:

- Statistical information about award distributions and sizes;

- advances and impediments in award submissions, including the "5-day rule";

- the good success, potential problems, and budgetary impact of the recent delegation of many pre- and post-award administration responsibilities from OVPR to schools;

- information flow between OVPR, schools and faculty;

- embedding faculty into decision-making processes;

- the role and composition of the Advisory Council on Research;

- GW's UFF, CIFF/CDRF and other funding incentives;

- the internal selection mechanism for federal solicitations which allow only for a limited number of submissions per institution;

- surprise by both OVPR and faculty about recent hikes in IDC changes which were adopted without consultation of either.

The meeting was highly educational and helped to clear up some misconceptions and mis-informations on both sides. On some topics, we found aligned priorities, and on others different and mutually complementing perspectives. The minutes will provide more details.

In subsequent meetings, the committee will prioritise topics, discuss and review policies and policy changes, and arrive at informed responses. These will include requests for more information, evaluations of conflicting evidence, and advocation of specific policy changes.

It turned out this was the first time VP Chalupa had ever been invited to or present at a committee meeting. Both sides agreed that we needed to restart the long-dormant consultation process and establish a pattern of reliable and frequent interactions, both in formal and informal settings. Two important first steps are: VP Chalupa invited the committee chair to regular private consultations. In turn, the committee will consult with VP Chalupa at least once every semester.

We therefore look forward to work with VP Chalupa, OVPR and GW's administration on a number of issues, and to receive such information sufficiently in advance of important decisions to be able to provide sound, well-informed advice and recommendations, in compliance with Article IX section B of the Faculty Code.

Finally, of particular urgency is the impact of recent changes to the Fair Labour Standards Act. It mandates a higher minimum salary for Postdoctoral Researchers, so that they are exempt from overtime provisions starting December 2016 (i.e. in 6 weeks). It appears that the majority of federal agencies does not provide supplemental funds to cover the necessary budget increases. Many PIs are therefore struggling to find additional funds, while Postdocs feel uncertain about their future. This situation is untenable and may have significant impact on research at GW. Additional one-off funds need to be found for this emergency situation. We look to the Provost for guidance.

Approved minutes of the meeting are appended.

Summary of the Meeting on 4 November 2016

The committee discussed the impending shutdown (third attempt in 2 years) of the ACAD webserver by DIT, without prior faculty consultation, sufficient notification or adequate

alternatives. Several departments are frustrated with DIT's lack of consultation and response. Emails provided only unsatisfactory answers from Director of IT D. Steinour and his staff. In December, DIT and CCAS Office of Technology Services as well as other schools reached an agreement that ACAD was moved over to an Amazon Web instance (external server) in January 2017, but the address remains the same. School IT directors are responsible for managing and support. DIT covers costs for one year, School IT directors need to absorb additional costs.

We discussed advantages and problems of the new regulation that all receipts must be submitted in iBuy/Concur within 60 days. This can generate problems when equipment needs to be returned after testing. Sometimes, equipment can only be tested under specific conditions, which often takes longer than 60 days to set up. Generally, the committee was content with the change.

The committee discussed the October meeting with VP Chalupa, which was labelled very successful and contained a cornucopia of information on which the committee felt follow-ups would be most helpful. We decided to have similar meetings on more detailed questions with administrators. Since then, the teams have been working on lists of issues to present to the appropriate administrators to prepare such meetings.

The committee discussed GW's raise of the minimum postdoc salary, to make them exempt from the overtime pay requirements of the recently revised Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). As of 1 December 2016, the new minimum is $47,476. In an email, VP McLeod provided additional and clarifying information. 55 postdocs were below that threshold and therefore had their salaries raised. It transpired that less than a dozen postdocs made a salary of less than 35k$, a pittance given a posdoc's qualification and the steep costs of living in DC. The vast majority of the committee welcomed the change but was worried about the impact on research awards. Many federal agencies did not increase ongoing awards accordingly. We exhorted GW administration to be flexible in helping out, and to inform all parties in a timely manner. The implementation of the FLSA is now held up in federal court, but GW has assured the committee and postdocs that it will honor the new salaries.

The committee heard from Bob Orttung about efforts to boost faculty engagement in large-scale proposals.

Summary of the Meeting on 13 January 2017

The committee discussed a statistics provided by OVPR on the number of awards per school and per dollar-amount tier. Of about 1400 awards in FY16 or FY17, half involve less than 150k$; 10% have a budget of over 1M$. "Small" awards are at least as vital for scholarship and GW's reputation as large ones. The committee also addressed the false impression that GW could boost its operating budget with more research awards. The total IDC recovery in FY 2016 was 24M$, or 1% of the university's operating budget. IDC is charged because of (at least some) actual expenses incurred by GW (like office space, research infrastructure, etc).

The teams provided progress reports on identifying and collecting questions and issues, and to suggest solutions, in preparation for meetings with administrators.

Summary of the Meeting on 3 February 2017

We continued discussions of questions, issues and solutions, in preparation for meetings with administrators. The committee also held a brainstorming for the meeting of the Senate's

Committee Chairs with incoming GW President T. LeBlanc on 7 February 2017. Its outcome was summarised as follows:

GW's faculty, young and old, recently arrived and well-experienced, strive to make GW a university well known both nationally and internationally for cutting-edge research in all disciplines. But our long and fast-paced march to a tier-1 university needs to be complemented by important paradigm changes:

- Firmly establish the primacy of Academia over the fiscal branch of GW, i.e. including a "culture change" in which administration serves to further academic excellence, and not dictate academia what to do and how. That also includes stopping to measure research excellence solely by dollar-amounts brought in. Instead, focus on a broad slate of mutually complementing criteria for research productivity, like public impact, papers, books, demonstrated willingness and success to go after grants (not measured by grant size),....

- Cut the red tape -- minimise the impact of federal and self-inflicted regulations. Again culture change: Administration shall move from _imposing_ rules to help us efficiently navigate them, with minimal impact on faculty time and resources.

- Strongly foster more and more productive conversations between Faculty and the Board of Trustees. That includes a drive to educate the BoT about what faculty do, what a research-driven university is, how big the impact of research-dollars on the budget actually is (2.4%) -- and all that in the context of our market basked and national averages.

The Chair also informed the committee about GW's efforts to mitigate the US "Travel Ban" for non-residents from 7 countries. By email, the Provost has assured that GW is moving as quickly as possible and along many avenues to explore what the new rules mean, what their impact is, and how to best notify those impacted. He strongly suggested everybody closely monitor the ISO website. At this point GW can't provide clear guidance because the White House staff themselves give contradicting statements as to the extent and validity of the order. Federal courts are weighing in with suspension orders as well. As of May, the order and its subsequent variation is still suspended pending court rulings. The impact on our students and faculty is significant.

Summary of the Meeting on 31 March 2017

The committee finalised lists of Pre-Award and of Material Transfer questions and issues. These can be used by next year's committee as basis for meetings with GW administrators.

The committee reviewed its work. A leaner committee of about a dozen dedicated people may be more appropriate. A clear agenda, individual preparations and a focus on fact-gathering and helping with structural improvement to research at GW, instead of personal, anecdotal grievances, shorten meeting times and improve productivity. The new relation with OVPR is a strong asset to make sure the committee's voice is heard and respected. That includes regular meetings with the VP for Research, and frequent informal meetings between the Chair and the VP for Research.

Further issues deserving attention next year include:

- Inequities in graduate student funding. A few years ago, GW changed its accounting for Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs). Under the new policy, GW contributes 2/3 of the tuition of a GRA only in a given semester when the student is (1) GRA for the full semester; (2) the grant covers the remaining 1/3 of the tuition need; (3) the GRA award

incurs fringe and the "full" IDC rage (59.5% no campus, 26% off-campus). The PI receives then 100% of the IDC for the GRA as REIA funds. This provides a clear, transparent, uniform ruling, which gives graduate research assistants benefits, while only increasing the overall cost to PI per position by ca. $10k, making it an attractive solution in the majority of cases. However, there are two situations in which there are unintended consequences to the policy. First, the cost of a PhD position almost doubles for the PI (from $35k to $62k) when they are required to use the off-campus indirect rate. The decision to use the off-campus rate is made by the funding agency, not by the PI. Second, when a student on a 59.5%-overhead research grant receives a prize or award that pays any fraction of the student's salary/stipend, the entire tuition support and overhead return arrangement is immediately voided. The increased cost of the student now forces PIs and students to turn down such prizes as, until the prize is more than $20k, the student cost increase is unbearable on most grants.

- Hiring of personnel at the graduate, postdoc and faculty level is still very slow. Researchers had to return funds to agencies because GW was unable to process position advertisements and hiring requests in a timely manner. GW appears to have added so many red tape to hiring an individual that the process now routinely takes 6 months. Visa processing is also slow.

- Discussions with the Board of Trustees and GW's incoming President about the importance, benefits, limitations, and roadblocks of research at GW.

- As Schools take over more pre- and post-award responsibilities from OVPR, clear guidelines are needed for staff and faculty; see list of questions on Pre-Award issues.

Finally, the Chair will not request to be re-elected for the 2017/18 session, due to health and family issues.

Appendix: Minutes of the Senate Research Committee Meeting on Friday, 7 October 2016

Agenda: Discussion with VP Chalupa

Present: William Briscoe, Andrew Cutler, Michael DeNieu, Goberdhan Dimri, Tarek El-Ghazawi, Laura Engel, Harald Grießhammer (chair and minutes), Valentina Harozonova, Stephen Hsu, Irene Kuo, Linda Kusner, Michael Larsen, Beverly Lunsford, Karen McDonnell, Katy Roche, Mudit Tyagi, Kausik Sarkar, Josh Woolstenhulme, Pearl Zhou, Vice President for Research Leo Chalupa, CCAS Dean for Research Yongwu Rong, Kathleen Merrigan (Sustainability)

Notes: The minute taker apologises for not taking attendance and not asking the speakers to introduce themselves. Therefore, the conversation will only identify the Committee Chair [HG], the Vice President [LC] and "Q" for any committee question or comment.

In some places, the notes condense and rearrange a discussion, for clarity's sake. Notes in [italic] are inserted by the minute taker for clarity. At rare occasions denoted by "[]", a discussion which is not germane has been left out.

LC received a list of 15 questions (27 May 2016, updated 12 September 2016). As these form the basis of the discussion, the written version of each precedes the discussions below.

The meeting was called to order at 14:02:00.

HG welcomes VP Chalupa.

LC: This is my first time here, after I had already asked for such a meeting several years ago.

HG: We hope that there will be many more in the future. You are always welcome as ex-officio member of this committee. We all share deep passion for research and strong commitment to see the stature of GW as research institution grow. We are all distinctly qualified experts on research, since this is why GW appointed us and tenured most of us. This committee is selected by the faculty to address these issues. Today's goals: find facts, gather information. Discussions, reviews and decisions in subsequent meetings.

Statistical Information

1. Please provide a one-page summary of your office's responsibilities and organisational chart.

LC: Glad to clean up some misconceptions about how OVPR works. 4 equally important parts:
1. Research Integrity: human subjects, animal research, lab safety, responsible conduct of research, export control. Considerable time to make sure we apply with dozens of new federal regulations every month. All whistleblower charges must be investigated. Actual misconduct is rare; 1 case, took 3 years to investigate.
2. Operations and Enhancements: Sponsored Research, research enhancement, core facilities, communications and data management.
3. Research Innovations: corporate and industrial research, connect researchers with entrepeneurs/companies. Successful but not as much as I want. Innovation and Entrepeneurship office very successful, brings in 1M$ per year. Tech Transfer office founded by my brought in 0.5M$ last year, 1M$ this year.
4. Special Programmes: Centers, institutes, programmes. Some directly report to me, e.g. Center on Homeland Security, programme on extremism, autism, etc. I meet monthly with directors and coordinate Deans' supports for them.
2. Please provide a breakdown of grants by federal and private unit (NIH, NSF, NEA, DOE, Sloan etc), both by dollar amount and by number of grants, for the past 3 years.

LC: President Knapp is judged by BoT by research growth as one of three metrics. I keep track monthly, by school and department, report to President quarterly, to BoT annually (e.g. later this month). Focus is on expenditures. Metrics requested here are somewhat different. Most recent federal expenditures for 2013/14 from NSF website: GW increased in expenditures by 17.4%, more than all but 2 universities. (At Rutgers, Med School combined with

campus, and Uniformed services Med School received 30% hike from congress.) Annual average of top-100 schools was -0.2% (negative). We went up 10 ranks, to 83rd in the US.

Breakdown by agencies (percentages of IDC revenue):

Federal gouvernment	81% (2014), 78% (2015),	84% (2016, 142M$)
Foundations		8.3%
International		2.2%
Corporations		1%

NIH	65%,	93M$ (2016)	Congress plans significant boost of NIH funding.
NSF	8.7%,	12.5M$	
DoD	4.3%,	6.3M$	
DoEducation	4%,	5.7M$	
DoE	1.7%,	2.3M$	
DoState	1%,	1.2M$	
NASA	0.7%,	<1M$	

Numbers are pretty stable; federal expected to grow and liked because of biggest overhead, less in foundations. Biggest item continues to be Biostatistics Center: 55M$ in grants, at 26% IDC. Without it, GW would be at level of American University, 3rd-rank.

HG: Awards in Humanities are much smaller but no less valuable for both faculty and reputation. Can you comment on number of grants as metric of scholarly activity?

LC: Humanities agencies (NEA, NEH): <350k$, very small number of grants, I would estimate <30. Want to bolster Humanities in 2 ways: 1. Separate track in UFF grants for their scholarship (they used to get <5% of UFF awards). 2. I just informed CCAS Dean Vinson that OVPR will sponsor a seminar series for the Humanities, with majority of funds from OVPR, plus some CCAS support. Call for proposals (workshops, conferences,...) is on OVPR website.

Q: Was funding jump 2012 to 2015 an anomaly or is that consistent growth?
LC: When I arrived, we were 112th in research expenditures, now 83rd. Growth is not continuous, but we get up every year, more than average of top-100. GW's problem is that we were not interested in NIH at the time when its budget was doubled. Now that grants go down, we are, and we get many more NIH grants. Potential problem is reliance on Biostatistics, which dominates our revenue. If that disappears, none of the other schools can counter. SEAS and other schools are going up dramatically, but SEAS absolute numbers are rounding errors relative to Biostatistics.
Q: Majority of us has grants smaller than millions of Dollars, so we are very interested in number of NSF grants etc.

LC:	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016
NSF	183, ca 20% of total	213, 21.6%	242, 23%
NIH	328, 37%	369, 37.5%	428, 40.1%

By the way, there is no such thing as a small grant for a PI.
HG: That are the numbers we look for. Could you send us these numbers?
LC: Happy to do so. Metrics by which I am judged by BoT is Dollars, but that is not the way I want to look at this. A Pulitzer Prize in English or a Guggenheim is great for everybody at GW. I want to build excellence. When I arrived, we hired Edward Jones, who received a National Book Award, by working with the chair of the English department. I also worked to establish a colaboration with the Phillips Gallery. That's a new GW connection.

3. Which fraction of applications is returned without review or rejected as "past deadline", annually? What are the most common rejection reasons?

LC: OVPR gets more than 1200 transactions per year. About 30 come back after submission to agency but prior to deadline and are then fixed and resubmitted. If they are submitted too close to deadline, we cannot fix them. That's one of the major reasons for the 5-day rule. NSF has become extremely picky, e.g. when wrong typeface is used. We had 1 such case. Last 2 years, only 3 proposals (<0.2% of applications) were returned without review. Some cases may directly be sorted out between PI and agency, we do not know about these.
HG: Sometimes, conflicts arise where OVPR advices one way but the PI understands a solicitation another way or even has more information. That's particularly bad in these last few days or hours when stress levels are already high. Is it OVPR policy to defer to PI judgment or to submit only when OVPR's version is implemented?

LC: We hope there is flexibility on both sides and we can come to an understanding, but it's easier when proposal is submitted 5 days in advance. The sooner a grant is submitted before deadline, the less possibility for conflict. Difficult to answer in a general way. Another issue is that GW is responsible for compliance with General Accounting Office rules. These overrule even NSF rules, and any private communication between PI and funding officer. Noncompliance can result in multi-million Dollar fines.

Q: Automatic rejections happen typically just one hour after submission. Would it be possible to make submissions before 2pm, so that there is time to address automatic rejections on the same day, before the typical 5pm cutoff?

LC: That was also suggested at last year's townhall meetings. Proposals submitted to OVPR 5 days in advance should be submitted to agency on the next day. We now give that instruction to everybody in the office.

Q: Pushing the button should take higher priority than vetting out difference between OVPR and PI; OVPR should defer to PI.

LC: I could not agree more.

13. Please explain to which extent the "5 day rule" is affected by the restructuring. How can OVPR provide greater transparency and flexibility?

Q: In some instances, PI obeyed 5-day rule but issues were not examined just before submission deadline.

LC: We changed that. Last year, we had 2 town halls with about 40 faculty, in January and June. We took these suggestions, not gripes, worked with HR and others to implement them. *[Note: copy of handout summarizing suggestions in appendix.]* In staff training, we say when it arrives 5 days ahead, try to get it out within 48 hrs.

Q: Were there staffing issues since June?

LC: That is always an issue, with turnover. We have training programme. Also, introduced a survey for PIs about 1.5 years ago, with link at bottom of every OVPR email. When you respond, we read that. Also, I always tell everybody: if you do run into problems, just send me an email. I do not care if it's HR or finance; I can have it taken care of. Your job is to bring in the money, which is very difficult. My staff should help you with that. We are not there yet, but we are a lot better than 3 years ago. You can see that from the comments we get.

Q: SEAS survey indicated faculty impression that staff saw as its primary responsibility that 5-day rule is obeyed. That comes across as confrontational, more compliance-oriented rather than customer-oriented.

LC: Before 5-day rule, SEAS sent 58% of proposals arrived within last 2 days. Now, only 17%. CCAS was 54%, now 26%. There are not that many proposals that are late. *[Note: statistics in appendix.]* But you need to understand that my staff does not get overtime, and they work very late. Often, I get emails from them or see them in the office after I had dinner. So their stress also gets less with the 5-day rule, and we have less turnover. Attitude is very difficult to change, but we work very hard at being customer sensitive. So use the survey, report if someone is more interested in the rules than in helping with the grant, and someone is going to talk to that person.

Q: Sometimes, weather interferes: storms etc. Shared responsibilities for delay and more flexibility on 5-day rule? We all act with good faith and due diligence.

LC: Unless agency gives dispensation, the deadline applies. So get it in early. In a survey, Jennifer Wisdom actually found the average is 7 days in our market basket.

Communication, PI Input into Decision Making

4. How does OVPR communicate with PIs and research committees on the university and school level? How are faculty informed of OVPR proposals and decisions? How does OVPR make sure all faculty are informed and can provide input in the decision making process?

LC: Direct: Emails to relevant faculty; to research deans; from research deans to faculty; monthly newsletter "Research Updates" to over 1700 recipients, opened >75% of the time; Infomails to all GW faculty and staff.
To Committees: Advisory Committee on Research, Research Leadership Council (research deans of schools). OVPR website.
Informal lunches with ~10 faculty in my office; town hall meetings last year, plan new set this Spring.

HG: Do all faculty get emails, or just PIs, not co-PIs? We want to reach everybody who may intend to write grants.

LC: Need to follow up. We want to reach everybody.

HG: How are town-hall meetings organised?

LC: Email to all faculty, plus ACR. Two dates provided, 2-3 hrs each.

HG: This committee will of course also provide input, being charged to do so by the Faculty Senate.

LC: The more input the better!

5. Please describe the role you see for the OVPR's Advisory Council on Research, how its members are selected, and what its differences or commonalities are relative to the Senate's Research Committee.

HG: We did not find a list of members on the website, but you mailed us the newest one. *[in appendix]*
LC: Approximately 40 members, including research deans and 2 nominated from Senate Research Committee. Meets 3-4 times a year. Formal obligations: chartering/rechartering centers and institutes; review and rank UFF and CDFF applications. Informal: I discuss things I am thinking about doing or am doing, whatever comes up through the pipeline. Examples: Discussion if GW should have classified research a few years ago, I related to President that faculty did not want to do that. Idea to expand CIFF grants was born there as well.
In 2011/2012, the ACR had 3 meetings. Of the 2 Senate Research Committee members, one attended zero meetings, the other one 1 out of 3. 2014/15: all 3 SRC members attended zero meetings. 2015/16: 1 attended 2 of 3, the other zero meetings. Please do not complain about input if the members of this committee do not come to the ACR.
HG: I can only talk about what happened since I became chair this May. There certainly was a lack of communication in the past between this committee and OVPR.
LC: I reject that statement. You were invited, you did not come.
HG: Let me be straightforward as well. It is the Senate Research Committee which is charged by the faculty to provide meaningful input into the decision-making process and come up with recommendations which are then sent to OVPR. It is not the charge of the ACR to vet recommendations on behalf of faculty.
LG: So how many recommendations have you provided? Zero.
HG: I started chairing this committee in May, and we are in the process of developing recommendations. The purpose of this meeting is to base them on good evidence and good information. That is why we very much appreciate your time here, providing detailed information. It will allow us to provide meaningful input. I do know that we have been lacking on that in the past.
LC: I am glad to hear that. It is very difficult to collaborate with someone who does not answer the call to come.
HG: How are the members selected?
LC: 3-year term. Message to all Deans and research deans listing present members and those whose term is expiring. We ask them for recommendations of funded faculty who are willing to serve. These people are then asked by OVPR to serve.
Q: This committee has been re-energized, with many new members who are really invested.
LC: I appreciate this. But I resent the attitude that my office somehow does not communicate with this committee. This committee was *muerto*. I asked the chair before the previous twice to be invited. Now that you have re-energized, you *[HG]* can come to my office once a month, and we talk about research.
HG: This is an excellent idea. I look forward to that, and I look forward to emails with policy proposals from you to discuss in this committee, and to send you our policy proposals. This is one positive outcome of this meeting already.
Q: I see that the email distribution list for town halls only includes the ACR, not all faculty.
LC: That can be, I do not recall. But it could also be that there were several emails to different lists.
Q: That is possible.
HG: So I ask that for the future, when you brainstorm ideas with the ACR, you also brainstorm them with this committee.
LC: You are an ACR member, are you not?
HG: No, I am not. I nominated two other people *[Kouveliotou and Roche]*.
LC: Then I will send you an email invitation to the ACR. And we keep attendance records.
HG: Excellent. With that, we can skip the next question and move directly to CIFF funding.

6. In the past, faculty have been informed inadequately or with significant delays about several major changes: CIFF funding, graduate student accounting, changes in the Indirects and Fringe Rates, etc. Such decisions were reached without the advice of the Senate Research Committee. What mechanisms does OVPR suggest to adequately consult with faculty prior to decisions, and inform faculty after decisions have been made?

[skipped]

<u>Center and Institute Funding</u>

7. We are concerned that the proposal to limit CIFF funds to cross-school research would disproportionately hurt strong intra-disciplinary programs which have successfully used CIFF funds as "seed money" and

"matching funds" for federal grants. It would also render ineligible inter-disciplinary programs in diverse schools like the Columbian College. To which extent has such a negative impact been taken into account?

LC: This is misinformation. The announcement says: "All Center and Institute Directors are eligible to apply as well as individual faculty engaged in collaborative research involving two or more schools." A member of this committee talked to the Hatchet, saying "my center cannot apply any more". That is false and irresponsible. The Hatchet should have checked out the facts.

Before, only Center and Institute directors could apply. Now, in addition, any two faculty can apply if it's across schools. []

Q: Was funding expanded as well?

LC: Yes, despite of the 5% budget cuts annually in my office, we expanded it from 480k$ to 667k$. 19 applications from institutes and centers, 6 got funded, for total of 270k$. 61 applications not from directors shows tremendous need, but only 9 funded.

We have 112 or so centers and institutes, 1 for every 10 or 12 faculty. That is because faculty want to found centers to get access to the money. That led to an uncontrolled proliferation. When I came to GW, we had 78. The BoT already says we only approve Chartereds *[Chartered Centers and Institutes]*, we never close them. Indeed, we only close them when the director dies. Now, with the new rules, the number of Charter applications decreased dramatically. Our idea was to break down walls, to get people out of the silos. If you have a good cross-disciplinary idea, you can just apply and do not need a center.

Q: That is a great idea. I agree there are a lot of institutes. But ACR has the oversight, and they should be more skeptical. But I would wish there are separate tracks, one for Chartereds, and one for individuals. That appears to me as more healthy.

LC: We want to find the best research and use these funds to attract outside funding. We have so few large grants at GW. We need more joint, multi-PI grants.

HG: Some funding agencies strongly discourage multi-PI grants since they are harder to adjust if needed.

LC: I am talking about programme grants, like from NIH. We just have a handful. I am not talking about grants with some co-investigators, but big multi-million Dollar grants like Prof. Kouveliotou's Astrophysics grant. SEAS has not one. That is what institutes should be doing.

Q: I come from SEAS, and I find that comment disparaging. There are reasons why we do not have such grants. At U of Delaware, IGERT applications get strong institutional support. VA Tech, as a system, have an "internal IGERT", which tells them how to write and apply. We do not have this kind of support.

LC: Not true. We regularly employ grant consultants on large applications, like for ICOR. I tell Mike Plesniak *[Chair, Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, SEAS]* "find a faculty member who wants to apply for a large grant, we will do whatever it takes." So far, they tried this for 2 years and came up with one application. It says how far you have to come when someone like you says that there is no infrastructure.

Q: Well, we try to ramp it up in SEAS. At the university of a colleague, they had put together faculty from 3 schools, meeting every month, for one year, just to find out what the IGERT could be about.

LC: That part is your job!

Yongwu Rong [CCAS research dean]: Our faculty often already have problems to get the information, like when comparing benefits between institutions.

LC: I told Prof Kouveliotou: Write the grant, we will work the benefits out for you.

Prof. Merrigan [Head of Sustainability, ex officio]: This is a broader discussion we need to have as faculty. For one event on sustainability with Duke Energy at the Law School, 3 people came. For an NSF solicitation on renewable energy (50M$ annually), one of the NSF co-directors came to GW. We had 22 faculty there. When the Director and co-Directors of the National Institute for Agriculture came,

8 faculty came. I think this is not an OVPR problem but something I have heard for 2.5 years at GW. My role is to help build such large cross-institutional collaborations, and I have not found out the secret sauce to make that happen and bring faculty together. I want to have a conversation with this committee how I can be more effective in my role.

Indirect Cost Rate and Postdoc Salary Change

14. New overtime provisions in the Fair Labor Standards Act triggered GW to raise the minimum salary for Postdoctoral Researchers. How will this affect Postdocs whose salaries are below the new threshold but whose contract extends the December 1, 2016, transition date? Will they be eligible for overtime pay? Will GW support PIs whose awards cannot provide the additional funds to raise salaries for existing postdocs?

Q: Actually 3 related questions: 8, 9 and 14. IDC and postdoc salaries increase. At the information/training session on postdoc salaries, VP McLeod verbatim said: "We consulted all of the GW schools and briefed them on the law and received information from them how they would prefer to handle postdocs. All school leadership reported a preference of increasing the postdoc salaries to the threshold." When asked where the money would come from, he said "talk to OVPR". So now the PI is responsible for additional money. DoE has no additional money, no supplementals like for NIH or NSF. PI gets stuck in the middle. Shouldn't this be a consensus issue, a cooperative effort to find common ground? HR now sends out letters that the salaries will be increased to new minimum, effective Dec 1.

LC: To my knowledge, this came from a lawsuit. All universities face the same issue. I was not involved in this at all. There was no consultation with me until it was a done deal, I know about this as much as you do. This is an HR/OTC decision.
HG: Moving forward, there is a gap for some PIs. It's not large, but how can we close it when PIs do not have the necessary funds?
LC: The only thing you can do it use your REIA funds.
Q: I have 5 postdocs, and my REIA would only cover 50% of the increase.
LC: Talk to your Dean. You are in a tough spot.
HG: We need to talk at some point about a practical solution how we can find money to solve the FLSA problem where it exists, so that our postdocs are not out in the street. I think we all agree that the postdocs are the ones who actually do the research.
Q: There also was a discussion at GW and many other institutions that postdocs are actually trainees and should be totally different from employees. They should not be treated by HR in the same rigid manner. When I have to hire postdoc quickly, I should not face the same rules as for regular employees.
LC: I agree.
HG: I want to defer that discussion, in the interest of time. We need to sit down with HR to talk about background checks and similar issues.
LC: At the town hall in June, VP McLeod was asked about that point-blank, and he assured everybody that they would change the way postdocs are hired. I do not know if they did that. The problems you have with HR are exactly those my office has.

8. We are concerned about the implications of the significant Indirect Cost Rate hike for PIs on future awards. In the real world, the dollar amount of many federal awards is established by a phone call in which the funding officer gives the PI a total, gross budget number. It is then up to the PI to meet that number. The federal budget situation does in general not allow for 5% budget increases in renewal applications. A rate hike in effect translates into a corresponding decrease of available net funding and therefore of research productivity. To which extent has such a negative impact been taken into account?

LC: IDC is determined every 5 years. The finance office hires a consultant. They look at every research-related expense – custodial, everything. That's given to the GAO, and then there is a negotiation. Then I get an email what the IDC is. I was told this is an 8-month process, but I was told about it only at the end. I was not in the loop at all – and I shouldn't. When I asked why it went up so much, they talked about the cost for the new building [SEH], increased cost of labour, electricity etc.
There is a misconception that OVPR gets IDCs. We do not. It all goes to the finance office. They have a formula to distribute the money. For example, in the last 4-5 years, IDC on-campus has grown by almost 6M$ from 20M$ to 26M$. Last year, we went up 1.9M$ or 2.1M$. My budget increase was 180k$ in discretionary funds – which I put into the CDFF. But my overall budget was cut by 5%.
In many universities like Georgetown and VA Tech, the new IDC take effect in the next fiscal year, even in the middle of the grant period. We had long and hard discussions, and I argued against that. I chair the Executive Research Oversight Committee which involves the Provost, Lou Katz, Beth Nolan (OTC), Jeff Akman (Dean of Health Sciences). There, I argued we cannot do that. There is a terrible mismatch between the university which tries to get as much IDC it can, and the PIs. Our "real" IDC rate of all ICD relative to all research expenditures is 18%.
Q: Why is that?
HG: Most equipment has no IDC.
LC: And Biostat is largest grant recipient but pays only 25% since they are off-campus in Reston. Many foundational grants have 0% IDC, like at GSHED and the Elliot School. Many institutions do not process such grants. We do.

HG: That is a point where we present a united front. PIs hear about changes at the last minute or when the rules are already in effect. It appears you share that frustration. I hope you can advocate with Lou Katz that we get a heads-up about such changes like IDC or FLSA which can have an impact on PI budgets, as soon as they come up. Had we known about the FLSA change in May when it came out, PIs would have had half a year to plan and save money elsewhere. I hear that you are a champion for us here.

LC: I agree with you, and with the principle: the sooner you know, the better you can plan.

Graduate Student Accounting Changes

9. We see that the change from Graduate Research Assistantships to the new research assistantship/fellowship model was not "budget-neutral", i.e. that GRA/GRF position have become more costly for PIs than under the old model. Please comment.

[skipped]

OVPR Restructuring

10. Under the new administrative model, most of the pre- and post-award administration will be delegated to the school level. Please provide a detailed account which tasks you suggest should be retained by OVPR, and why.

11. Which mechanisms exist to ensure effective communication between OVPR and the schools on: new award guidelines from sponsors; new GW requirements; etc.

12. We already see the benefits of the subsidiary model of award administrations. However, we are concerned that the transfer in responsibilities to the school level has not been synchronized with an adequate transfer of fiscal resources from OVPR to the schools. For example, CCAS has to hire at least 4 new staff but did not receive increased funding. Please describe to which extent schools have or will receive additional compensation for the tasks which were previously under OVPR's purview.

Q: This also includes the impact of GW's new budget model.

LC: When I arrived, Deans and PIs got zero IDCs. So I started the REIA, with the President's support: 6% to PIs, 4% to Chairs, 2% to Deans. They wanted to impose that you have to spend it in a year, I said they should keep it, so that it builds up. It's a rainy-day fund for when you loose a grant. Now, it's 8% to PIs, 4% to Chairs, 0% to Deans because I think they should do development etc. I want the money for the people in the trenches. With the new model, the distribution is: in closed-budget schools like School of Public Health and Medical School, Deans keep all IDC and there is no REIA fro PIs. The new model for open-budget schools now is that 27% go back: 8% to PIs, 4% to Chairs, 15% to Deans. So now the Deans have an incentive to build research, and they responded to it. CCAS and SEAS are taking off. And now Deans like Dolling want all the REIA. There is one person between that and your REIA, and you are looking at him.

Now, the Deans get 70% of tuition. They have money for things like FLSA; some deny it, but one has 15M$ in reserve funds. You should not feel intimidated to go and ask for 20k$ for your postdocs.

HG: Moving to the other part of the question: Schools are now more involved in pre- and post-award administration. I think this is a great model because one is much closer to the administration you work with, and we already see huge improvements. But how can we make sure we do not end up with two parallel structures, where OVPR gives one kind of advice, and the school another, conflicting one? That would be very bad, especially when it comes to award submission.

LC: That is very perceptive and could happen. You PIs and we need to watch that. We need to iron that out. When it happens, send me a 2 or 3 sentence email and I will iron it out. That happens maybe 3 or 4 times a week. When there is a HR problem, I send it to Lou *[Katz]*, and it's taken care of in 24 hours because when Lou speaks, people listen. My general attitude is to help PIs as much as I can. I believe in giving to the PIs as much power as possible. I have in mind what we did at my previous institution: I told my pre-award person "I need a budget of this much, I want a postdoc and graduate student, this and that – do it." And she did, and did all communication with the office of research. I did not have to worry and concentrated on the research narrative. You should be in a position where you can concentrate on the science.

The Deans need more pre- and post-award people, and they now have the money for it.

Q: We just want a customer-centric model. Maybe it's where we are right now. But speaking for the committee, we often feel we are penalised rather than our work being facilitated.

HG: Only very few people, maybe 1 or 3, have final authority to submit on behalf of GW. That should always reside with OVPR. But we are worried about cases where OVPR and School differ on the interpretation of the solicitation. An example is a supplemental to the DoE solicitation by DoE's Office of Nuclear Science which explicitly overrules some page limits etc. Another example is a conflict-of-interest form for NSF proposal. OVPR said it has to be 1 page, but the solicitation and funding officer say it has to be complete and there is no page limit. One cannot get names and addresses of 200 people in a collaboration onto 1 page. In the future, the School is likely aware of this because they work closely with the PI, but OVPR may come back and say this is not up to specifications. Resolving this conflict is doable if we have 5 days, but only if both sides are flexible and listen – at a time when the PI is really stressed already. I do not say this is already happening, but we need to be watchful and have structures in place. So we would like to understand the balance of power between PI, School and OVPR.

LC: We train the people in the Schools, so it's our responsibility to get this right. No doubt there will be glitches, but we need to work through them. We will never have a perfect system. Last year, we processed 1326 grants; 6 years ago, it was 940. If just 1% is screwed up, you have a lot of unhappy faculty. The number of people processing grants has deceased, but the number of proposals has gone up.

Q: A model that the School is the initiator and OVPR the approver is fine, but not if OVPR becomes a customs officer who tells you that something is missing but you have to find what it is yourself.

LC: That is just bad customer service, and you should call me.

Q: You instill that positive change, the culture that this is a team effort and here is what the administrator is going do to help you. When that proposal does not go out, we all loose – faculty and staff, PI, School and OVPR alike.

HG: There could even be a model that OVPR may say: "We think this proposal does not meet this or that specification. If you really want to submit it, then that is okay, but it becomes your responsibility. We are not responsible if it's rejected." So then OVPR is not the gate-keeper.

LC: We do that right now, if the proposal does not comply with the 5-day rule.

HG: That is very interesting because we see cases where OVPR says: "We will not push the submit button unless you fix this."

LC: If it's a blatant violation of the agency regulation, we will do that. But if it's not reviewed by us, then it becomes your responsibility. But to a certain degree it's also the responsibility of faculty to educate our pre- and post-award people. Give them a heads-up, take them out for tea and talk about the proposal you want to submit – a month ahead of time!

HG: That is why we like the subsidiary model, where staff is much closer to us.

Additional Question

15. Some solicitations allow only for a limited number of GW submission (e.g. MRIs) and thus mandate an internal selection process. Please comment how OVPR makes the selection, including ensuring transparency of selection criteria.

LC: That varies on the agency. For KECK, we send all summaries to them. The program manager then tells us what he thinks of each – too clinical, too mathematical, we could fund that one, etc. For NSF MRI etc, I make the ultimate decision. That is based in part on cost to the university. Some need special equipment to be built and special staff and that does not come from the award. Then we need to ask the Provost for funds, and he may say no. We also ask the research dean when there are two from the same school. We look at the track record. Someone has not had a grant in 23 years and goes for a MacArthur – what are the chances? We also have a grant-solicitation unit of 18 people, former NSF directors etc. It costs us 250$ per proposal, but they give honest advice. So ultimately, I make the decision but let people know ahead of time so that they can talk with me.

Ultimately, I want to increase our standing. If the numbers are going up, that's good. If they go down, it's bad. I am judged by that by the President.

Q: Do you have people who review the scientific case?

LC: No, and that is a good point.

HG: We need to educate the BoT what research actually is. This committee would like to help. []

LC: Yes, we must be seen as not destroying the house but as helping to remodel it.

HG: This brings us to the end. We thank you very much for your time and effort, and look forward to a close collaboration in the future. I feel it is going to be much more active, on both sides. This was a passionate and spirited exchange, exactly what I like. Let's heed Franklin's advice to the Constitutional Convention: "We are here to consult, not to contend."

The meeting was adjourned at 16:04.

Minutes submitted by Harald Grießhammer.