MINUTES

BOARD OF REGENTS COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION MEETING

FEBRUARY 19, 2019

I. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Jan Sullivan, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 19, 2019, at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Campus Center, Executive Dining Room, 2465 Campus Road, Honolulu, Hawai‘i 96822.

Committee members in attendance: Committee Chair Jan Sullivan; Committee Vice Chair Eugene Bal; Regent Kelli Acopan; Regent Robert Westerman; Regent Ernest Wilson, Jr.; Regent Stanford Yuen.

Others in attendance: Board Chair Lee Putnam; Board Vice Chair Jeffrey Portnoy; Board Vice Chair Wayne Higaki; Regent Michael McEnerney; Regent Randy Moore; Regent Michelle Tagorda; (ex officio committee members); President/UH-Mānoa (UHM) Chancellor David Lassner; Vice President for Community Colleges John Morton; Vice President for Legal Affairs/University General Counsel Carrie Okinaga; Vice President for Academic Planning and Policy Donald Straney; Vice President for Research and Innovation Vassilis Syrmos; UHM Vice Chancellor for Research/Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Michael Bruno; UH-West O‘ahu (UHWO) Chancellor Maenette Benham; Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents (Board Secretary) Kendra Oishi; and others as noted.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Board Secretary Oishi announced that the Board Office received no written testimony, and no individuals had signed up to provide oral testimony.

Regent McEnerney arrived at 9:01 a.m.

III. AGENDA ITEMS

A. For Information and Discussion

1. Fiscal Year 2019 2nd Quarter Extramural Awards Update

VP Syrmos proposed changing the frequency of reports to a semi-annual basis. Committee Vice Chair Bal expressed concerns that semi-annual reports would result in less frequent tracking and could be troublesome if goals are not being met. The committee agreed to maintain quarterly reports that provide highlights. No questions were asked regarding the materials.

4. Strategic Research and Training Revolving Fund Investments

VP Syrmos provided an overview of Research and Training Revolving Fund (RTRF) investments in innovation hubs and other significant investments made by the System
Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, UHM Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, and UH West O‘ahu for the last fiscal year. Portfolio investments were scaled back last year as RTRF went down due to decreased extramural funding. VC Bruno explained that the numbers in the report do not include the 50% of RTRF that is allocated to the units.

The committee requested additional information on how units are utilizing RTRF investments and prioritization of the expenditure of funds. VC Bruno explained that he is currently working with the deans to gather that information. The UHM Faculty Senate (UHMFS) had passed a resolution requesting a unit-by-unit policy for RTRF distribution and the outcomes. The policies will be posted on the VC for Research website that describe unit-by-unit the amounts retained by the dean’s offices and amounts received by individual principal investigators and departments. Individual investments for fiscal year (FY) 2017 will also be posted on the website.

Regent Westerman arrived at 9:11 a.m.

Committee Chair Sullivan suggested there should be some prioritization or direction at a policy level of how RTRF funds are spent. VC Bruno explained that he and his predecessors have tried not to be too prescriptive with the deans and only intervene when there is a question of appropriate use in terms of supporting research and training. Both he and VP Syrmos have discussed providing matching funds and other incentives for utilizing RTRF.

Regent Yuen asked whether there is criteria for defining success and whether there is an average of all distributions to the dean’s offices. VC Bruno explained that distributions vary by unit because some units such as the Cancer Center, Institute for Astronomy, and School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology have mature research support offices with centrally kept funds and competitive funds for research support. Other units need more assistance, resulting in less central funding and more funds going directly to the departments. His office is taking into consideration whether they have a role to play in providing supplemental support or provide more prescriptive guidelines to the deans on keeping a certain percentage of funds to grow a research support office within the unit.

Committee Chair Sullivan explained that she was not implying there should be prescriptive rules for units, but she had been told UH has an abnormally high allocation of funds that is passed through to units and wants to understand what other universities are doing. She requested that board staff work with VC Bruno on putting together information on best practices for how other Tier 1 research universities are utilizing RTRF. VP Syrmos added that there was a national study conducted several years ago on how universities distribute their RTRF and UH participated in that study.

Regent Westerman asked if there is an office within the university that seeks grants or conducts program management. VP Syrmos explained that the community colleges, UHWO, UHH, and UHM all have grant development offices and the System OVPRI office coordinates with Hawai‘i’s congressional delegation regarding federal funding.

2. University of Hawai‘i at Hilo Research and Innovation Long-Range Plan Update
UHH Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Ken Hon provided an overview of the high-impact research being done in collaboration with county, state, and federal agencies that has an economic impact on communities and advances UHH’s teaching mission. He also provided a history of research grant awards from 2014 to 2018 by academic unit, and provided examples of research and community partnerships. He noted that UHH research is different from UHM in that UHH pursues more applied research.

Regent Acopan arrived at 9:26 a.m.

Board Chair Putnam arrived at 9:30 a.m.

Board Vice Chair Portnoy arrived at 9:32 a.m.

Regent Westerman noted the four new data science positions and expressed concern about filling these positions given the decrease and uncertainty in grant funding. VC Hon explained that the positions are instructional and not research positions. He noted that the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCor) provides four-year funding that is being leveraged to hire needed interdisciplinary instructional faculty with data science skills to start a new data science degree program at UHH.

3. UHealthy Hawai‘i Initiative: Strategic Growth Area

VP Syrmos explained that the UHealthy Hawai‘i Initiative is a System initiative that impacts healthcare and wellness within the State of Hawai‘i, which is one of the most important challenges facing the state. Hawai‘i has an excellent healthcare system that needs to be maintained. VP Syrmos introduced Dr. Aimee Grace, UH System Director of Health Science Policy, who completed her medical degree at the John A. Burns School of Medicine and recently served as the health policy advisor to U.S. Senator Brian Schatz.

Dr. Grace summarized the purpose of the UHealthy Hawai‘i Initiative to improve health and health care in Hawai‘i and the Pacific by leveraging the UH System’s health sciences programs and forging meaningful collaborative partnerships. She identified and described four key priority areas: (1) ensure a robust statewide health workforce; (2) discover and innovate to improve and extend lives; (3) promote healthier families and communities; and (4) advance health in all policies. She discussed the next steps and opportunities to engage with legislators and community members, increase partners, work collaboratively to set priorities to improve health and health care in Hawai‘i, establish a preliminary budget and funding goals, and seek funding.

Board Vice Chair Higaki arrived at 9:45 a.m.

Regent Moore arrived at 9:52 a.m.

Committee Vice Chair Bal asked how long the initiative has been active. Dr. Grace responded that she started last May and will be working on putting together a core office team.
Board Chair Putnam noted the importance of working with the State Department of Education on pipeline issues and the State Board for Career and Technical Education. Dr. Grace explained that she has been in contact with Hawai‘i P-20 and is looking at aligning high school coursework with pathways to the community colleges and undergraduate/graduate programs. The committee discussed the importance of funding this initiative.

Board Chair Putnam indicated that increasing residency opportunities would be a way to help address the physician shortage in Hawai‘i. Dr. Grace indicated that although addressing physician shortage was not in today’s presentation, it was in the UHealthy Hawai‘i Initiative white paper.

Board Chair Putnam asked how statewide health improvements are being developed and implemented. President Lassner explained that this is a high priority area where the university can make a difference in the state. This initiative is about everyone working together to make Hawai‘i healthier. Sustainability, climate, resilience, and the teacher shortage are other areas that need to be addressed but are not as developed systemwide, although there are components such as the new Institute for Sustainability and Resilience at UHM and the System Office of Sustainability.

Regent Acopan requested that UHealthy Hawai‘i work with counselors and academic advisors at high schools to ensure that opportunities are communicated to students. Students have goals and career aspirations but are not always aware of available resources and pathways. Dr. Grace responded that she has spent time learning about the student advising program. She indicated that the Pre-Health/Pre-Law Advising Center is an excellent resource that she would like to see expanded to help get more students interested and provide them with the necessary resources.

Regent Westerman noted the importance of thinking outside the box when it comes to finding a solution to expand clinicals and cautioned about working around the existing fiefdoms. Dr.Grace indicated that she hopes the healthcare sector partnership can work together to figure out what can be done for industry and to ensure strong educational programming.

Regent Tagorda expressed appreciation to the president for addressing this issue and the role the university can play in supporting the state and across the Pacific. She was glad that the topic of workforce is being discussed among different administrators in terms of being intentional and the types of academic programs that need to be expanded or created to serve the state’s and the community needs. Dr. Grace responded that there have been a number of discussions about working together in areas such as certified nursing assistants, surgical technicians, physical therapists, and occupational therapists, and the role of the university.

Committee Chair Sullivan noted that this is an exciting initiative and that the key is to obtain funding. With the next federal budget starting to take shape, she suggested that an appropriations request be submitted to Hawai‘i’s congressional delegation. Dr. Grace responded that the UH System’s appropriations request was submitted to Senator Schatz’s office, and she is utilizing her expertise in helping the university craft and
strategically target funding requests. After listening sessions with legislators this year, a state budget plan will be considered next year.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Regent Wilson moved to adjourn, and Regent Yuen seconded, and with unanimous approval, the meeting was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

/S/

Kendra Oishi
Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents