

University Research Committee

Summary of Activities, 2021-2022, Academic Year 1 June 2022

The URC conducted eight 60-90-minute meetings during the 2021-2022 academic year (9/30/2021, 10/28/2021, 11/18/2021, 12/14/2021, 2/15/2022, 3/21/2022, 4/7/2022, and 5/18/2022).

Professor Cinnamon Carlarne (College of Law) served as Chair and Dr. Eric Johnson (University Libraries) as Vice-Chair. Professor Carlarne has been re-elected as chair for the 2022-23 academic year.

In addition to regular updates from, and consultations with Vice President of Research Peter Mohler & Senior Associate Vice President for Research Jan Weisenberger from the Office of Research and Associate Vice President Susan Garfinkel from the Office of Research Compliance as well as meetings with Provost Melissa Gilliam and Vice Provost Helen Malone, the 2021-2022 activities of the URC focused on four primary areas:

1. *Overarching Research Questions with Interdisciplinary & DEI/ Implications:* The URC focused on several overarching research challenges this year that implicated the University's ability to support interdisciplinary research and to create a truly inclusive research community. The URC continuing to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the research community, with particular emphasis on the impacts on historically underrepresented communities and junior faculty members (including a briefing by Helen Malone on how the challenges are being addressed in the promotion & tenure process). In addition, the URC was briefed by Ajit Chaudhari Chair, University Senate Diversity Committee on ongoing challenges for interdisciplinary faculty that work with students from other units but are not credited (financially) for the teaching and supervision work they do with graduate students from other units. The Committee believed that more data was needed to understand this challenge but agreed that persistent problems exist with respect to support of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research, teaching, and advising and noted that the Committee would like to focus on this topic in future meetings/years. The URC was also briefed by Caroline Wagner, Chair, Honorary Degrees Committee, on the persistent problem of the under-citation of women and people of color. Dr. Wagner presented data on the degree to which women are cited less often than men, receive fewer grants and lower grant ratings, are often negatively affected by student evaluations. Similar inequities with respect to people of color were also discussed. Dr. Wagner offered suggestions for how OSU could respond to these inequities, including through citation adjustments, norm changes etc. The Committee did not arrive at common ground with respect to a solution but agreed that this should be a continuing topic of focus for the URC.
2. *Workday:* The URC continued to serve as a repository for researchers to share difficulties they encountered with the Workday transition. As in 2020-2021, URC communicated these concerns to the appropriate offices on campus. Workday challenges were a topic of focus during early Fall discussions in the URC but gradually faded to a background topic as OSU leadership, particularly the Office of Research, continued to make progress in addressing key Workday challenges.
3. *Outside Activities & Conflicts Policy:* The URC was briefed on several occasions (by Susan Garfinkle, Jessica Tobias, & Ben West) on the university's new, combined *Outside Activities and Conflicts Policy*, which was in the process of being revised and open to review and comment. The Committee offered extensive feedback to the team charged with implementing the new policy.

Committee feedback focused on academic freedom, clarifying what types of professional service requires approval, avoiding changes that would constrain faculty members' ability to provide immediate advice/work on pressing policy matters, maintaining discretion at the College/Unit level, and avoiding high level administrative mission creep.

4. *Overarching Opportunities & Impediments to Research at Ohio State*: Over the year, a primary point of focus for the URC was on identifying overarching research obstacles and opportunities at the Ohio State University. In addition to multiple conversations among the full Committee, a small group consisting of: Sunny Zong, Eric Hantz, Mara Frazier, Rita Pickler, Susan Cole, Eric Johnson, and Cinnamon Carlarne met on multiple occasions to develop a policy document that could be transmitted to OSU leadership. The goal of these meetings and the resulting memorandum was to identify key challenges to research excellence at Ohio State and to prompt Ohio State leadership to think across these challenges collectively. In May 2022, the resulting memorandum was transmitted to Vice President Peter Mohler on behalf of the 2021-2022 University Research Committee. In transmitting the memo, the Committee requested feedback from the OSU leadership team, including information about which person(s)/division(s) has responsibility for each of the key challenge-areas we identify as well as timelines relating to how the leadership team envisions responding to both the discrete and overarching challenges. The 2022-2023 URC hopes to continue working on these challenges and we look forward to doing so in cooperation with the Ohio State leadership team. The text of the memorandum follows.

**TO: The Ohio State University Leadership Team c/o Vice President for Research,
Dr. Peter Mohler**

FROM: University Research Committee (2021-2022)

RE: Research Obstacles & Opportunities at the Ohio State University

Mission Statement

The Ohio State University is a world class R1 university with the potential to deepen and widen its global influence. The faculty, staff, and students at Ohio State are its greatest strength. While Ohio State provides exceptional opportunities and resources to its community, and while the community at Ohio State individually and collectively achieves great things, more is possible. Like many large and complex institutions, Ohio State struggles with excessive bureaucracy, poor pathways of communication, and a perceived absence of transparency. Over time, these challenges have deepened with the effect of creating serious obstacles to research at Ohio State. These obstacles negatively affect productivity, threaten well-being, undermine hiring and retention, and compound existing systemic and structural inequities. Identifying and responding to institutional barriers to research will have cascading positive impacts for Ohio State.

Background & Principles

Ohio State has some of the greatest researchers in the world. Too many of these persons think Ohio State creates obstacles to research that limit their ability to achieve their fullest potential, and otherwise undermine the individual and collective excellence of the University. Many of these obstacles compound existing inequities across multiple lines e.g., race, gender, and academic seniority and position, as well as between different divisions on campus (e.g., more and less well-resourced colleges and departments).

There is a greater need for shared governance premised on the importance of transparency, inclusive participation, and equity. This is especially true with respect to high level decision-making processes that have ripple effects across campus (e.g., People Soft, Box, Workday).

There is an urgent need for Ohio State to identify and respond to research barriers that limit research excellence and deepen structural inequalities (e.g., inefficiencies and poor management of project management, grant and IRB processes, contracting, coordination with external partners, research purchasing).

While COVID has created many challenges for research, it has also provided lessons in flexibility and adaptability. Ohio State's rapid and ongoing response to the pandemic demonstrates its capability to be nimble and adapt to change when needed. This is a lesson that we can apply moving forward as the University positions itself to be a world class institution leading from the front in research, teaching, and service.

Key Areas of Challenge

Recognizing that there are widespread efforts across campus, including by Senate committees, administrators, student groups and others to address individual topics (e.g., Workday or graduate support), with this document the URC hopes to highlight the ways in which these individual challenges intersect and overlap to create research challenges. That is, the combined effect of many of these challenges creates cumulative impediments to research. Some of these impediments are quantifiable – e.g., lost time, lost partnerships, lost or delayed grant income. Other impediments, however, are harder to quantify but equally harmful – e.g., effects on morale, high levels of stress and frustration, equity-based harms. These factors intersect to affect research creativity, research productivity, hiring, and retention.

To be precise and offer a high-level picture, we have chosen to group research-based impediments into four broad categories: research processes; IT/data management; human resources; hiring and retention. For each of these categories, we list and briefly describe different challenges. The topics we discuss are examples; they are not exhaustive of other issues that could fall under these headings. These challenges focus on areas where we think it is entirely possible for Ohio State to improve its system in ways that benefit the research enterprise.

Research Processes:

- **IRB Process:** There is widespread perception that Ohio State's IRB process is overly complex and inefficient as compared to peer schools. For example, our pre-screening process takes several weeks and does not focus on "harm reduction to participants." Rather, the pre-screening process seems to focus on minor issues and edits. Overall, it slows down the entire IRB approval by several weeks or months
- **Contracting:** There are widely recognized problems with contracting. Although the University is making efforts to improve the ease and efficiency of these processes, they remain burdensome for researchers and for research support officers in ways that both impede research and create high levels of stress and frustration.
- **Project Management:** Project management practices at Ohio State are inconsistent and often burdensome, particularly for research support officers. Most units on campus are understaffed resulting in inconsistencies and inefficiencies in project management that impede research (e.g., prolonged processes for projects with complicated compliance

aspects, such as Export Control, due to the increasingly complicated federal regulation framework as well as staff turnover in the office.)

- Challenges Working with Internal & External Partners: Although we recognize the necessity of “firewalls” to protect University systems and personnel, there are additional unnecessary barriers to collaborations among University researchers and with researchers external to the University. These barriers include difficulties sharing files (even those without HIPA or other identifiable data), communicating via video systems (Zoom, Teams), and setting up agreements for data sharing or data transfer.

IT/Data Management:

- Mandatory Review of Software: while researchers understand the need for mandatory review for security purposes, current policies are outdated and inflexible and create unnecessary research barriers and inefficiencies (e.g., challenges in acquiring new software due to the inefficiencies in processes for accepting the licensing agreements without the involvement of Business and Finance).
- Vita/P&T Processes: Despite frequent shifts in the dossier management system, OSU’s promotion and tenure system is outdated and ill-suited for a modern research institution. Similarly, there are concerns about the substance of promotion processes across campus. The intersection of procedural challenges (vita) and substantive challenges (e.g., equity-based concerns) create widespread anxiety among faculty. While we have known of the procedural and substantive challenges for years, progress in moving forward has been slow and there are concerns that the process – and efforts to evolve the process – fail to adequately address ongoing equity-based concerns around promotion and retention (e.g., continuing underrepresentation of women and historically underrepresented groups, disparate levels of citations for women and people of color)
- Forced Updates: enterprise-wide management of technology assets can sometimes feel like an overreach that impedes productivity. For example, forced updates, password expirations, and dual authentication that requires the use of a personal device to gain access.
- Data Repository Policy: New policies regarding data repositories, although required by some funding agencies, were not announced, or described. No training has been provided about when repositories are needed. Different responses have been provided by different staff at the IRB, requiring researchers to develop workarounds to address needs for on-going research.

Human Resources:

- Workday: The problems with Workday are well-documented, but we wish to highlight that the way in which the shift to Workday happened is emblematic of past practices where the University implements efficiency-based strategies without adequate input and these strategies result in excessive and avoidable stress on faculty, staff, and students. With Workday, for example, by decentralizing basic business and HR responsibilities and offloading them onto the shoulders of individual faculty, staff, and graduate students—most of whom are not trained to do this kind of work—the new efficiency-oriented system has not only deepened inefficiency, but also created significant amounts of stress for staff, faculty, and students, alike.
- Career Roadmap: Similar to Workday, while this system ultimately may be essential, the way in which it has been rolled out and the timing of the roll out suggests a lack of awareness of the way in which it would impact morale amongst an already stressed and overburdened staff

(compounding existing understaffing issues) and a lack of engagement ahead of time with key stakeholders, which is a dominant theme across many of the issues we highlight here.

- The requirement for using centralized talent recruitment staff in the recruitment and hiring process often slows the hiring process. In addition, the number of steps in Workday for something as simple as appointing a GA has made the process so cumbersome and time consuming that sometimes graduate students cannot be appointed in time to receive their first paycheck. These issues impede research and student training, and further impact faculty and student morale

Hiring & Retention:

- Salary Compression & Inversion: The challenges associated with widespread salary compression and inversion across campus are widely known yet efforts to respond to these challenges are inconsistent across units and inadequate on a university-wide scale. Salary compression compounds systemic equity-based concerns and undermines efforts to retain faculty. Ongoing efforts to dramatically ramp-up hiring – while creating tremendous opportunities for Ohio State – are likely to compound existing salary compression and resulting equity issues. These challenges – i.e., salary compression, retention, and hiring – must not be approached in isolation.
- Prioritizing DEIJ: Ohio State is committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice yet these values are not always reflected in our promotion and tenure processes, salary decisions, and retention efforts. Here, we point to the efforts of other groups across campus that are working on these challenges and offer support for these efforts to center and prioritize DEIJ across all decisions that Ohio State makes moving forward.

2020-2021 URC Roster

MEMBER	SOURCE
Rita Pickler	Faculty Council
Brian Focht	Faculty Council
Mara Frazier	Faculty Council
Thaddeus Ezeji	Faculty Council
Eric Johnson	Faculty Council
Karin Jordan	Faculty Council
William Minozzi	Faculty Council
Jan Lang	Faculty Council
Abigail Norris Turner	Faculty Council

Cinnamon Carlarne	Faculty Council
Susan Cole	Faculty Council
Bridget Carruthers	Faculty Council
Lisa Voigt	Presidential
Edward Taketa	Presidential
Moray Campbell	Presidential
Anne Kloos	Presidential
Sunny Zong	Research Staff
Alyssa Meiman	USG
Yan Yuan	CGS
Eric Hantz	CGS
James Gallagher	IPC
Sara Elgamal	Postdoc
Sumaya Hamadmad	Postdoc (non-voting)
Crichton Ogle	Senate Fiscal Committee Chair
Alicia Bertone	Dean, Graduate School (non-voting)
Peter Mohler	SVP, Research (non-voting)
Jan Weisenberger	VP, Research (non-voting)
Susan Garfinkel	VP, Research Compliance (non-voting)