MINUTES

BOARD OF REGENTS’ COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION MEETING

NOVEMBER 5, 2015

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Eugene Bal, called the meeting to order at 12:23 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015, at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Information Technology Building, 1st Floor Conference Room 105A, 2420 Correa Road, Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96822.

Committee members in attendance: Committee Chair Eugene Bal; Committee Vice Chair Jan Sullivan; Regent Ben Kudo; Regent Coralie Matayoshi; Regent Barry Mizuno.

Others in attendance: Board Chair Randy Moore; Regent Simeon Acoba; Regent Wayne Higaki; Regent David Iha; Regent Lee Putnam; Regent Michelle Tagorda; Regent Stanford Yuen; Regent Ernest Wilson (ex officio committee members); President David Lassner; Vice President for Academic Affairs Risa Dickson; Vice President for Community Colleges John Morton; Vice President for Legal Affairs and University General Counsel Carrie Okinaga; Vice President for Research Vassilis Syrmos; Vice President for Information Technology Garret Yoshimi; Vice President for Budget and Finance/Chief Financial Officer Kalbert Young; UH Hilo Chancellor Don Straney; Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents Cynthia Quinn; and others as noted.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 1, 2015 MEETING

Regent Kudo moved to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2015 meeting, as amended, Regent Mizuno seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board Cynthia Quinn announced that the Board Office received no written testimony, and no individuals signed up to testify.

IV. AGENDA ITEMS

A. For Information:

1. Briefing on Research Corporation University of Hawai‘i (RCUH) Functions and Relationship with University of Hawai‘i

Sylvia Yuen, Executive Director of RCUH, gave a presentation that provided an overview of RCUH including its background history, governance structure, number of employees, explanation of UH service ordered funds, approval processes, volume of business by project, projects by county, and evaluation of services. She explained how the intent of the Legislature when establishing RCUH as a self-supporting organization
was to support faculty and researchers to receive federal and other funds, and exempt it from state procurement and certain state civil service personnel regulations to accommodate the limited duration of these types of contracts and grants. RCUH must adhere to federal procurement rules and regulations, and follow 26 personnel statutes relating to federal and state laws (e.g., affirmation action, Family & Medical Leave Act, the Affordable Care Act, etc.).

She explained how the sources of service ordered funds for RCUH include extramural funds, intramural funds, revolving funds, and direct projects, and all projects require preapproval by UH (e.g., deans or directors, Vice Chancellor for Research, and Vice President for Research).

RCUH is housed in the Mānoa Innovation Center, and at Burns Hall/East-West Center. RCUH transacts approximately $300 million in business annually, 70% through extramural contracts and grants, and the remainder through intramural, revolving and direct projects. RCUH also fulfills its charge to enhance the economic development of the state as it has personnel and projects on all islands.

To meet its responsibility to provide top notch service to the individuals they serve, RCUH collects performance data. She shared the positive results of the recent evaluation of services to 704 principal investigators, fiscal officers and service/project coordinators who utilize RCUH services, with a 41% response rate.

Questions and concerns were raised regarding survey effectiveness, efforts to facilitate grant writing for professors; lobbying efforts for grant funding; coordination with UH on prioritization and allocation processes for project proposals, and personnel grievance processes.

Director Yuen explained how the survey was on a Likert scale of 5 categories with vast majority responses at the top end of the scale and the remaining 20% across the remaining three categories. RCUH is working with the VP for Research and university administrators to eliminate duplicating services and improve productivity. VP Syrmos noted that RCUH provided $500,000 in a project fund for pre-seed money for principal investigators/UH faculty to do more substantial research in order to be eligible to submit proposals for federal or state agency grants. UH is very thankful for this money not only because of RCUH’s good will, but because the more successful the university is, the higher the fee, which helps generate more business. Director Yuen indicated that the increasing trend among federal agencies in particular, is for large, multidisciplinary grants, encouraging faculty working across disciplines. These complex proposals require coordination to be successful in this new environment.

Regarding lobbying, Director Yuen explained that RCUH was a state agency administratively attached to UH. RCUH does not lobby, rather it will answer questions and educate policymakers as needed.

Director Yuen highlighted how RCUH and UH administrators are focused on the mission of RCUH, which presently states that RCUH is to support UH research and training programs. All projects must be directly or indirectly related to research or
training. VP Syrmos noted that by definition, extramural contracts and grants automatically go to RCUH, and the university determines which institutional funds (e.g., Tuition & Fee Special Funds, General Funds, Research Training & Revolving Funds, and bond proceeds) to service order projects to RCUH. Authority is delegated to the president, which is in turn delegated to the Office of the VP for Research, and subsequently delegated to the campus chancellors, as well as VP Morton for the projects involving community colleges. The committee requested page 6 of the presentation be updated to include chancellors and the VP for Community Colleges.

Regarding the process for involuntary terminations and grievances, Director Yuen explained RCUH employee grievances are handled by RCUH. Employees can go to the human resources department to resolve problems. Prevention is the guiding principle, resolving problems at the lowest level possible before they become a formal grievance.

Regent Yuen noted that an error on an external website for BloombergBusiness regarding his participation at RCUH that needed to be corrected.

Committee Vice Chair Sullivan recognized Director Yuen for her leadership and asked why revenues received from UH increased at the same time volume of business between 2012 and 2014 decreased. Leonard Ajifu, Director of Finance & Project Administration at RCUH, explained there was not always a strict correlation of volume to revenues received from UH depending on variables. In this case, Cancer Center and UH-West O‘ahu had a special arrangement for a fixed fee per month, and because of the variables, the straight correlation is not seen. VP Syrmos confirmed he oversees all arrangements to ensure fairness and reasonableness.

Regent Higaki left the meeting at 12:56 p.m.

2. Update on Status and Timeline of Long Range Plans that Establish the Strategic Goals and Objectives for Research, Innovation, and Technology Transfer at the University

Committee Chair Bal explained long range plans were discussed at a prior committee meeting, and that milestones on when these long range plans from each of the campuses were due to the Office of the VP for Research were to be discussed.

VP Syrmos noted that October 30, 2015 was the deadline for four year universities and the community colleges to provide his office with their long range plans following the strategic directions for the Hawai‘i Innovation Initiative (HII). All reports for Milestone 1 were received, except for the community colleges plan which is expected shortly. The Office of Technology Transfer & Economic Development (OTTED) participated in the long range plans exercise because they have a significant role in achieving the strategic directions. The Office of Research Services (ORS) and Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at UH Mānoa also participated and were tasked with looking at efficiencies and processes to improve research administration and better serve principal investigators. Inputs will be compiled and reviewed by all participants and a draft of the report given to the committee in January 2016.
3. Update on Amendment Proposals Regarding Research-Related Regents’ Policies:
   
a) RP 12.203, Right to Investigate and Disseminate
b) RP 12.206, Establishment and Review of Organized Research Units
c) RP 12.207, Research Corporation of the University of Hawai‘i

The committee discussed three draft amendments to regent policies associated with research.

VP Syrmos provided a powerpoint presentation on proposed revisions to RP 12.203, 12.206, and 12.207, and the effect of the proposed revisions. Regarding RP 12.203, VP Syrmos commented on the suggestion of having principal investigators and faculty apply for grants that align with the strategic directions of the university. Based on discussions with the Research Policy Task Force (RPTF), it is his opinion and recommendation to maintain academic freedom and maintain the freedom of faculty members to also apply for contracts or grants in areas that are not within the priority of the university. Regarding RP 12.206, in response to suggestions that the policy reflect the intent of an organized research unit and handle administrative and housekeeping items through executive policy or administrative procedures, the policy was revised to eliminate item D and E regarding the review process, and delegated authority to the president for implementation. Regarding RP 12.207, the amendment clarifies the relationship between UH and RCUH in the areas of major capital improvement projects, repairs and maintenance, purchases of goods and services, and consultant contracts to align with RP 8.201. Clarity was also provided specifying approvals for service orders and employment terms.

VP Syrmos explained that the RPTF and administration worked on the policy revisions, and upon regent concurrence official consultations will begin with the UH Professional Assembly, Hawai‘i Government Employees Association, the All Campus Council of Faculty Senate Chairs, the UHM Faculty Senate Executive Committee, specifically the Committee on Research, and the vice presidents and chancellors. The proposed policy revisions will be posted on the Office of the Vice President for Research’s website so other stakeholders (e.g., UH Association of Research Investigators) may provide input. The RPTF will compile the feedback, make recommendations, and administration will target presenting the final product to the board for approval in February.

Regent Matayoshi agreed with the proposed revisions and commented that everyone should be trying to further the highest goals of the university whether through extramural resources or faculty doing research. She raised concern about needing more direction to encourage faculty currently on the UH payroll to align their interests with fulfilling the mandate of the university and the State of Hawai‘i, while recognizing academic freedom. VP Syrmos responded that his office facilitates the research enterprise of the university system. The long range plan on each campus provides the vision to strategically invest in human capital and research areas aligned with the strategic directions that contain a list of areas that are important to the university, the state, and the nation, and where the university’s strengths are. His office will work with the campuses to invest in these areas. In addition to the research enterprise, extramural funding, other funding and the impact of
the research to the economic development of the state, UHM has the primary goal of scholarship. Being the only liberal arts university in the state, having a vibrant liberal arts scholarship program is extremely important for the university, the students, and scholarship. He understood the concerns, but noted that UHM is a quite complex institution and there are faculty that may not bring in a lot of funds or do not work in a specific areas (e.g., cybersecurity or cancer medicine), but their scholarship is extremely important for the state because of money and because they educate our children. Great scholars are usually great teachers as well. He added that because every research proposal involves a commitment of resources, all proposals undergo a multi level vetting process before submittal.

There being no objections from the committee, Committee Chair Bal instructed VP Syrmos to proceed with the consultations regarding the policies.

4. Review of Research and Innovation Performance Goals and Metrics

VP Syrmos reviewed the performance goals and metrics that were distributed in the materials. The proposed metrics were presented at a prior committee meeting; the first six metrics were approved last January. The remaining metrics resulted from discussions with the committee and were developed in conjunction with certain deans, directors and administrators from UHM and UHH. Some of the metrics have been defined, but still need to be quantified. The metrics are ready to be published on the Office of the VP for Research’s website upon committee concurrence, and will be reported as part of the quarterly report to the board.

The committee inquired as to whether metrics were tied to any national standards, and additional metrics regarding venture capital investment.

VP Syrmos indicated some of the metrics came from the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and the Association of American Universities (AAU). In the future, as data collection improves, he will bring proposals to the committee to consider. He added that UH is one of 25 members on the national board of the university recently joined the National Board of AAU/APLU initiative that will be defining national research metrics for these two organizations and will tie into the economic development of the state, the nation and beyond.

In terms of metrics regarding venture capital investments, VP Syrmos explained measures could include the success of return on investment, and regarding development of faculty and students, the post activity of participants, even if the project was not successful. As part of a national discussion, the census is also participating as they follow these people, the data can be provided on activity and revenue generated.

There being no further comments or questions, Committee Chair Bal indicated the metrics to gauge performance would be adopted
5. Research Compliance Task Force (RCTF) Report

Committee Chair Bal indicated a Research Advisory Board was formulated, and they commissioned a group of individuals to look at research compliance.

VP Syrmos explained that he and Sylvia Yuen chaired the RCTF. The RCTF was the outcome of discussions between the UH Association of Research Investigators (UHARI) and former system and UHM leadership regarding how the university could help researchers perform their jobs better, faster and more efficiently. Compliance was one of the biggest issues and the RCTF was formed to help address this matter. The creation of the RCTF was timely, as there were discussions about reorganizing the Office of Research Services.

Director Yuen thanked the regents for their interest in the welfare of the researchers and creating a more productive environment. Improving policies plays a significant role. She presented a summary of the RCTF report on background information on the RCTF, work undertaken, recommendation highlights, efforts in building an effective research community in compliance with regulations, improving compliance efficiency, and reorganizing to be more successful and efficient.

The committee asked what RCUH’s role was regarding compliance.

Director Yuen explained that the responsibility for compliance rests with the university. Committee Chair Bal noted that there is a principal investigator associated with each contract or grant. President Lassner added that RCUH oversees personnel and procurement practices comply with their policies, which comply with federal rules and regulations.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or objections, Committee Chair Bal adjourned the meeting at 1:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/

Cynthia Quinn
Executive Administrator and
Secretary of the Board of Regents