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Appreciation to CPI Sponsors

The Council of Principal Investigators thanks Texas A&M University, Texas Engineering Experiment Station, Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A&M Health Science Center, Texas AgriLife Research, and the Texas A&M Research Foundation for the annual funding they provide the CPI for its operating expenses, as well as the salary of the CPI support staff. In addition, the CPI would like to thank the Texas A&M University Division of Research and Graduate Studies, which hosts and provides support for the CPI website and the printing of monthly meeting agendas and materials and other valuable resources.

Summary of August 11, 2010 CPI Meeting

At the August 11, 2010 CPI meeting, Dr. Karan Watson, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, provided an update on the budget and reallocation process. Ms. Katherine Rojo del Busto, Executive Associate Vice President for Administration and Legal Affairs/Chief of Staff for the Division of Research and Graduate Studies, provided an update on the activities of the Export Controls Task Force. The August 11, 2010 meeting agenda and materials, including a video recording, can be found at http://cpi.tamu.edu/CPI_8.11.10.pdf.

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Preview of October 13, 2010 CPI Meeting

Currently, the October 13, 2010 CPI meeting will be a closed session meeting, with only CPI elected members in attendance to discuss initiatives for the 2010-2011 academic year.

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Open Forums on the Strategic Budget Reallocation Process

Dr. R. Bowen Loftin, President of Texas A&M University, is hosting five open forums on the Strategic Budget Reallocation. The first open forum, Improving our Graduate Program, was held on Friday, September 3, 2010. Complete information on the remaining open forums and the budget process can be found at: http://provost.tamu.edu/strategic-planning-2010/strategic-budget-reallocation-process.

All of the open forums below will be held in Rudder 601. If you cannot attend in person, you can watch the broadcast live on Campus Cable Channel 82 or via the web (Windows Media format) on TTVN Channel 20 at http://ttvn.tamu.edu/streams. You can submit questions to be answered during each forum to askthepresident@tamu.edu.

- Enhancing the Undergraduate Experience: Tuesday, Sept. 7, 4-5:30 p.m.
- Facilities Improvement: Thursday, Sept. 9, 10:30 a.m. to noon
- Elevating the Faculty (Teaching, Research and Service): Wednesday, Sept. 15, 1-2:30 p.m.
- Institutional Functionality: Friday, Sept. 17, 10:30 a.m.-noon

Research Administration Shared Services (RASS): Consultant's PI Survey

This update is intended to provide a brief update on the status of the evaluation of research administration by Schaefer & Company LLC to identify organizational and efficiency improvement opportunities for the System.

As part of the engagement, Schaefer & Company surveyed a sample of 2,338 leading research faculty to understand customer satisfaction levels and perceptions about organizational resources and assessed needs in pre and post award services, in meeting their research administrative needs. Of the PI’s surveyed, they received responses from 820, for a response rate of 35.1 percent.

They surveyed 191 research administration employees, asking them to provide their ideas and perspectives on potential operational improvements areas, and to estimate where they spend their time among core processes and sub-processes in pre and post award service areas. 156 employees responded, for an 81.7 percent response rate.

They also surveyed 115 of the largest TAMUS research sponsors in which various System members act as research administrator, to understand their perceptions concerning organizational resources, services and responsiveness of research administration and related recommendations for improvements. Of these 115, 34 sponsors responded, representing a 29.6 percent response rate.
Schaefer & Company is in the process of analyzing the survey response data as well as the data provided by all the System members and the Research Foundation. It is also meeting with stakeholders and sharing preliminary conclusions based on the data collected to obtain feedback. As they consider the feedback from stakeholders they are working towards finalizing their conclusions and recommendations for presentation to the Board of Regents on September 23, 2010.

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EPIK-MAESTRO Working Group

The EPIK-MAESTRO Working Group met on September 2, 2010. The group received an update on improvements being made on the Researcher and Executive Portals. The group also began detailed discussion related to the Pre-Award function. The primary modules to be included in this function include Funding Opportunity; Proposal Information; Key Personnel Bios and Workload; Compliance; Budget; Subcontracts; Negotiation; and Submission. The three modules that will be developed first are Funding Opportunity, Proposal, and Compliance. Subcommittees are being formed for these modules to formulate needs and requirements that will be vetted with the Working Group and then forwarded to the Steering Committee. The next meeting of the Working Group will take place on Thursday, October 7, 2010. For more information on the Working Group’s activities or to provide input for the pre-award modules under development, please contact Beverly Kuhn at b-kuhn@tamu.edu or 979-862-3558.

Contact:
Dr. Beverly Kuhn, b-kuhn@tamu.edu

Biosafety Advisory Committee Update

The Biosafety Advisory Committee (BAC) met on Aug. 27, 2010 between 9-10 am. In the series of presentations made by the PIs/Departments from various colleges regarding the experiences of the PIs with the Biosafety Office & related entities, the last overview was presented by Dr. Michael Pishko, Department Head - Chemical Engineering. Based on the information gathered so far, BAC will compile a preliminary report summarizing the concerns and needs of the PIs and will make the first set of recommendations to the VPR with specific suggestions that can help to improve the experience of the PIs with the Biosafety Office while being compliant with the requirements laid out by various state and national agencies. A draft version of the report and the recommendations will be circulated to the committee members by the chair Dr. Bhanu Chowdhary by September 6, 2010 so that the committee can discuss the same at the next meeting.

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Transportation Services Advisory Committee

The Transportation Services Advisory Committee held its first meeting of the year on August 23, 2010. The group tabled the selection of Committee Co-Chairman until a future meeting when more members are in attendance. The setting of a recurring meeting date was also tabled until input from all members
is obtained. The majority of the discussion during the meeting covered the review and update of the Transportation Services tow policy. The key issues up for discussion included details on the current tow policy, the presentation of best practices from peer institutions, the desire to reconcile policy and practice, and the benefits and revenue implications of implementing best practices. The committee provided considerable discussion and Transportation Services representatives will address those comments prior to the next presentation to the TSAC. Other items briefly reviewed included updates on the car-sharing program, the utilities update project, transit software implementation, west campus visitor parking, the addition of bike racks at ISLB and WCG. The next meeting of the TSAC will take place on Wednesday, September 22, 2010. Information on the TSAC can be found on the TSAC website at http://transport.tamu.edu/tsac.aspx. For more information on the committee’s activities, please contact Beverly Kuhn at b-kuhn@tamu.edu or 979-862-3558.

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Undergraduate Student-Faculty Research Expo
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The Texas A&M University Chapter of Sigma Xi, the scientific research society, will have an Undergraduate Student-Faculty Expo on Wednesday, October 6, 2010 from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. in the Interdisciplinary Life Sciences Building lobby. The Expo will promote and introduce students interested in research opportunities in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines. Food and prizes will be available. For more information please click on the following link: http://cpi.tamu.edu/research_expo.pdf.

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The JoAnn Treat Research Excellence Award
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As a reminder, nominations for the 2010 JoAnn Treat Research Excellence Award are due to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Dr. Frank Ashley, by September 27, 2010. August 27, 2010, as reported in the July 2010 CPI newsletter, was the deadline for nominations to the researcher's College Dean or equivalent.

The JoAnn Treat Research Excellence Award was established by the Texas A&M Research Foundation. Candidates should be leaders in their field, their research should have a dramatic impact on their discipline(s), their research should be conducted through the Research Foundation, and they must be at least 41 years of age by December 31, 2010. For additional information, please see the original July 6, 2010 memo at: http://cpi.tamu.edu/JATmemo2010.pdf.

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CPI Brochure
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The CPI has an informational brochure available at http://cpi.tamu.edu/10_CPIbrochure.pdf. The brochure includes a brief history of the CPI; who the Council represents; activities; governance; mission
and purpose; and communication resources for the PI community. For questions or suggestions about the brochure, please contact the CPI Coordinator, Jason Whisenant, at jwhisenant@tamu.edu or 979-458-1861.

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