



Council of Principal Investigators

CPI Newsletter – December 2015

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Update from Dr. Helene Andrews-Polymenis, CPI Chair

Top CPI priority areas, Sponsored Research Services and improving graduate student education and support, remain discussion topics with administrators at all levels.

On the SRS front, several things are moving forward. In the past few months the Transition Services Operations committee, a committee appointed by the Vice President for Research to facilitate improving operations at Sponsored Research Services, has made several important recommendations that have been approved and implemented (the establishment of “automatic” interim funding, providing notices of “award in house” etc.). A separate search committee has undertaken the search for new leadership at SRS, and as we understand it this process is well underway. The CPI has representatives on both of these important committees (I am serving on the TSOC committee along with additional faculty members Wolfgang Bangerth (Science) and Les Morey (Liberal Arts), and Loren Skow (CVM) represents the CPI on the search committee for a director of SRS). Finally, Dr. B. Don Russell, in his role as Transitional Facilitator for SRS, continues to guide SRS through this transition and work directly with SRS staff and the PI community to address issues as they arise. My hope is that SRS becomes a truly excellent resource for grants administration, one that allows us to be ever more competitive for extramural funding, and that PIs and SRS staff will come to view one another as invaluable members of the same team in obtaining and managing extramural funding. ***As CPI Chair I ask for your continued patience and support for SRS. While this transition proceeds, as always, please feel free to bring your questions and concerns regarding this process either to Dr. Russell or myself.***

Also in the past month, the CPI leadership met with President Young to discuss whether research active faculty, via the CPI, could participate in proposing research priorities for the capital campaign and in improving graduate student support and education. President Young invited us to use the CPI to bring big picture research ideas forward, as well as identify several areas where investments in graduate education would have the highest impact. I will establish two CPI led committees to make recommendations in these two areas.

In other activities, myself and other CPI members participated on your behalf in the interviews of the three finalists for the Dean of Faculties position. It is my understanding that the interviews are now complete, and we await a decision on the appointment of a new Dean of Faculties.

CPI members and other faculty participated enthusiastically in a working group to provide feedback on and suggest improvements to the usability of Maestro. A second meeting of this group is planned to gather further feedback. Finally, the CPI has been invited to nominate a member to the Export Control Working Group. Dr. Tahir Cagin has kindly agreed to serve in this role (Engineering).

Thank you for your continuous participation, providing feedback, and attending CPI meetings! You continue to provide very valuable input on the research environment, gathered from your colleagues and units. The CPI EC and I work diligently to bring issues, concerns and suggestions regarding improvements to the research environment to the attention of the administration. Please feel free to alert us to any issues or concerns you may have regarding research at cpi@tamu.edu or email/call me directly at handrews@medicine.tamhsc.edu or 979.436.0340.

The CPI meeting on Wednesday, December 9th, 2015 will be webcast live at ttvn.tamu.edu/webcasts on Channel 20, and videos are stored on the “[Archives](#)” section of the CPI website.

CPI Executive Committee Meeting Summary

The CPI EC met for its monthly coordination meeting on December 2nd with invited guest from the Texas A&M Foundation and administrators from the Texas A&M Health Science Center, Texas A&M University, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, and TEES.

The group received updates that the SRS Transition and Services Operations Committee (TSOC) is making progress. Dr. Andrews-Polymenis reported that PIs involvement on this committee has been very positive

because issues of concern from SRS are sometimes not seen by PIs and vice versa. Dr. Laine provided an update on SRS and on the search for a new director for SRS. The SRS Executive Search Committee has identified several competitive candidates for the SRS director position and qualified individuals are currently being contacted.

An overview of the new capital campaign was provided by Mr. Mark Klemm, the Texas A&M Foundations Campaign Director. Although this campaign has been in a silent phase for 2 years, the official kick-off took place on November 6th. Mr. Klemm reported that this campaign emphasizes academic excellence and addressing global issues, and that donors today are very interested in the potential impact their gifts will facilitate. Mr. Klemm will present a short introduction to the Capital Campaign at the December 9th CPI meeting.

The CPI EC discussed the January CPI meeting and plans for it being a closed meeting for CPI members only to plan for 2016 and establish two new committees: 1) CPI committee to formulate list of high impact research areas; and 2) CPI committee to focus on areas where investments in graduate education would have high impact.

Transportation Services Advisory Committee Update, Margaret Hobson

Transportation Services is considering making two changes regarding their handling of parking violations. First, although more than 95% of the parking fines are collected, there is still more than \$100,000 each year that is not collected. Given the increasing expenses that Transportation Services is experiencing and the limit imposed on increasing student fees, they are looking to recover some, if not most, of these unpaid parking fines. Student fines are collected because they are added to their tuition and fees bill, and students cannot register without paying all outstanding fines. Faculty and staff fines are collected since you cannot renew your parking permit without paying them. The unpaid fines are from former students, one-time visitors, and people in the local community who are not affiliated with the university.

Transportation Services proposes to contract with a collection agency to collect these unpaid fines. The University of Texas at Austin, among many other universities, already uses a collection agency. Furthermore, the warning letters already sent out state that unpaid balances may be turned over to a collection agency. Having an unpaid parking fine turned over to a collection agency does NOT impact credit scores. Only balances unpaid after 90 days (with 4 warning letters) would be turned over. Transportation Services would like to hear from CPI members about any potential concerns.

The second proposed change is to add car “booting” instead of or in addition to the current towing policy. The current policy calls for towing cars that are in immediate need of removal (in a reserved numbered space at the request of the space owner), in a fire lane, in a handicap spot, or otherwise blocking traffic. They also tow cars that have a significant number of unpaid parking tickets. The proposal is to continue to tow cars that need immediate removal, but boot the cars with unpaid fines. Towing requires up to 2 hours of the parking officer’s time plus the involvement of a supervisor. In addition, it is a considerable expense and inconvenience for the individual towed; they must pay all outstanding fines plus towing costs and reclaim their car in a remote location. Booting would take a few minutes of the parking officer’s time and could be resolved with a phone call by the car owner (depending on the type of boot). Booting fees are significantly lower than towing fees. Booting also has the further benefit of being a visible warning to other drivers.

Questions or concerns about either of these changes may be directed to Ms. Debbie Hoffman, Associate Director of Transportation Services dhoffmann@tamu.edu.

Research Development Fund - Advisory Committee announces deadlines for spring 2016

The Research Development Fund committees are currently reviewing the second round of applications for RDF funding. The Research Development Fund – Advisory Committee (RDF-AC) has posted new submission dates and deadlines for spring 2016 applications. Please review the RDF website at rdf.tamu.edu for the list of dates.

Upcoming Agency Deadlines from Sponsored Research Services (SRS)

NIH Notice regarding ASSIST

NIH Announces New Policies Regarding 1) Inclusion of Sex as a Biological Variable and 2) Improvement of Reproducibility in applications and progress reports:

Beginning with applications due January 25, 2016, PIs will have to demonstrate strong scientific premise, rigorous experimental design, and consideration of sex and other biological variables in the Research Strategy section of their applications. Reviewers will factor this information into their overall impact scores. [Click here](#) for more information.

Contact:

Dr. Jim Joyce, Associate Executive Director – jrjoyce@tamu.edu, 979-458-5852

Sign up for notifications about Limited Submission Proposal opportunities

The list of current Limited Submission Proposal (LSP) opportunities, maintained by the Division of Research, is available at <https://u.tamu.edu/LSP>.

To receive notifications about new LSP opportunities as soon as they are announced, email Ms. Shelly Martin at shelly.martin@tamu.edu.

Bulletin for Principal Investigators – Issued weekly by the Division of Research, Texas A&M University

The Division of Research at Texas A&M University issues a brief weekly bulletin for Principal Investigators that highlights research accomplishments and projects, funding opportunities, honors and promotions, workshops, and other items that may be of interest to the PI community.

[Click here](#) to subscribe or unsubscribe to the bulletin. [Click here](#) to submit items for consideration for an upcoming bulletin.

Upcoming Seminars and Workshops for Texas A&M Researchers

The Division of Research (DOR) offers seminars and workshops throughout the year relating to professional development in research proposal planning and writing. All of these events are coordinated by [Research Development Services \(RDS\)](#), a DOR unit providing a wide range of support to Texas A&M researchers. The new RDS calendar can be found at <http://vpr.tamu.edu/researchdevelopment/calendars>.