Annual Report of the Faculty Affairs Committee of the UWT Faculty Assembly, Academic Year 2011-12

June 16, 2011

Committee members: Donald Chinn (chair), Erin Casey, Sergio Davalos, Denise Drevdahl, Johann Reusch, Matthew Weinstein

This report describes the accomplishments of the Faculty Affairs committee of the Faculty Assembly at UW Tacoma this past academic year. Following the Executive Summary, more details are provided on each work item. Committee minutes can be found on the committee's web page.

Executive Summary

Accomplishments of the Faculty Affairs committee in academic year 2011-12:
- **Development, implementation, and analysis of a set of interview questions for faculty who pursue or wish to pursue external funding to identify ways in which the university can support such faculty.**
- **Discussion of the reporting of adjusted median scores in student evaluations of teaching.**
- **Continuing discussion of daycare at UWT for faculty, staff, and students.**
- **Support for a Lecturer survey to address issues of workload and role in the faculty as a whole.**

Research Survey

As a continuation of the work the committee did last academic year to investigate ways in which the university can support research activities of faculty, the committee focused on ways in which the university can support faculty who pursue external funding.

Thirteen faculty were interviewed to discuss their experiences with seeking external funding and suggestions for improving the process. The committee analyzed the responses of the participants and summarized them in a report with recommendations. The report, which contains details of the committee's methodology, is attached to this one.

Reporting of Adjusted Medians in Student Evaluations of Teaching

At the request of a faculty member late in the academic year, the committee investigated the reporting of adjusted medians in student evaluations of teaching. Currently at UWT, the summary of student evaluations that faculty receive from the Office of Educational Assessment contains a "raw" median score for each item in the first two sections of the survey.

A description of the motivation and methodology behind the development of the adjusted median score can be found at
http://www.washington.edu/oea/services/course_eval/uw_seattle/adjusted_medians.html .

The committee drafted a recommendation to have this information provided, and representatives on the committee asked their individual programs for feedback on the

recommendation. Not all of the units have reported yet, and so the discussion will resume next academic year.

Daycare at UWT

The committee has been kept up to date on the activities of the Day Care Task Force, led by Bonnie Becker (IAS). The various possibilities that the Task Force investigated last year yielded no concrete proposals. Chancellor Debra Friedman is generally supportive of day care support for UWT, but currently there is no viable partner for the university to work with. The Task Force will continue to find such a partner.

Throughout this process, the committee has served in an advisory role. The continuing understanding is that the task force is the primary body on this issue, but that our Committee is interested in the outcome, as it does affect faculty life.

Lecturer Survey

Katie Baird (IAS, Vice Chair of Faculty Assembly), Linda Dawson (IAS, Executive Council member), and Donald Chinn (Institute, Chair of Faculty Affairs) developed a survey for Lecturers to help understand the issues that they face, including workload and participation as part of the full faculty. The Faculty Affairs committee reviewed version of the survey. The survey was administered late in Spring 2012, and the results of the survey will be analyzed over the summer.

Agenda Items for Academic Year 2012-2013

In addition to finishing the unfinished business from this academic year (analysis of the lecturer survey, progress on day care for UWT, reporting of adjusted medians), one large item that the committee could address next academic year is support, improvement, and evaluation of teaching. This issue is especially important because of the large number of full-time and part-time lecturers that the university has hired in the face of recent budget cuts. Generally speaking, individual academic units do not have well-developed criteria for the evaluation of teaching. The issue of reporting of adjusted medians is a small part of this larger discussion.

UWT Faculty Affairs Committee Findings from
Faculty Interviews Regarding Pursuit of External Funding

June 14, 2012

Committee members: Donald Chinn (chair), Erin Casey, Sergio Davalos, Denise Drevdahl, Johann Reusch, Matthew Weinstein

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a set of interviews conducted by members of the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) in the Winter and Spring of 2012. The interviews were conducted to extend prior work of the committee on research and scholarship by examining more closely UWT faculty's pursuit of external funding.

Research Survey Method

The FAC elected to gather data via individual interviews in order to elicit in-depth and nuanced information regarding faculty members' experiences applying for and administering external funding. An initial list of potential faculty to interview was created by identifying faculty who had been successful at obtaining external funding. In addition, faculty who had submitted applications for external funding recently were included in the list. Each faculty on the list (approximately 20 faculty) was contacted via email and invited to be interviewed. In addition, an email was sent to the uwtfac mailing list to solicit anyone who was interested in participating.

A total of 13 faculty were interviewed. All ranks are represented (including one Lecturer) and a wide range of years of experience at UWT (from 3 to over 20 years). Each were asked broad questions about their efforts to pursue external funding, including what went well in the process, what could have gone more smoothly, and recommendations for improving the process. They were also asked about what kind of mentoring they received and what their trajectory was to get to the point that they were successful in obtaining external funds. The list of basic questions used in the semi-structured interviews is attached as an Appendix.

Recommendations

Based on the feedback from the faculty interviewed, the FAC makes the following recommendations for how the university can support faculty who wish to pursue external funding.

1. **Continue efforts to increase infrastructure for and to centralize the process for post-grant administration.**
2. **Be more proactive in identifying and disseminating information about funding opportunity announcements and fostering relationships with foundations and other funding institutions so that faculty are earlier and better informed about opportunities (e.g. Gates Foundation).**

3. **Consider creative ways to give time to faculty to develop, write, and submit proposals, including stacked course loads, or the opportunity to apply for a course release to develop a significant proposal.**
4. **Develop institutionalized mechanisms to foster collaborative and mentoring relationships. These could include centrally organized research forums on shared substantive areas of expertise, seed funding for research centers, interdisciplinary / community collaborations, or creative agreements with experienced principal investigators from other institutions to provide mentorship to faculty at UWT as our own pool of funded researchers begins to grow.**
5. **Although there have been efforts to have more financial resources at the program level, there is still a place for centralized (UWT) funds for collaborative research projects.**

Thematic Content Analysis of the Interviews

What is working

Faculty who were interviewed identified several areas which they found worked well in submitting and obtaining external funding. Those areas included support from the UWT Office of Research, Collaborative Relationships with Peers, and "Other" UWT Resources. Each of these areas is explained more fully below.

UWT Office of Research. The UWT Office of Research was identified by several interviewees as being important in successfully obtaining external funding. Faculty specifically mentioned receiving useful feedback from Elise Ralph, who ran the Office of Research previously, and Kelly Fitzgerald, the current Director of Sponsored Research, on drafts of their grant proposals. Kelly Fitzgerald and Leo Aguiling (Grants Coordinator) were also helpful with the technical aspects of grant submission, including the budget. Additionally, faculty noted that having the eGC1 being approved locally was important in expediting the grant submission process. The Office of Research has also been helpful in locating funding sources, figuring out what is allowed in the budget proposal, and in drafting sub-contracts. There was a clear theme that the grant submission process has gradually improved over the past several years. There was a mixed review on whether the post-award process was "working," with one faculty noting that it seemed to work well, while another identified some specific post-award issues.

Collaborative Relationships. Several faculty mentioned that having colleagues to provide support, consultation, and/or to review grants-in-progress was quite important and useful. Some had affiliations with colleagues in various schools/departments at UW Seattle. Having these peers allowed for collaborative projects, such that they were able to be on grants that subsequently were awarded. The relationships were also a means to hear about various funding opportunities. Those who identified collaborations as important stated that these efforts occurred largely outside the UWT campus. Several people mentioned that they learned by making mistakes during previous funding attempts.

"Other" UWT Resources. There were additional resources offered on the UWT campus that interviewed faculty found beneficial including the research quarter provided to "junior" faculty, as well as access to small pots of grant funds, like the Chancellor's Research Fund. There was

concern that "loss" of this particular fund was going to hurt efforts to conduct research. One faculty identified the important of tapping into existing infrastructures and programs on the UWT campus (such as the study abroad program) which provides faculty the opportunity to meet with potential collaborators.

What is challenging: barriers to applying for and administering external funding

Interviewees identified eight challenges associated with pursuing and administering extramural funds. Primarily, these challenges were related to the time required to conceptualize and steward funding applications, difficulties with processes associated with grant submission and administration, and impediments to establishing effective collaborations. The challenges are described more fully below.

Collaboration and mentorship. Several participants (8) noted that the small nature of our campus renders finding productive internal collaborations in shared substantive areas of expertise very difficult. As noted above, many faculty report collaborating across the UW campuses or with colleagues at other institutions, but say they establish these relationships on their own. Participants identified a lack of concrete infrastructure for developing collaborations, a lack of a collaborative "culture," and a lack of an internal pipeline of experienced researchers who could mentor and bolster the credibility of applications from new investigators as related impediments. One faculty member lamented, "we don't have a critical mass" of faculty with external funding experience. Another faculty member commented that "Relationships are everything" and recommended building true supports for fostering intra and inter-campus collaborations, as well as community collaborations. Finally, some faculty noted that time and fiscal constraints make it difficult to attend trainings and conferences where collaborations could be fostered.

Time. Eight participants identified the considerable time required for grant development, writing, review, collaboration and submission as a substantial barrier to submitting applications. Some noted that the period during which faculty have time, summer, rarely corresponds with grant-related timelines, or the work required on proposals.

Locating funding mechanisms in a timely way. Eight participants identified difficulties with locating funding opportunities that are a good match with faculty expertise as a barrier. Some faculty noted that they have found funding announcements accidentally, purely serendipitously, or too late. Some participants felt that there was insufficient proactive attention to identifying and disseminating information about a range of funding mechanisms and opportunities. A few faculty suggested that more proactive efforts to build relationships with community foundations and with research centers on the Seattle campus would facilitate access to funding announcements and awards.

Post-grant administration. Several faculty (8) cited examples of past budget or billing inaccuracies or overly bureaucratic processes associated with administering awarded funds. A few faculty identified a lack of a centralized system for post-award administration as a problem, noting that individual programs do not have the capacity or the training to handle the unique budget and tracking requirements of each individual grant. One participant noted, "It is as hard to spend grant money as it is to actually get the money."

Navigating complex grant submission processes. The logistics, paperwork and myriad unique details associated with each separate funding mechanism were cited by seven participants as barriers to grant submission. Faculty noted that trying to navigate these is burdensome, largely re-created by each individual faculty member, and sometimes results in failed submissions or mistakes. Some faculty noted that although available help with logistics has increased, it is still insufficient to manage the arduousness of each unique process. A few faculty suggested that this process, in combination with a lack of recognition of faculty who have tried diligently but have so far been unsuccessful in securing funding, leads some scholars to give up in frustration.

A constricting external environment. Five participants noted that declining federal and foundation dollars makes submitting grant applications less appealing and less likely to pay off. Several faculty described experiences of responding to funding announcements that were subsequently cancelled due to funding. Others noted that federal grants are becoming far more competitive, and that it is difficult for UWT faculty to compete given heavy teaching and service demands.

It's too hard to hire people. Four participants mentioned that the process for hiring on awarded grants is onerous or inordinately slow.

Lack of graduate students. Three respondents noted that research is often not feasible without graduate students or the ability to hire post-docs. These faculty also noted that grant proposals may not be competitive without graduate student personnel in budget, and that undergraduate involvement is often not feasible due to skill level and the amount of training time required.

Trajectory and mentoring

Participants were specifically asked to comment on their career trajectory and opportunities to be mentored.

Long term process and trajectory. The trajectory for individuals achieving external funding can be summarized as a gradual process of development consisting of setting a research agenda in small steps (rather than initially trying to find funding to pay for large projects). Initially they went after "low-hanging fruit" grants and after some time, established their reputation with multiple grants and collaboration. This enabled them to go after larger grants and national grants. In a few cases, internal funding provided an initial step. The Chancellor's fund has also been an important element of grant proposals. For instance, pilot study data were obtained through a small study funded by a Chancellor's grant.

Mentoring relationship. Faculty discussed several types of mentoring support. One type was as a graduate student learning how to write grants. Another type was working with a team of people/colleagues who share ideas, expertise, and credit for publishing their work. This collaboration provided greater access to collaborators with overlap in substantive expertise, and access to more experienced researchers on other campuses. Another type was from peers who provided feedback on grant proposals and ideas. A fourth type was an individual learning by

doing which consisted of getting to know the requirements for submission of different sponsors, by submitting several proposals and often getting rejected.

Other. One respondent was concerned about the possibility of developing a system of rewards that unfairly favors faculty who obtain external funding over those who are active scholars, who pursue external funds, but do not obtain them.

APPENDIX

Interview Questions for Researchers Pursuing External Funding

1. What is your history with UWT?
   a. What was your rank when you came to UWT?
   b. How many years have you been at UWT?

2. What is your experience with obtaining funding at UWT?
   a. How many grants (internal and external) have you submitted since you have been at UWT?
   b. How did external funding fit with your research program?
   c. What sorts of things did external funding pay for (e.g., students, equipment, travel, course buyout)?

3. What worked well in the whole process?
   a. Finding funding sources
   b. Writing the proposal
   c. Submitting the proposal
   d. Post-grant administration
   e. Hiring research assistants

4. What problems did you encounter?
   a. Finding funding sources
   b. Writing the proposal
   c. Submitting the proposal
   d. Post-grant administration (e.g., Program Administrator support, how the money is administered at the program level)
   e. Hiring research assistants

5. How could the University help to facilitate your efforts to pursue external funding?

(Some suggestive questions)

6. What sorts of shared resources have you found useful in pursuing your research (e.g., library resources, UWT shared resources, UW Seattle resources)?

7. Describe your trajectory to get to the point where you were successful in obtaining external grants? What sort of mentoring (if any) did you have?