University of Washington
Faculty Council on Research

The Faculty Council on Research met on Friday, March 4, 2005, at 8:00 a.m., in Mary Gates Hall 420. Chair Brent Stewart called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Synopsis:
1. Comments, announcements, approve agenda, approve minutes
2. International graduate student enrollments, visa problems for visiting academics (Discussion
3. National Research issues and Updates: Teleconference with Barbara Perry from Washington, DC
4. Export Control Policy and Training Policies (Carol Zuiches)

Comments, Announcements, Agenda, Minutes
The agenda was approved. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

Brent Stewart reported briefly on the development of the Deep Underground Science and Engineering Laboratory, commenting that the DUSEL approval process could provide a useful model for complex and sensitive projects like the Regional Bio-Containment Laboratory to follow.

Craig Hogan advised FCR of several research-oriented bills now active in the state legislature, including HB1268 on Stem Cell Research, SB5594 on Stem Cells and Cloning, and SB5381 establishing a Washington State Academy of Sciences. The proposed independent, nonprofit panel of distinguished scientists from various fields throughout Washington would advise the governor or the Legislature on matters of science, technology and medicine. The presidents of the University of Washington and Washington State University would serve as co-chairs of an organizing committee that would create the academy.

Public meetings on the Regional Bio-Containment Lab (RBL) continue, with a report from the Provost's Siting Committee due in mid-May. In the first round of RBLs, some were constructed off-campus. The committee, which includes Ross Heath, will include a review of those cases to understand why this was done, and how the researchers are dealing with the reality of off-campus sites.

Mac Parks testified in support of SB5811/HB1806, encouraging the ethical transfer of technology for the economic benefit of the state. The bill would allow research universities to develop and adopt their own written administrative processes in place of the obligations now imposed by several sections of RCW 42.52.

The Faculty Senate is presently talking about budget concerns, including faculty salaries.

International graduate student enrollments, visa problems for visiting academics
David Fenner, Assistant Vice Provost for International Education and Director of International Programs and Exchanges, visited FCR to discuss some reasons for the decline in international graduate student enrollments. A survey by the Council of Graduate Schools concluded that "following a decade of steady growth, the number of first-time international graduate students studying in the U.S. decreased between 6 and 10% for three consecutive years." Some of the largest declines were seen in schools that enroll the most students in engineering.

Fenner described the current decline in enrollments as the result of a "perfect storm." Graduate education around the world is seeing more grad students sticking closer to home, partially as a result of increased recruiting by other countries and partially as a result of increased barriers to recruitment in the U.S.
Australia, Ireland, Britain and Singapore are aggressively recruiting, Fenner said. For example, according to the Norwegian Consul in New York City, every Norwegian high school gets an annual visit by Australian recruiters. By contrast, only two Norwegian high schools were visited by U.S. schools (St. Olafs and University of Puget Sound) last year.

In the past, some grad students used the system as a backdoor immigration method – there are eight clear avenues for immigration, but the student visa is not intended to be one of them, Fenner said. The INS has clamped down on this practice by instituting arcane and expensive application procedures at U.S. Embassies around the world, resulting in a 50% denial rate for visas. The aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks contributed a chilling effect, with a tightening of U.S. visa requirements. The process is now much more complex and can be inefficient, with otherwise-qualified candidates getting "lost" in the SEVIS computer system. With immigration simpler and more welcoming in other countries, and with education in countries like Canada costing much less, international students seem to be asking themselves whether a graduate degree from Toronto is worse than one from Illinois.

The good news is that some of the new processes put in place since 9/11 are beginning to sort themselves out. U.S. schools are seeing fewer delays in processing visas in 2004 than in 2003. The average wait time for a visa decision has been reduced from 73 days to 14 days.

Fenner said the UW can enhance its "welcome mat" for international students by giving greater assistance to students who want to apply, including helping them navigate the complexities of the process. He would like to see the UW develop a formal institutional policy on international enrollments, supported by President Emmert, because attracting international grad students is critical to the UW's success. For example, 64% of UW students in Economics are international students. If these numbers continue to decline, what will be the effect on the Economics Department?

Fenner also addressed the issue of visiting scholars, commenting that the UW is a popular and welcoming place for visiting scholars and should be kept that way. Horror stories of students and scholars who leave for the summer and then find they cannot come back, however, are usually due to their having fallen out of visa status during their stay. It's crucial that all visa requirements be met – no work is allowed, the person must still be in a program, etc. The International Service Office is cautioning students about these requirements.

Fenner hopes that the current dip in international student enrollments at the UW – 1800 in 2003 versus 1100 in 2004 - is temporary, but no one can say for certain what will happen.

**ITAR - Export Control Policy and Training Policies**

Carol Zuiches asked for an FCR volunteer for a committee that will oversee and promote the UW's compliance with Export Controls regulations, federal laws that restrict the flow of certain materials, devices and technical information outside the United States. Zuiches sees a need to help educate UW researchers from the chair level on down, so that everyone pays attention to the impact of ITAR and other federal regulations on the UW. Working out restrictions on publications and making sure the UW retains its Fundamental Research Exemption would be of prime importance.

Zuiches said that a new question on the regulations has been added to the ECG-1. The Attorney General's office is also aware of the impact of the regulations on researchers and is providing advice and assistance. An FCR volunteer is needed; please contact Brent Stewart or Carol Zuiches if you can serve.

**National Research Issues and Updates: Teleconference with Barbara Perry from Washington, DC**

In a teleconference, Barbara Perry told FCR members that ethics issues in the NIH continue to be of concern. Draconian NIH regulations have not appeased anyone; there continue to be hearings on integrity in science.
The funding climate for scientific research is trending downward, Perry said. In a disturbing move, the U.S. House of Representatives has restructured the House Appropriations Committee so the science agencies and NIH are included in the Commerce Committee. Perry sees this as an emphasis on research as a vehicle for commerce – science for profit. She said this is in line with the Republican philosophy of having the Federal government fund Defense, National Security and Commerce, with the states assuming responsibility for everything else. The Senate has not followed the House's lead, so research spending is now in two different appropriations committees in the two separate bodies.

The Open Access question seems to have settled down, Perry said. Stewart confirmed this, and applauded NIH for letting the author decide.

Perry updated FCR on INS policy changes that will affect international student applications. A bipartisan visa measure in the Senate mandates fixes for the glitches in the SEVIS system, allows states to negotiate reciprocal agreements with other countries so students can leave the U.S. for visits home and still come back, and exempts students and scholars from the visa MANTIS requirement that a consular official must assess whether they can return after a brief absence. The period for the exemption is four years for an undergrad and two years for scholars.

In response to a question about collaborating with recipients of NIH funds, Perry referred FCR members to the FAQ page on the NIH Website. There have been many lawsuits around these issues, so researchers should familiarize themselves with the rules.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 a.m. Minutes by Linda Fullerton, Recorder.

Present:  
Professors Booth-La Force, Franza, Heath, Kiyak, Miller, Morrison, Stewart, Vogt
Ex-Officio Kahl, Hogan, Zuiches, Barker

Absent:  
Professors Benner, Haeseleer, Kumar, Morrison, Rasmussen, Sarikaya
Ex-Officio Stygall, Blake, Fredericks, Dworkin, Camber, Parks, Ashby-Larrabee

Guests:  
David Fenner, Assistant Vice Provost for International Education; Director International Programs and Exchanges
Barbara Perry, Associate Vice President/Director of Federal Relations (via teleconference)