Georgia State University
Senate Research Committee Meeting
July 18, 2005
Minutes

Present:            Don Reitzes (Chair), Albertha Barrett, Tim Bartness, Al Baumstark, Mary Jane Casto, Missy Cody, Robert Curry, Crawford Elliott, Joe Gilbert, David Houchins, Kim Huhman, Beth Jones, Amy Lederberg, John Medlock, Robin Morris, Mary Ann Romski, P. C. Tai, Art Vandenberg

Dr. Reitzes called the meeting to order at 3:06 pm.

Approval of Minutes

The first order of business was review and approval of the minutes from the April 25, 2005 meeting. No member present at the meeting asked that changes be made to the minutes. A motion was made for approval of the minutes; the motion was seconded and the minutes were approved by those Committee members present.

Election of Faculty Representative to the GSU Research Foundation for FY06

Dr. Reitzes stated that each year the Committee elects 2 members as well as one faculty member at large to serve on the GSU Research Foundation Board. Last year, the 2 Committee representatives elected were Dr. Tai and Dr. Dixon, with Dr. Nelson serving as the faculty member at large. Dr. Reitzes asked for nominations of members to serve for FY06, noting that all three currently serving are willing to serve for another year. A nomination was made for these three members to serve again for FY06. A vote was taken and the nominations were unanimously approved by those Committee members present.

Introduction of Mr. Joe Gilbert, Director of Technology Commercialization

Dr. Morris, Vice President for Research, introduced Mr. Joseph Gilbert as the newly appointed Director of Technology Commercialization at GSU. Joe comes from Iowa State University, which is known to have one of the top 5 university technology transfer practices in the US. He previously worked for Lockheed/Martin Marietta and served in the US Air Force.

Review of Huron Consultants’ Report on Research Infrastructure at GSU

Dr. Morris reviewed the report on research infrastructure at GSU which was recently completed by Huron Consultants. He noted that the consultants met with all staff in the Research office as well as about 50 faculty and staff members across the campus. He asked the Committee for feedback on the report’s recommendations for restructuring the research infrastructure at GSU.

Dr. Elliott asked about the percentage of grant awards which are generated by smaller departments on campus. Dr. Morris provided a handout showing tentative totals for FY05 grant proposals and awards for each department. He noted that the amounts shown on the handout are preliminary. In summarizing the data, there were about 600 proposals submitted and about 400 grants awarded for FY05, which he said is a fairly large load for the small staff in the Research office.
Dr. Morris noted the Huron Consultants report concludes that research administrative support needs to be spread out, or decentralized across departments on campus. He stated that the largest departments like Biology which generate the greatest amount of grant activity need to have dedicated research support staff in order to make the grant submission and award process more efficient. He stated the college of Education has a good research administration model in place which other units should consider emulating. For smaller departments, there needs to be research administration resources available at the college level. He stated the Huron Consultants report recommends this approach to organizing research infrastructure, noting that it has worked well at other universities with similarly sized research programs in the US.

Dr. Reitzes asked if cross-training is important to the success of such a decentralized research administration model. Dr. Morris answered that cross-training is critical to its success. He added that determining who is responsible for training and compliance is an open issue. He noted that GSU recently went through an audit with the NSF which resulted in significant findings to the university. One area where GSU needs to do a better job of training and administration is with effort reporting. He stated that our documentation is very weak in this area and large audit findings resulted from this, but added that universities across the country are experiencing the same type of results when audited.

Ms. Barrett stated that the number of regulations covering grants is proliferating and the federal agencies are now focusing more closely on whether universities have written policies/procedures in place to govern their practice of grants administration, including any interpretations received from program officers. She stated that one of GSU’s big problems is a lack of documentation of research administration policies and procedures. Dr. Morris noted that universities with more than $50 million in grant awards each year are being targeted by the federal regulators for audits. He added that other areas of focus by the regulators are cost sharing and subcontracts.

Dr. Morris stated that it is his plan for all new PIs to be required to take comprehensive training on grants administration. Dr. Romski asked if all PIs, including senior faculty, should be required to take such training. Dr. Morris suggested that a refresher course would be a good idea for experienced faculty. He said if the Committee supports a refresher course for more senior PIs, then he will go forward with having it developed. Dr. Morris stated that Dr. Lederberg will work with the Committee to develop and roll out the training module planned as a refresher course for senior research faculty at GSU.

Dr. Bartness expressed dismay that the existing grant budget reports generated by our financial system are almost incomprehensible and have been for many years. He suggested that making the financial reports more understandable would help all PIs maintain compliance on their grants. Dr. Morris responded that part of the problem is the Peoplesoft system itself, but stated that he can investigate developing a more useful financial reporting framework for grant budgets in the Peoplesoft system.

A Committee member asked who would write the grant policies/procedures which are needed by GSU. Dr. Morris responded that his office should lead this effort; he has hired a consultant to start the process by first updating GSU’s disclosure statement (DS2) which details all of the University’s financial policies and procedures. This will be the foundation of GSU’s grants administration documentation. Dr. Morris added that he plans to build upon that foundation with documents suggested in the Council on Government Relations (COGR) Best Practices checklist for university research units, which runs about 90 pages in length.

Dr. Bartness stated that unfortunately most faculty researchers at GSU are already overburdened with administrative tasks, and some course credit may need to be granted in order to keep up with all of the grant compliance requirements. Dr. Morris responded that the Huron Consultants report indicated that a competent staff of research administrators across the university can assist with this burden for faculty. Dr. Baumstark countered that the feedback he has gotten is the departments are already overstaffed with administrative
personnel, so it seems it will be difficult to obtain approval/funding for additional staff. Dr. Morris stated that this idea is based on internal comparisons, but external reviews indicate that GSU is understaffed compared to other universities and he believes the decentralized model recommended by Huron Consultants will be the best solution for GSU.

There was additional discussion on this topic with some concerns raised by Committee members about whether the decentralized model can be successfully implemented at GSU.

Dr. Tai asked about the cost of restructuring research administration at GSU. Dr. Morris stated that his goal is to work with the H/R Classification and Compensation group over the 2006 fiscal year to get staff positions reclassified so that more competitive salaries can be paid. He noted that FACP awarded his office a portion of the University’s indirect cost starting this year, and he plans to use the indirect cost funds for this purpose.

Dr. Baumstark asked about the number of grants that would be administered by each research administrator in the decentralized model. Dr. Morris stated that one benchmark would be for each FTE to handle about 40 grants, however this would not be an absolute rule, and it would depend upon the type and amount of grants being managed.

Ms. Casto stated that the recommendation in the Huron Consultants report for a strategic technology plan resonated with IS&T. Dr. Morris stated that there is a need to develop a strategic plan for research computing for the University overall. He commented that Dr. Lederberg and Ms. Barrett are working on developing a web portal for electronic research administration (eRA). He noted that every federal agency which provides grants seems to have different requirements for electronic submissions and signoffs, thus development of a portal will be a significant undertaking for GSU. At this time, there is not a reasonably priced, comprehensive vendor solution which handles all of the different electronic submission requirements.

Overall, members of the Committee agreed that the Huron Consultants report was very well done and much better than the analysis done several years ago by another outside consultant. Dr. Romski made a motion for the Committee to endorse in principal the recommendations set out in the report and to be actively involved in implementation of those recommendations. The motion was seconded and approved by those Committee members present.

Subcommittee Reports

Dr. Reitzes stated the only group which has met since the last Committee meeting is the Internal Grants subcommittee, so it will be the only one to report today.

Internal Grants
Dr. Romski reported that the subcommittee met recently and worked on revising the announcements and instructions for the Research Initiation, Dissertation and Mentoring grant programs. The group plans to have the revised information about these programs up on the web by the end of the month. The subcommittee also began discussions regarding a proposal to transform the RPE grant program into a program to provide graduate student support. It would take the RPE grants that have been funded for 9 consecutive years (3 competitive review cycles) and permanently move those funds into the department where the PIs for those programs reside. There would no longer be RPE grants after this transfer of funds takes place, probably beginning after FY06. Dr. Romski plans to present a proposal to the Committee at the September meeting.

Dr. Reitzes asked if there were awards made last year from the Internal Grants program to support conferences held at GSU. Dr. Morris responded that all of the money allocated to that program was awarded last year. Dr. Romski added that she has a report of all Internal Grants program funding for the last five years.
that she can share with the Committee. Dr. Reitzes then asked if a course release is given to faculty members who agree to serve as mentee under the Mentoring grant program. Dr. Morris said that has not yet been approved by the Deans, but he is working on it.

**New Business**

Mr. Vandenberg reported on the biocluster. He stated there are about 20 graduate students and 20 faculty using the 40 nodes on this cluster. He advised members to look for an important future article in the *Focus IT* newsletter that will discuss computer security at GSU.

Another initiative IS&T is working on is the SURA grid. There will be about 60 universities eventually linked together on this grid which will allow use of remote resources by faculty/staff at GSU. Also, GSU is still pursuing with various vendors the possibility of purchasing a top 500-class computer. This is somewhat dependent on obtaining external funding.

**Announcements**

Dr. Reitzes stated he would like to have Dr. Tis report on the Research Integrity subcommittee’s progress on the Roles & Responsibilities document at the next meeting of the Committee.

The next Committee meeting will be held at 3:30pm on August 22 in 718-G.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31pm.