

University Enrichment Committee  
November 20, 2009  
3:30-4:30 PM, Trimble Study

In attendance:

Renee Houston, Peter Greenfield, Jim Jasinski, Brendan Lanctot, Sarah Moore, Tamiko Nimura, Heidi Orloff, John Rindo, Matt Warning, Jennifer Utrata

1. M-S minutes, approved
2. RH announced that people will be meeting on Mon. 11/24 to talk about the faculty travel overseas policy change. Included in that meeting are Lisa Ferrari, Renee Houston, Leslie Saucedo, Peter Wimberger, Sarah Moore, Rachel DeMotts, Keyna Fox-Dobbs. The discussion will focus specifically on the situation where a faculty member travels to a country with a travel warning (which is permitted) and wishes to bring a student with him/ her (the university will not support student travel to countries with a travel warning). For some faculty this poses a significant hardship, given that they very much want to include students in their research at these locations.
3. Faculty travel caps  
Sarah had prepared a report for the committee, stating how much faculty spent in travel allocations (per diem, hotel, airfare, etc.).

The main, two-part question under discussion: Is there a way to rethink the caps on funding for faculty travel so that 1) there is not a "bias" against disciplines such as the sciences, who have high conference registration fees, and 2) there is not a "bias" against those who travel widely and internationally on a regular basis?

A number of questions and options arose during this lively discussion. These included:

- Can we (faculty) turn in receipts that had underestimated the per diem or airfare, as long as it does not exceed the UEC caps? (Answer: Yes.)
- Does the form cover unexpected expenses in unexpected categories? (Answer: no.)
- Do some people overestimate their budgets? Do some people underestimate budgets, and may not be filling in the entire form? (Yes, but this is not an issue per se' given that the UEC reimburses for actual rather than estimated expenses.)
- Can we change the caps for some categories (e.g., registration, airfare/travel, hotel) and keep the caps for others?
- What kinds of "abuse" of the system may be (or have been) at risk if we change the caps? Sarah noted that the category most likely for discretionary spending is "food." Airfare, registration, and hotel costs are more fixed or determined by the conference rather than the faculty member.

- Can we outline expectations about what are “reasonable” arrangements? (e.g., not staying in the most expensive hotel in town)
- Can we encourage faculty to generate their own travel funds from outside donors?
- One conference a year does not meet our professional needs anymore; can we create greater possibilities for second and third trips? (with the understanding that the restriction was created for the sake of junior faculty)
- Why does department travel money lapse after three years? (Sarah noted that departments are allowed to accumulate up to 3 years worth of department travel funds. Excess beyond this amount is returned to the general faculty travel pool, some \$5K to \$9K per year.)
- Faculty may be wary of lowering the caps for the sake of a lump sum tradeoff. Can we poll the faculty to see how they/we would feel about this trade? We are trying to find a way to allocate money in a more equitable way across the disciplines.

It was then decided that Renee would work with Randy Nelson on a way to survey the faculty to see how they/we feel about the travel funding options on the table. The questions, to be crafted and refined further:

- Would you be in favor of lowering cap if you could manage the money on your own and make choices about using it for one or two conferences, etc? (Would we need to be specific with amounts?)
- Should the lump sum with cap on food and hotel be greater than now? (Renee asked: Can we use that same lump sum for more than one conference? )

Respectfully submitted,  
 Tamiko Nimura  
 Scribe-of-the-month