

Report on the Research Council activities during AY 2018-2019

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The Research Council (RC) works as an interface between the UTK faculty and the UTK Research Administration with approximately half its members being research active faculty and the other half being research administrators ranging from the Associate Deans for Research to the Vice Chancellor for Research.

Its monthly meeting focus on discussions of topics that have been agreed upon by the members as being currently of importance. Over this year the RC have discussed issues related to the overall research budget for UTK, core research facilities, potential financial impact if a larger proportion of UTK faculty were receiving external grants, funding levels for graduate students performing research, the UT Research Organization, ideas for communicating UTK research accomplishments better, and research interactions between UTK and ORNL, and UTK and UTIA.

Research Budget:

ORE's base budget is \$4.5M in salary and operating budget with an additional mission support of \$400K for undergraduate research and compliance. ORE's Strategic and Transformative Investments in Research (STIR) is \$1.75M and Scholarly and Research Incentive Funds (SARIF) which support equipment, humanities, exhibits, performances, publishing, foreign travel, conferences, faculty scholarly research, faculty fellowships, open publishing totals to \$904K. ORE also provides \$1.3M in annual support to UT's Joint Institutes with ORNL, and \$5.4M annual allocation for the Science Alliance with an ORNL match. The Science Alliance program currently supports Distinguished Scientists, Joint Directed Research & Development, Graduate Research Assistants, Economic Development and Equipment. ORE's Start up budget is \$5.6M annually with \$9.5M obligated in FY19 to provide 50% support of start-up packages provided to new and continuing faculty, \$333K of bridge funding, and \$1.5M annual allocation to support external funding.

The Interim Vice Chancellor for Research Robert Nobles promised at the meeting on Oct. 10, 2018 that the RC will be involved in setting the priorities for the research budget for FY 2019-2020.

Core Facilities:

Core Facilities are shared resources available to UT faculty, staff, and students recovering cost through user fees and non-federal subsidies. These centers are non-profit re-charge centers with limitations of the types of charges allowed based on federal regulations. The current UT cores include life sciences, physical and material sciences, communications, and analytical/computational resources.

There was general agreement in the RC that the Core Facilities program is very important to the UTK research enterprise and allow UTK researchers access to instrumentation they would otherwise not have access to. However, in many cases the facilities are not able to sustain themselves based on user fees and will need support from ORE or other research funds.

Potential growth of UTK's external research funding:

Associate Vice Chancellor for Research Development Bruce LaMattina discussed the potential for increasing the external research funding through single-PI grant if more researchers became funded. Currently around 2/3 of UT faculty receive external funding. However, even if this number should increase dramatically to 100%, which is probably not realistic to assume, the research revenues would only increase by \$23M, which is 10-15% of the total external research funding. So whereas it is important to support our current PIs and to increase the number of funded UTK researchers, the main avenue to strong increases in research funding will be through large-scale multi-PI grants.

The UT Research Organization (System Level):

At the February 2019 meeting Stacey Patterson, UT Vice President of Research, Outreach and Economic Development, discussed the organization of the research administration and support done through the UT's Research Office and UT Research Foundation (UTRF). UTRF is a separate 501c3 organization which serves the University of Tennessee. At the system level, UT Research is responsible for UT system-wide reporting, the partnership with Battelle to co-manage ORNL, and state representatives including the Board of Trustees. Several system wide research initiatives, like solar energy initiatives, biofuels and the \$259M IACMI program were discussed. Overall the human resources allocated to research at the system level are fairly modest (less than 10 people), and since they have responsibilities not copied at the campus level, there are no obvious advantages seen to merge their functions in a single campus level research organization. Furthermore, UT is occasionally in a position to engage outside partners due to the synergy between the various campus of UT. So from a research perspective it does not seem wisely for UTK to separate from the UT system. There are also various legal aspects of the important collaboration with ORNL through the UT-Battelle organization that makes a separation very difficult and could have serious negative consequences for research at UTK.

Communication of Research Accomplishments:

At the March meeting Tisha Benton, Vice Chancellor for Communication, discussed ways to enhance the visibility of the research accomplishments at UTK. Part of the effort will be to improve the internal communication of research accomplishments, so the external communication of results can become more agile and ahead of the "news cycle". Discussions between UTK leadership and the local newspaper might also lead to more coverage of positive news stories from UTK as long as the stories are relevant to the readers at a level they can understand.

UTK/ORNL Interactions:

At the April Meeting Michelle Buchanan, Deputy Director for Science and Technology at ORNL, discussed the research interactions between UTK and ORNL. Several successes, like the Bredesen Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Graduation Education, The Tennessee Manufacturing Innovation Program, and the many aspects of joint positions between the two organizations, were discussed. Overall, UTK and ORNL are clearly bringing substantial value to

each other. Special emphasis was placed on improving the Joint Faculty program through a more centralized appointment process and by having more clearly communicated expectations for Joint Faculty from both institutions. Currently emphasis is also placed on finding ways for new UTK faculty to collaborate with researchers at ORNL.

UTK/UTIA Research Collaboration

At the April meeting Interim Vice Chancellor for Research at UTK, Robert Nobles, and Associate Dean for Research at UTIS, David White, also discussed the somewhat complicated ways in which UTK and UTIA collaborate on research. They presented a set of tables clearly explaining which programs are joint and which are not. Since this information is not always readily available on the web, they were encouraged to make sure it would be more clearly presented to UTK/UTIA researchers in the future. One interesting piece of information emerged from the ensuing discussion: UT is the only land grant university in the nation that has the complicated division between the land grant university and the Agriculture activities. It seems like all other land grant universities have them merged together in one organization. However, changing this will be more than what the current Research Council can accomplish!

Another important aspect of the RC's work is a set of sub-committees making recommendations concerning selection of a) faculty members for research awards (Chancellors Awards Committee), b) proposals for internal research support (SARIF Equipment Committee), and c) graduate student support (SARIF Graduate Research Assistantship Committee). In addition, the RC members serve on a number of other standing or ad-hoc committees related to research, like the Core Facilities Advisory Committee, the Institutional Compliance Committee, and the Working Group for Human Subject Research as well as various screening committees for selection of external proposal.