

## Research Policies Committee

Minutes of April 29, 2021

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**Present:** Chair Natalie Colabianchi, Maddy Paxson, Irene St Charles, Allen Liu, Zenon Sommers, Teri Rosales, Jay Vornhagen, Marisa Conte, Nicholas Harris, Robert Ploutz-Snyder, Elizabeth Devlin

**Absent:** Hafiz Malik, Mimi Dalaly, Vania Hinkovska-Galcheva, Vitaliy Popov

**Guests:** Tabbye Chavous, Associate Vice-President for Research-Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts, UM Office of Research, Professor of Psychology, Program Director, National Center for Institutional Diversity, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and Professor of Education, School of Education;

Huda Akil, Gardner C Quarton Distinguished University Professor of Neurosciences, Gardner C Quarton Collegiate Professor of Neurosciences in the Michigan Neuroscience Institute, Professor of Psychiatry and Research Professor, Michigan Neuroscience Institute, Medical School

11:03 Chair Colabianchi called the meeting to order.

A motion was made to approve the minutes from the March 19, 2021 meeting, the motion was seconded. There being no further discussion the minutes were approved by the committee.

Chair Colabianchi introduced the guest speakers Tabbye Chavous and Huda Akil.

Tabbye Chaves shared that they will give an overview of the work conducted during the Fall term surrounding the impact of COVID-19 on the university research communities. The committee was to bring together some researchers in different career stages and to engage around the questions of immediate concerns and immediate steps of relief and what is the long-term impact. The slides will contextualize the work of the group.

### **Presentation: Covid 19 impacts and research disparities: Immediate Challenges and relief steps**

Co-chairs Tabbye Chavous and Huda Akil Fall (2020)

Tabbye Chavous described the committee make-up that included those in administrative roles, junior and senior faculty, staff, and post-doctoral fellows and researchers.

- Committee Objectives:
  - Recommend immediate low-cost actionable steps that OVPR can take support or advocate for reduced inequities caused by COVID-19 researchers
  - To recommend criteria by which impacts will be measurable.
  - To align with and seek partnership with other groups on campus.
- Guiding Principles
  - Challenges, disparities, and research productivity are interrelated.
  - Addressing these challenges and disparities is a university imperative and obligation as a human organization.
  - Some immediate action needed, need ongoing.
  - Coordination and leverage across efforts are essential.
- Categories of Challenges
  - Career disruption, family care, research continuity (People being able to continue their work a big theme in the financial freeze), research time recovery, internal communications, and personal impacts.

#### Key short-term recommendations

- Research continuity – Lift spending restrictions on research funds.
- Research time recovery – Units might consider short-term service releases and adjusting in teaching assignment being planned currently, based on transparent equity principles.
- Family care – To support researchers with added childcare needs, adapt existing resources such as Family helpers or other online tools to support family pod formation; maximize flexibility in existing policies for childcare funding/access.

Overview of what they still are learning as the pandemic continues including, impact on women scientist, faculty time devoted to supporting student mental health, faculty researchers at all stages impacted, unique negative impacts for humanities faculty researchers, and losses in quality professional networking opportunities through online conference formats.

Professor Akil wanted to underscore that this coming moment in time is a really important point where people could spiral out even further or you could bring them back and so they can feel supported so life can go back on track.

#### Committee discussion and questions:

SACUA liaison Liu shared that during an ADVANCE meeting the return to in person teaching seemed to be divided and indicated that going back should be a transition and not an immediate circumstance. He asked the speakers their thoughts on research recovery time through teaching during the pandemic.

Professor Akil responded that a simple low-cost solution would be to create a pool of expertise where faculty can describe what they are willing to talk about and teach. This would be a way for faculty to connect with other faculty for when they are creating a class. It would lessen the pressures, promote research time recovery, and create a better community and support each other in a meaningful way.

Chair Colabianchi asked about the systematic survey that units are conducting on COVID-19 impacts and what is the mechanism and how they are creating an evaluation and if it is the most efficient way to do it.

Tabbye Chavous responded that the COVID-19 impacts are not being captured in a systematic way. Some schools and colleges are requesting impact statements, while others are trying to lessen the pressure on their time by having them list COVID-19 as a reason. This, while alleviating the pressure, will not fully capture how different scholars have been impacted across the university.

The committee suggested adding information that is not tenure track faculty orientated. The communication about flexibility from the top down would be very helpful. Although the flexibility is being offered, specifically to research staff, they are not necessarily taking it because they believe it may be perceived negatively.

Tabbye Chavous responded that it is an important point and that is an inequity embedded in that they can make more visible.

Committee members asked how this recommendation set and report is contextualized within existing inequities within the university prior to covid.

Tabbye Chavous indicated the charge was short-term recommendations, but it did emerge over the course of the work that looking into the areas around culture, structure, and practices that were problematic to begin with should be investigated further.

Chair Colabianchi thanked them and Tabbye Chavous and Professor Akil left the meeting at 11:43

**Follow-up questions for Dr. Teri Rosales:**

Chair Colabianchi asked committee member Rosales how the RPC could help support ODEI in facilitating more action items around research in their DEI plans.

- Committee Member Rosales suggested:
  - The RPC could bring forward the existing tools and resources available across the university that could be shared and used more broadly in research.
  - UMOR will have a year of self-evaluation of the DEI efforts and is possible that the RPC could be helpful in contributing capacity and taking direction. An RPC member could potentially be part of the DEI evaluation committee.

**Year in review, goals for next year:**

Chair Colabianchi let the committee know that the name change for the RPC to Research Advisory Committee will be voted on by the Senate Assembly on May 10. She asked the committee for suggestions for future goals for RPC.

- The committee discussed RPC future goals and topics and the unique role of the committee as advisory faculty.
  - The committee agreed to the continuation of the DEI goal and its intersection with research.
  - The committee will address research issues as they arise.

Chair Colabianchi thanked the committee for their work throughout the year. Committee members thanked Chair Colabianchi for her stewardship.

12:00pm Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Elizabeth Devlin  
Faculty Senate Office