

**University Enrichment Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 28, 2015, 8:00-8:50 a.m.
Collins Memorial Library – Misner Room**

Attendees: Dawn Padula, Roger Allen, Jess Smith, Kabir Jensen, Sunil Kukreja, Aaron Pomerantz, Mark Martin, Erin Colbert-White, Randy Worland, Terry Beck, Maria Sampen (Faculty Senate Liaison), and George Tomlin (Guest).

Approval of Minutes:

Minutes from December 2, 2014 were approved.

Announcements:

We will postpone committee assignments for our next meeting.

Agenda Items Discussed:

1. **Discussion of Memo submitted by OT to the Faculty Senate Regarding UEC Fall Student Research decisions.** Guests: George Tomlin (OT Faculty) and Maria Sampen (Faculty Senate Liaison)

George Tomlin, OT Professor, joined the committee for this discussion to represent the OT Faculty. In his opening statements, he focused on three major topics:

1. On behalf of the UEC, Sunil Kukreja suggested to the director of OT that student research proposals needed to include more information about budgets for student research proposals when the application budget far exceeds the maximum possible UEC award. Tomlin stated that because this sort of explanation is not required per the criteria provided online, OT interpreted this as being a change from what they had been told in past years.
2. Due to the severe decline in funded OT student applications this fall, something seems to be amiss. There is no expectation of full funding or even partial funding for all students; however, given the level of the current OT class and their preparation, the severe decline in funded student proposals was alarming and indicated to the OT faculty that something was different.
3. OT Faculty went to the Senate because there is no committee-level appeals process.

Kukreja brought up concerns about engaging in a conversation about the UEC's process given that there is no evidence that the student research subcommittee operated inappropriately or did not follow its guidelines. Furthermore, Kukreja talked about the importance of not setting a precedent for second guessing the committee's decision-making process.

Tomlin stated that because he was not aware of an opportunity to have a conversation with the UEC, the OT faculty were concerned that cause for further review within the UEC would be ignored. In response, both Kukreja and Padula outlined the proactive steps both had taken to address the OT faculty's concerns, including:

- Upon review of the Fall Student Research applications at the December 2nd meeting, the UEC discussed the need for OT faculty to receive further clarification about how budget discrepancies should be noted on future applications in which student project budgets exceeded the UEC maximum award.
- Kukreja contacted Yvonne Swinth directly with this feedback.
- Based on concerns that Swinth raised back to Kukreja, Kukreja noted that he would discuss these concerns with Padula, and that, in the meantime, retroactive funding may be possible for

proposals that were not awarded funds this fall, if revised and re-submitted during the next application cycle.

- Kukreja spoke with Padula, and Padula placed the OT concerns on the Agenda for the first meeting of the spring semester.

Tomlin expressed the concern that because the research applications were for graduate thesis projects already in their initial stages of implementation, retroactive funding would fall so late in the semester that it would make it impossible to restructure student projects with enough time for appropriate implementation.

Terry Beck noted that the tone of the memo suggested that the subcommittee acted unethically. He explained a bit of the process:

- There were 32 applicants and two readers evaluated each application.
- If both readers did not feel the application warranted funding, it was not discussed further.
- For all applications that received at least one positive evaluation, members of the subcommittee engaged in a discussion of merit.
- There was a clear difference in quality between applications that were awarded funding and those that were not.
- This was a very strong group of applications and all were carefully considered. The student research budget has remained stagnant for a number of years, which makes the work very challenging.

Padula noted that since no OT faculty contacted her directly regarding their concerns, the memo to the Senate (sent over winter break before the UEC reconvened) was unexpected. She also noted that the memo to the Senate mentioned that members of the UEC had spoken to members of OT faculty, though it is unknown what members spoke to whom. Padula requested that any future concerns be addressed directly to the committee chair (vs. by individual UEC members) who can most accurately represent committee business in an official capacity.

Possible next steps:

- Open up a discussion with the UEC about whether further information about how applicants should address budget discrepancies should be published on our website and in applications.
- Open up a conversation with the UEC about potentially publicizing the potential for retroactive funding on a case-by-case basis.

Conclusion:

Tomlin expressed his confusion as to where this leaves the students who were denied funding last semester and how he will explain the change in funding. Padula reiterated that the subcommittee fairly evaluated the large number of applications, that they were dealing with a restricted budget, and noting that OT had a number of applications that were not funded, the UEC proactively reached out to OT providing specific feedback about what would help them in the future.

In closing, it was determined that the meeting time for this semester will be on Wednesdays from 8 – 9am.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50am.

Respectfully submitted,


Jess K. Smith, UEC Committee Member

Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre Arts