



Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

Minutes of Meeting: 12/8/25

Circulated: DATE

Approved: DATE

Present: Orsolya Lautner-Csorba (Chair), Quentin Stout, William A. Calvo-Quirós, Fadh Alakwaa, Greg Rybarczyk, Magda Ivanova, Jesse Capecelatro (SACUA), Alena Stocking (OVPR), Arthur Lupia (Vice President for Research and Innovation)

Absent: Audrey Bennett, Karen Downing, Seth Guikema, Tyler Nix, Mrinal Sarkar, Nina White

Guests:

Don Jordan, Senior Director of Research Communications

Lisa Prosser, Associate Vice President for Research-Health Sciences and Research Faculty Affairs, Office of the Vice President for Research

Faculty Senate Office: Eric Vandenberghe

1:01pm-1:03pm: Call to Order, Approval of Agenda and Minutes, Announcements

The agenda was approved. The minutes for the October RAC meeting were approved.

1:03pm-1:31pm: OVPR Communications Strategy

Summary: The Chair welcomes and thanks the guests for attending the meeting. Senior Director Jordan proceeds to provide an overview of Research Communications, a unit within OVPR. This is a seven-person team. This unit helps promote research across the university in a myriad of media formats, both internally and externally. All services are rooted in collaboration. They take great care to represent faculty work accurately and fairly.

The *Michigan Research* Newsletter is an aspect of Research Communications that is highlighted. This is a monthly newsletter that has approximately 91,000 subscribers of both internal UM community members, and external individuals. Further metrics are shared that provide context for the reach of the newsletter. In early 2025, the scope of the newsletter was updated to emphasize the importance of research conducted at UM to the community.

The newsletter focuses on original storytelling, compelling video/photo content, and thought leader opinion pieces to engage with its audience. Senior Director Jordan describes collaborations with academic units to explore research changing people's lives. Future topics for the newsletter in the coming months include poverty solutions, artificial intelligence, and unit collaboration, among others.

A member asks how Research Communications gathers their stories. It is indicated that one of the major avenues for procuring stories is working closely with communication leaders



at the unit level. Other means of gathering stories are shared. The committee is encouraged to offer feedback on how this process could be improved. A member indicates the need to engage with print media to reach different generations.

A member indicates that there is a need to demystify the University's work with Los Alamos. There is an uptick in misinformation related to this relationship, and it is negatively impacting faculty involved, as it has led to increased harassment. The member encourages UM to put out further clarifying statements. The committee proceeds to discuss this subject.

VP Lupia discusses strategies to galvanize lawmakers and the public that emphasizes research impact from the onset of any media piece on faculty research. A successful example of this with a federal lawmaker is discussed.

The guest is thanked for his presentation and discussion.

Action: Discussion

1:31pm-1:43pm: Research Track Faculty Update

Summary: The Chair introduces AVP Prosser to the meeting. AVP Prosser provides the committee with an update on 2026 updates to the research scientist criteria review. She shares figures showing that there are 740 faculty members who are either a research investigator, scientist, or professor. Further figures are shared that break this number down by individual units. Most faculty that fit this description reside in the Medical School and the College of Engineering, although there are some in many other units as well.

A committee was formed to review research scientist appointment and promotion criteria. The criteria for the research scientist track were created in 2008 and updated in 2019 and 2024. This committee was charged with performing a full review of the criteria. Primary areas for committee review included faculty contributions to the university mission, as well as evolving roles in team science. This review is relevant to the Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Flint campuses.

The committee met five times between March and October this past year. There was broad representation across units and campuses. The committee reviewed internal data on research scientists. They conducted a comparison of appt/promotion criteria to staff scientist titles and research professor pathway. The committee also reviewed benchmarking data across 11 peer institutions.

The committee provided several recommendations. These included:

- revising criteria to reflect additional scholarly contributions,
- revising criteria to remove required PI status for full Research Scientist,
- replacing requirement for two arm's length external letters with requirement for minimum 2 non-arm's length external letters; 5 internal/external letters required
- No change to the time in rank requirements, but provide more transparent information on extensions
- Establishing a workgroup to address climate issues for research track faculty in partnership with the Provost's office

A list of potential scholarly contributions is shared. These are items that are not always



recognized in appointment and promotion criteria, but the committee recognizes as accomplishments that should be considered.

The committee will work on sharing their findings with stakeholder group (as they are in this meeting) through the Winter term. In June the revised criteria will be disseminated in the annual promotion memo. Implementation is expected in September 2027.

The guest is thanked for her presentation and discussion.

Action: Discussion

1:43pm-2:01pm: Open Conversation, Q&A

Summary: Prior to the meeting, the Chair distributed a questionnaire among committee members requesting feedback on the closure of CSCAR and other emerging issues. The question addressed during the remainder of the meeting pertains to the closure of the Consulting for Statistics, Computing & Analytics Research (CSCAR).

Committee members expressed concerns regarding the closure of CSCAR, which previously supported many faculty members across various schools and departments with their statistical needs. They emphasized the importance of having an easily accessible institute like CSCAR on campus, noting that its services contribute significantly to the quality and prestige of research at the University. Members also asked whether, if the closure of CSCAR is not reversible, there could be an opportunity to establish a new center that offers similarly high-quality statistical analysis services—accessible to all faculty—for both quantitative and qualitative research. A further question is posed as to how it would be financed, particularly considering it would need to be used by UM community members who could not otherwise afford the service.

VP Lupia discusses the budget at UM, and what went into the budgetary decisions OVPR made last summer. He proceeds to explain the primary functions of OVPR. Compliance is the primary function, and funding dedicated to that aspect of their duties cannot be deviated. Further functions of OVPR are discussed.

The costs of CSCAR are shared. VP Lupia discusses the ongoing efforts to provide the services offered by CSCAR in a more cost-effective model moving forward. Further announcements with more details will be made in the coming months. AVP Prosser discusses that OVPR has reviewed peer institutions for comparative models. Resources that are available at this time are discussed and are listed on the [CSCAR website](#).

The Chair thanked OVPR for their engagement in this matter and offered the committee as a sounding board for future decision-making on similar issues. The Chair also expressed the committee's willingness to assist in finding solutions that best serve faculty needs.

Action: Discussion, Recommendations for OVPR regarding CSCAR, Questionnaire for gaining feedback from Faculty regarding Research Communication

2:01pm: Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,



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