

University Research Committee

Summary of Activities, 2025–2026 (Academic Year)

In the past academic year, the University Research Committee (URC) met on 9/5/2025, 10/3/2025, 11/7/2025, 12/5/2025, 1/9/2026, 2/6/2026, 3/6/2026, 4/3/2026, and 5/1/2026 for a total of 9 meetings. As the committee roster covers many university disciplines, all meetings were held virtually over Zoom. Meetings were generally held on the first Friday of each month from 1:00–2:00 pm during the academic year, with the final meeting of the year moved to 2:00–3:00 pm to accommodate scheduling.

Ms. Amy Spellacy (Program Manager, Enterprise for Research, Innovation and Knowledge — ERIK) served as the administrative point-of-contact to schedule meetings and collect notes for minutes of the meetings. A Microsoft Sharepoint channel was maintained for the URC, and annual access is provided to URC members with all meeting minutes and meeting materials stored in folders on the Teams platform. The Chair for 2025–2026 (Dr. Joal Beane), Vice-Chair (Dr. Alison Bennett), and the Senior Associate Vice President for Research Operations (Dr. Cynthia Carnes) met the Wednesday in the week prior to scheduled URC meetings to plan the agenda, ably assisted by Ms. Spellacy. The agenda was shared approximately one week prior to each URC meeting with the active committee roster.

Dr. Joal Beane served as Chair of the URC for 2025–2026. At the October meeting, following the vice-chair nomination and election process, Dr. Alison Bennett was announced as the elected Vice-Chair for 2025–2026. Consistent with URC succession practice, the Vice-Chair serves as Chair-Elect; Dr. Bennett will serve as Chair of the URC for 2026–2027. As announced at the final meeting of the year, the election for the incoming Vice-Chair for 2026–2027 will be held at the first meeting of the 2026–2027 academic year, and the standing meeting time (monthly, on a Friday) will be retained unless the committee elects to change it.

Throughout the year, Dr. Carnes provided frequent updates on ERIK activities. These updates covered research operations, continued implementation and stabilization of the Huron system (including the Huron IRB), the university's response to changes in state and federal regulations, and new procedures and entities at the university. The committee received recurring updates on the federal research environment and was repeatedly directed to the standing resource go.osu.edu/FederalResearch2025 for the latest information on federal impacts on research. In addition, Dr. Zeynep Benderlioglu served as liaison from the Committee on Research/Academic Technology and provided updates to the URC across the year.

The committee interfaced regularly with the research compliance and integrity team, including Dr. Julia Behnfeldt and Dr. Jim Giuliani, to receive updates on research integrity, research security, and compliance, and to support related university efforts. The URC responded to a call to nominate a representative to the newly formed Research Security Governance Board (RSGB); Dr. Akshay Sood volunteered to represent the URC on the RSGB Risk Assessment Committee. Dr. Ajit Chaudhari continued to serve on the Research Integrity Standing Committee. The URC also supported the Committee on Academic Affairs (CAA) center and institute review process, providing representatives to review new center and institute proposals as they advanced.

In addition to the updates noted above, the activities of the URC in 2025–2026 focused on the areas described below.

Improving Training and Resource Accessibility: A central theme of the year was the complexity and fragmentation of the research interface that principal investigators (PIs) must navigate. Investigators must manage IRB and IACUC protocols, grant submission and budgeting processes, federal compliance requirements, and laboratory safety and inspection procedures, and these barriers are compounded by deficiencies in the availability and accessibility of training. The committee dedicated substantial discussion across the year to understanding these barriers and to identifying concrete steps to make it easier for investigators to find and complete required training and to navigate compliance, submission, and oversight processes.

Early in the year, the committee reviewed the dissemination of faculty and investigator orientation resources, including the Principal Investigator Orientation Modules and the Research Knowledge Base (ohiostateresearch.knowledgebase.co), and noted forthcoming modules for Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) and Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) processes as well as Office of International Affairs resources. Members emphasized the need for a single “home base” for onboarding information and provided feedback to the Chair on what such a platform could look like, what additional curriculum is most needed, and which formats would be most effective.

To ground these efforts in data, the URC — in partnership with ERIK — designed and distributed a campus-wide Training and Training Communication Survey to identify gaps in the availability and accessibility of training and to understand researchers’ communication-channel preferences. The survey was distributed through multiple channels (OnCampus, the HealthBeat Hub, the ERIK PI newsletter, Associate Deans for Research, the Council of Graduate Students, the Research Administrator Network, and college communicators) and closed on March 27, 2026. Respondents were predominantly faculty/PIs (47%) and research support staff, with the College of Medicine (36%) and ERIK (16%) most heavily represented among units.

Key survey findings: The committee reviewed the following high-level findings and next steps:

- ERIK staff reported significantly different desired training needs than college faculty and staff. College respondents prioritized finding funding, award management, protocol preparation, and industry partnerships, while ERIK respondents prioritized understanding the research lifecycle and enterprise, the schedule of required trainings, and award management.
- Communication needs varied widely; a recurring theme was that there is “too much to keep on top of” and that messaging is spread across too many places.
- The Research Compliance team compiled an initial list of trainings, which had not yet been vetted or reviewed.
- Suggested next steps included vetting the current training list and posting it to research.osu.edu; forming two working groups to prioritize training needs (one for ERIK staff and one for non-ERIK staff); and updating the web presence and disseminating through communications vehicles as new trainings come online.

A working group was formed to analyze the survey results and formulate concrete deliverables, with the goal of developing a streamlined, user-friendly research interface which has since been created with the support of ERIK and can be found at: <https://research.osu.edu>

Research Security, Integrity, and Compliance: The URC devoted attention to the rapidly evolving research security, integrity, and compliance environment. The committee received an update on Ohio Senate Bill 1 and its implications for research, and it tracked new federal sponsor training requirements, noting that these requirements are driven by federal sponsors rather than by university preference and that they vary by funding agency. Members were directed to research-security and other-support training resources (including go.osu.edu/research-security-training and go.osu.edu/nihothersupport) and were advised to watch for a forthcoming BuckeyeLearn module.

The committee supported several standing and emerging compliance bodies. Following a call for participation, Dr. Akshay Sood volunteered to represent the URC on the Research Security Governance Board, whose Risk Assessment Committee is slated to meet monthly as needed while the full board meets quarterly. The URC also supported the Research Integrity Standing Committee, which requires a wide range of intellectual backgrounds to review cases as they arise, with Dr. Ajit Chaudhari continuing as a participant. Members reviewed and provided input on the final Office of Research Compliance guidelines on the use of Artificial Intelligence in Research, and were introduced to Proofig AI (go.osu.edu/proofig) as an image-integrity tool, with associated training webinars. Late in the year, the committee began discussion of the “honest broker” process, particularly as it relates to protected health information (PHI) and AI, as a priority topic for continued attention.

Artificial Intelligence, Digital Accessibility, and Academic Technology: The role of software, information technology, and artificial intelligence in research was a recurring theme, reflecting the ever-increasing role of the Office of Technology and Digital Innovation (OTDI) across all domains of scholarly and creative activity. The committee reviewed university AI resources and the list of approved AI tools, and noted that the medical center instance of Copilot is currently the only approved tool for use with PHI. Members also tracked the university’s AI-fluency efforts, including the announcement of an AI Fluency Faculty Advisory Council and associated teaching supports.

Through Dr. Benderlioglu’s liaison reports from the Committee on Research/Academic Technology, the URC followed developments in digital accessibility. The committee learned that the “Ally” tool selected through the LMS accessibility-scanner process applies to course content and cannot track faculty web-facing content such as u.osu.edu or research lab sites; SiteImprove was identified as the emerging vendor for other web-facing content, including research pages. Accessibility questions for web-facing content should be directed to college digital-accessibility coordinators, and the April 24, 2026 compliance deadline concerns demonstrating reasonable progress rather than a date on which sites would be taken down. The committee also discussed the research impacts of the university’s new software preapproval process and the OTDI advisory committee, reviewing the enhanced software ordering and storage tools and the university software directory.

Research Infrastructure, Facilities & Administrative (F&A) Costs, and the Federal Funding Environment: Building on prior-year discussions, the URC made plans to examine the research infrastructure and the

Facilities and Administrative (F&A) cost system in depth as a major focus for the 2026-2027 academic year. Members noted that some researchers face difficulty maintaining the shared infrastructure essential to their work (for example, autoclaves and core equipment), that unreliable shared-resource maintenance undermines research efficiency and competitiveness, and that there is significant variation across colleges in how F&A cost returns from externally funded grants are allocated and reinvested. The committee initiated an exploration of how individual colleges allocate F&A cost returns, with the goal of mapping variation, identifying best practices, and developing recommendations for transparent, equitable F&A allocation policies that prioritize shared research infrastructure.

The committee received a detailed overview of the university's F&A budget model from ERIK and university finance leadership (Christine Hamble, Justin Kieffer, and Courtney Mankowski). The overview reviewed the mechanics of cost reimbursement and allowable costs under 2 CFR §200 (including the new "defend the spend" expectation), the facilities components of the rate, and Plant Operation and Maintenance (POM), including what POM does and does not cover. Members learned that the university's current F&A rate for on-campus organized research is 57.5% and that work is underway on the university's next F&A cost proposal (FY2025 base year), with a core workgroup drawn from the Office of the Controller, ERIK, OTDI, and outside consultants, and with a space survey of approximately 91 high-activity cost centers planned. The overview also reviewed the age and technical complexity of the university's research building stock and the structural shortcomings of the F&A system, including backward-looking rates, administrative caps, restricted recovery from many non-federal sponsors, and limited awareness of the connection between F&A recovery and research support. Members reviewed data (via COGR) showing that federal research requirements have grown substantially — with roughly two-thirds of new or revised requirements since 1991 issued in the last decade — even as proposals advance to cap F&A. Two models were discussed: an Office of Management and Budget proposal for a 15% modified-total-direct-cost cap (with limited additional direct charging potentially yielding roughly 18% recovery) to be pushed into the Uniform Guidance, and the FAIR (Financial Accountability in Research) model, which would effectively convert today's indirect costs — facilities, information technology, administration and grants management, and IRB/IACUC/IBC — into direct costs. The committee emphasized that F&A payments are reimbursements for real, documented costs the university funds up front to support federally sponsored research, and that capping them poses a significant risk to the research enterprise.

Physical and digital infrastructure: As in the prior year, the committee recognized that Ohio State has excellent physical research infrastructure, including unique national facilities (for example, the NSF-funded National Gateway Ultrahigh-Field NMR Center and the shared resources of the James Comprehensive Cancer Center), supported by research expenditures that continue to grow and sustained staff investment. The committee also reiterated concerns about digital and computing infrastructure, including the discontinuation of the digital flagship program, insufficient computing support for graduate students, and the financial and ethical burden created when security requirements such as dual authentication push faculty, staff, and students toward using personal devices for university activities.

Improving URC Visibility and Researcher Feedback: The committee recognized that the URC's role and resources are not widely known across campus and that research barriers frequently surface on the frontlines without a structured channel to reach the URC in real time. In response, the URC actively worked

to expand its presence and awareness across colleges and departments and discussed a proposal to create an anonymous, always-available digital “tip box” through which faculty, staff, and students could report research barriers as they arise. Submissions would be reviewed regularly by the URC to inform agenda-setting and prioritize action items. The Chair presented the URC’s annual report to the Faculty Senate Steering Committee on March 12, 2026, and reported back to the committee; input on the visibility and feedback proposals was sought from the Steering Committee.

Center and Institute Reviews: Consistent with its charge to encourage cooperation across university sectors and centers, the URC supported the review of new center and institute proposals advancing through the Committee on Academic Affairs. The committee raised no objections to the proposal for the Appalachian and Rural Center for Health, and it identified representatives to participate in reviews as additional proposals came forward, including the university-level institute application for the Institute on Aging.

URC Recommendations: Drawing on the year’s discussions, the URC offers the following recommendations for continued attention:

- Build on the completed Training and Training Communication Survey — the survey has since closed and been analyzed, and its findings directly informed a major overhaul of the research education and training resources on the ERIK website (research.osu.edu), a substantial undertaking that significantly improved the accessibility of these resources for investigators. The committee recommends continuing to vet and expand the consolidated training list, keeping the site current as new trainings come online, and building on this work toward a streamlined, single onboarding "home base" for investigators.
- Advance transparency and equity in F&A allocation — map how colleges allocate and reinvest F&A returns, identify best practices, and develop recommendations that prioritize shared research infrastructure, while advocating for institutional standards that direct F&A returns toward the researchers who generate them.
- Protect the research enterprise against federal F&A proposals — continue to monitor the OMB and FAIR proposals and communicate that F&A payments reimburse real, documented costs essential to conducting research.
- Improve URC visibility and real-time feedback — expand awareness of the URC across campus and pilot an anonymous digital mechanism for researchers to report barriers in real time.

Committee Members for 2025–2026:

Lisa Baer	Becky Huang
Joal Beane (Chair)	Elena Irwin
Alison Bennett (Vice-Chair)	Courtney Jewell
Zeynep Benderlioglu	Justin Kieffer
Mei-Wei Chang	Blaise Kimmel

Ajit Chaudhari	Dean Lillard
Laurence Coutellier	Shamama Nishat*
Cynthia Carnes*	Akshay Sood
Holly Engel	Mary Stromberger*
Maryam Ghazisaeidi	Sean Wan
Jennifer Hefner	Lingying Zhao

**Indicates non-voting member*