University Committee for Research
August, 2010

Research is a vital part of the mission of Rice University. This emphasis is embodied in the first point in Rice’s Vision for the Second Century, which calls for Rice to “visibly and substantially increase our commitment to our research mission and raise our research and scholarship profile.” It is important that the Faculty have a strong voice for articulating and investigating issues relating to all forms of research and scholarship, and also for the Administration to have access to feedback from faculty relating to policies and procedures that affect Rice’s research endeavors and infrastructure. Through this process we can all work together to achieve our shared vision.

At present the university lacks a primary faculty committee focused on research issues, and there is a notable absence of a committee on research among the University Committees whose members are recommended by the Faculty Senate and appointed by the Office of the President. The need for faculty input is reflected in the recent appointment by the Vice Provost for Research, James Coleman, of an advisory committee on research. But issues pertaining to research have also recently been directed by the Administration towards the Senate in hopes of fostering broader discussion and gaining input from the representative governing body of the Faculty.

In an effort to better facilitate the communication between faculty and the administration on issues regarding research, and to establish a stronger connection between these discussions and the Faculty Senate, we propose to establish a University Committee for Research.

The membership of this committee will be recommended to the Office of the President by the Senate in consultation with the Vice Provost for Research. The chair will be a faculty member and at least one member will also be a member of the Faculty Senate in order to serve as a liaison to that body. The Vice Provost for Research and Associate Vice Provost for Research shall be ex officio members of the committee.

This effort is in keeping with an ongoing attempt to improve uniformity of committees on campus in order to make faculty service more transparent and aid in its recognition. In order to avoid duplication of effort and an increase in the number of faculty committees, the University Committee on Research will assume the responsibilities of the advisory committee formed by the Vice President for Research, with suggested initial membership drawn largely from that advisory committee.

In order to coordinate efforts with the Research Administration Advisory Group, such as to determine when an issue is better addressed by a body with large representation from various administrative offices or by a faculty-led committee, the chair of the University Committee on Research will be an ex officio member of the Research Administration Advisory Group.

The proposed charge for the University Committee on Research is:
(a) To serve as the primary committee for faculty to inform the administration of any problems and opportunities, including suggested policy changes, that relate to the ability of the faculty to engage in research and other scholarly activities.

(b) To initiate studies of various aspects of research and other scholarly activities with the intent of improving the climate for these activities at the University and articulating faculty vision on research issues.

(c) To become familiar with the functions of the Office of Research and provide feedback to the Vice Provost of Research when requested.

(d) To assist the Faculty Senate by investigating issues brought to it relating to research.

(e) To provide feedback to the Research Administration Advisory Group when the opinions of a broad representation of faculty on research-related issues are needed.

(f) To prepare a brief, written report of the Committee’s activities at the end of each academic year and to submit copies of this report to the President of the University, Vice Provost of Research, Provost and the Faculty Senate.

In the absence of a University Committee on Research, the Vice Provost for Research had created a Research Faculty Advisory Committee last academic year. He has suggested that the membership of this advisory committee constitute the core of the new University Committee. We suggest that future staffing of this committee also be done in coordination with the Vice Provost of Research.

We recommend Doug Natelson for the inaugural chair, and he has expressed his willingness to serve in this role. Members who have agreed to serve:

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Ex officio members
Mary C. (Cindy) Farach-Carson, Associate Vice Provost for Research
James Coleman, Vice Provost for Research