**Ad Hoc Task Force on Instituting a Permanent Research Advisory Council**

**UW Tacoma Faculty Assembly**

**Spring 2025**

*Charge*:

Review existing practices and recommend improvements to strengthen the role of UWT faculty in setting priorities, securing resources, and coordinating with campus leaders to better support the work of the Research Advisory Committee.

*Membership:*

Ken Cruz, Chair, Faculty Affairs Committee

Anne Taufen, Chair, Faculty Assembly

Heather Dillon, Chair, Research Advisory Committee

Peter Selkin, Research Advisory Committee

Randy Nichols, Research Advisory Committee

The task force is asked to:

* propose and justify any needed changes to the structure, purpose, composition, faculty workload, and name of the “Research Advisory Committee” (RAC) of Faculty Assembly, first to the Faculty Affairs Standing Committee;
* if approved, forward proposed RAC updates to Executive Council as Class A legislation for Faculty Assembly Bylaws revision;
* make any other recommended governance improvements to support this work, as may arise, through the Faculty Affairs Standing Committee.

*Timeline:*

February 2025 Inform Faculty Affairs of task force existence and charge (2/10/25);

Task force to review existing structure, purpose, activities of RAC

March 2025 Draft proposed changes for Faculty Affairs review (3/3/25):

Name and purpose of the RAC

Number of seats, composition, terms of membership

Reporting structure and expected outcomes

April 2025 Discussion, vote on Faculty Affairs (4/21/25); first review at EC (4/28/25); final review of draft legislation with UW Code Advisors

May 2025 Class A legislation to EC for final discussion, vote (5/9/25)

June 2025 EC to forward any approved legislation for full faculty vote

Approved by EC 2/7/2025

***Ad Hoc Task Force on Instituting a Permanent Research Advisory Council***

***2024-2025 Annual Report***

**Draft by UW Tacoma Faculty Assembly Chair and RAC Task Force Member, Anne Taufen**

**May 20, 2025**

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**Summary:** In Spring 2025 the Ad Hoc Task Force on Instituting a Permanent RAC was constituted by the Executive Council of the UWT Faculty Assembly, to further the determination by FAC Chair Ken Cruz in collaboration with the RAC that becoming a permanent part of Faculty Assembly was indicated. The task force met twice, once ahead of the 3/3/25 FAC meeting to formulate a proposed revised structure, charge, and membership terms for the RAC; and once following the 5/9/25 EC meeting where initial changes to the FA Bylaws clarifying the nature of different FA bodies were reviewed to gain preliminary approval. Based on ongoing conversations among RAC members, research leaders at UWT, and the FAC Chair, the task force determined that 1) the RAC should become a permanent Advisory Council; 2) the definition of Advisory Council must first (or simultaneously) be created and approved in the FA Bylaws; 3) the preliminary definition of Standing Committees and Advisory Liaisons having taken precedence in the process of introducing and approving Class A legislation in 2024-2025, these recommendations be introduced and followed by EC in collaboration with FAC at the start of the 2025-2026 academic year.

**Report on elements and execution of the Task Force Charge:**

Based on past work and recommendations of the RAC, as well as inquiry led by FAC Chair Ken Cruz in Autumn 2024 and early Winter 2025, the task force was charged with determining and proposing a structure for making the RAC a permanent body of Faculty Assembly. The RAC voted unanimously and affirmatively on 11/22/24 to be named and defined in the UWT Faculty Assembly Bylaws; and agreed that the description of the RAC’s work and responsibilities should be authorized someplace other than the FA Handbook, which is not a formally approved guidance document for the UWT Faculty Assembly. Thus, the current task force was formed and charged by the 2024-2025 Executive Council to:

* *propose and justify any needed changes to the structure, purpose, composition, faculty workload, and name of the “Research Advisory Committee” (RAC) of Faculty Assembly, first to the Faculty Affairs Standing Committee*

The task force met and agreed that formulation as an Advisory Council rather than a Standing Committee makes sense for the RAC, since research is a campus-wide function that is not the sole purview of UWT faculty. **The task force drafted two pieces of Class A legislation to formalize the RAC within Faculty Assembly.** These prioritized changing the name of the RAC from a Committee to a Council; defining the role of an Advisory Council in a proposed draft revision to the FA Bylaws (Article V, Section X), following the definition of a Standing Committee; then proposing the formation of a Research Advisory Council, in accordance with the new definition in a second draft proposed revision to the FA Bylaws.

The proposed formulation of the revised Research Advisory Council included a seven-person membership, with no more than three members from any one unit, representation of different fields and methodological orientations, and terms of three years. These draft proposals were brought before the FAC on 3/3/25, as described in the charge, for review and discussion.

* *if approved, forward proposed RAC updates to Executive Council as Class A legislation for Faculty Assembly Bylaws revision;*

The proposed bylaws changes to create Advisory Councils and form the Research Advisory Council were introduced and discussed at length by FAC members. **They were not approved** to be forwarded to the Executive Council for consideration.

Rather, FAC members expressed their concerns regarding faculty labor, and whether FA is taking on work that properly belongs to the Office of Research; making the charge sufficiently feasible, limited, concise, and likely to attract and sustain the faculty investment needed to sustain the role of the Advisory Council; avoiding overly simplistic characterization of research methodology (eg “quantitative and qualitative”); and further clarifying expectations so that the RAC does not become saddled with program development and management that is beyond the scope and resources of Faculty Assembly.

The task force agreed to continue refining the proposed bylaws revisions to respond to this feedback; and the FAC recognized the importance of prioritizing a preliminary Bylaws revision to institutionalize faculty work and presence on campus-wide issues: namely the creation of Faculty Liaisons and the formation of a Campus Safety Advisory Liaison, to further and honor the recommendations of a prior Ad Hoc FA Task Force, on Campus Safety Planning (co-chaired by Robin Evans-Agnew and Jim West). The RAC Task Force paused, briefly, in April 2025 to enable this preliminary work to move forward; FAC Chair Ken Cruz, former Campus Safety Ad-Hoc co-chair Robin Evans-Agnew, and FA Chair Anne Taufen worked together to draft, introduce, and gain approval for three pieces of Class A legislation at the 5/9/25 EC meeting, creating a definition of Standing Committees, a definition of Advisory Liaisons, and the creation of Campus Safety Liaisons. All three were unanimously approved in their first reading. This cleared the way for the RAC Task Force to reconvene and consider clear options for the reformulation and establishment of the RAC function vis a vis FA.

* *make any other recommended governance improvements to support this work, as may arise, through the Faculty Affairs Standing Committee.*

Armed with the additional option of Faculty Advisory Liaison, freshly and provisionally approved by EC, the RAC task force reconvened on 5/16/25, inviting former RAC member and chair, and current tri-campus Faculty Council on Research Chair Professor Jim Gawel (UWT Environmental Sciences) to join the conversation. The RAC task force re-considered the proposed Advisory Council option, as well as the need to introduce this additional definition as the next form of proposed Class A legislation to amend the FA Bylaws; as well as the possibility of seating multiple faculty Advisory Liaisons to a campus-wide Research Committee run and administered by the Office of Research in collaboration with Academic Affairs (addressing some of the major feedback about sparing faculty labor, previously offered by FAC members in early March).

The RAC task force reviewed an alternative draft Class A proposal which would create Faculty Liaisons with some of the same requirements and characteristics of the earlier proposal for an Advisory Council. The RAC task force expressed strong hesitation about locating responsibility for the RAC in a campus administrative unit, rather than as a body of FA. These include concern over the commitments and relative investment of subsequent administrative personnel who lead the Office of Research and Academic Affairs; the difficulty of “driving” the agenda for a body that has always been led and populated primarily by faculty; and the importance of being able to grow and guide the research function of the campus on behalf of faculty interests, especially in a challenging budgetary environment.

The recommendation of the Spring 2025 RAC task force is thus to pursue formulation as an Advisory Council, consistent with the draft Class A legislation proposed to FAC in March 2025. This will require two readings at EC, followed by a vote of the full faculty; or at a minimum online review of the proposed legislation at least two weeks prior to the EC vote, with enough time to secure the voting input of the full faculty, before the close of the academic year. May 16 was the date by which the RAC task force would have needed to authorize the Chair of FA to circulate the original Class A proposals for an Advisory Council definition, and the Research Advisory Council, to be added to the FA Bylaws as an amendment. The RAC task force opted instead to take limited yet important time to further simplify the proposed legislation ahead of EC consideration, and in light of the very brief and busy time left for EC in 2024-2025.

Going forward, the recommendations of the task force are to:

1. Seat the 2025-2026 RAC following the existing practice to provide continuity and ongoing capacity to accomplish this work.
2. Reintroduce the proposed Class A legislation to define FA Advisory Councils.
3. Revise, simplify, and reintroduce the Class A legislation to create a Research Advisory Council.
4. Adopt a “less is more” approach to the charge and membership language to be adopted into the FA Bylaws for the Research Advisory Council; this can provide flexibility for faculty leaders in coming years, and protect the capacities and resources of FA from becoming overburdened by responsibilities that are rightly based in administrative units on the UWT campus.