

Research Advisory Committee

Annual Report 2024-25

Committee Members:

Heather Dillon, chair
Sarah Alaei
Nicole Blair
Randy Nichols
Peter Selkin
Sonia De La Cruz
Cheryl Greengrove, *ex officio*
Kelly Dyer, *ex officio*

Overview

This report summarizes the work done by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) over the 2024-25 academic year. 2024-25 was the sixth year since the creation of the RAC.

This year the RAC continued to build on efforts from last year. This included a focus on building community around research on campus.

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Founders Endowment

The RAC made minor changes to the Founders Endowment process this year, noting that the prior year process had worked well. Grant funding continued at the \$10,000 level allowing faculty to propose a course release if needed. We developed a more formal rubric for evaluating the proposal this year, and streamlined the process by allowing reviewers to submit feedback via an online survey tool. This allows the reviewers to more easily work asynchronously if needed.

The RAC received 17 proposals this year, and all were of very high quality. The number of proposals was similar to the prior year as shown in Table 1. We again received permission from EVCAA Harris to fund a few additional proposals, bringing the total funded projects to seven.

Table 1. Summary of Founders Awards for prior year.

Founders Category	AY2023-2024 Applications Received	AY2024-2025 Applications Received	AY2024-2025 Funded Applications
Social Science	8	5	1
STEM	4	4	2
Social Justice	4	5	3
Humanities	5	3	1
Total	21 (7 funded)	17	7

The following projects were awarded Founders Endowment grants this year:

- Ji-Hyun Ahn (CAC-SIAS): *Selling Aversion: Anti-Korean Sentiment and New Nationalism in Postcolonial East Asia*, Social Science
- Cassandra Donatell (SET): *Swirl, Don't Sieve: Bioinspired Bilge Filters from Baleen Mechanics*, STEM
- James Gawel (SAM-SIAS) and Emese Hadnagy (SET): *Reducing Human and Ecological Health Risk in an Urban Pond: A Science and Engineering Collaboration*, STEM
- Carolyn West (SIAS): *From Margin to Center: Advancing Safety and Justice at the Intersection of Gun Violence and Commercial Sexual Exploitation on Aurora Avenue North*, Social Justice
- Kawena Begay (School of Education): *Highlighting Indigenous Voices to Inform Culturally Responsive Autism Evaluations*, Social Justice
- Anindita Bhattacharya (School of Social Work and Criminal Justice): *New and Evolving Patterns of Intimate Partner Violence among Indian Immigrant Women in Washington State: A Feminist Phenomenological Study*, Social Justice
- Ellen Bayer (CAC-SIAS): *True North: Life Lessons from the Wild*, Humanities

Another focus of the RAC review process this year continued to focus on formative feedback for the proposal teams. We spent a great deal of time discussing how to make the proposals more successful

for external opportunities. We directly suggested specific opportunities to each PI when we could, and we nudged faculty to consider collaborations that would open up wider opportunities for funding.

We hope that next year's RAC builds on this year's model of the Founders Endowment Awards. We understand that smaller funding opportunities (less than \$5K) to support travel for students and faculty are still needed on campus. We encourage the RAC and other groups to advocate for this type of funding on campus in the future.

Research and Scholarship Celebration

In January we coordinated a no-host happy hour aligned with the launch of the Founders awards. The goal of the happy hour was to allow faculty to discuss research and find interdisciplinary partnerships that would be helpful for them in preparing interdisciplinary proposals.

The RAC, in conjunction with the Office of Research and the Office of Community Partnerships, also planned and facilitated the annual research and scholarship celebration on April 10, 2025. This year we tested running the event as a joint celebration for scholarship, teaching and community. The event title was "The Collective Spark: Celebrating Faculty Excellence and Community". Awardees again prepared [videos](#) to allow the event to move quickly. After the award session, discussion tables were hosted with specific topic areas.

Over the academic year, the RAC also discussed the possibilities of co-hosting a fall welcome back event. This event has been scheduled for September, and may be a good opportunity to provide faculty with an opportunity to prepare well for the year ahead with a focus on research. Unfortunately we will not be doing this event this year and will have to implement next year.

Shared Vision of Undergraduate Research

The RAC continued to support excellence in Undergraduate Research on campus in several ways.

1. We voted to establish a campus level award focused on excellence in undergraduate research mentoring. The EVCAA is supportive and will assist the RAC with launching the award next year. The RAC needs to develop a rubric and award criteria in Fall of 2025 to prepare for this launch. Example site: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/chancellor/distinguished-research-award>
2. The RAC received comments and feedback from faculty over the year about the need for a coordinated UWT poster showcase for undergraduate research. We believe creating this event would bring regional students to our campus and also remove the barrier of our students traveling to the UWS poster showcase. The RAC agreed that this would be an excellent focus effort for next year.
3. Met with UWS (Sophie Pierszalowski Director of the UG Research Office) and UWB UG research groups periodically over the course of the year to share ideas.

4. Dr. Sarah Alaei supported undergraduate students in founding the undergraduate research club as an official RSO. This club may be a good way to introduce students to undergraduate research from the community.
5. Dr. Heather Dillon led the first year of the Undergraduate Research Faculty Fellows program. The program included a two-day workshop in September and a quarterly community of practice over the academic year. This program has been co-funded by an external grant and internal funds from UWT Academic Affairs to support faculty in developing mentoring skills and strategies. The first cohort of faculty participants developed CUREs, mentored students, and created wonderful impacts around campus. The program will run again in AY25-26.

Service and Committee Structure

At this time, the RAC is an ad hoc committee in the faculty governance system. This year the RAC worked closely with Faculty Assembly to address a few structural changes. First the RAC members voted on 11/22/2024 to recommend including the RAC in the Faculty Assembly Bylaws. The discussion and rationale included the following discussion of recent work that might be neglected if the RAC did not exist as a standing committee.

Examples of recent work and accomplishments:

- New programming has been developed by the RAC, including the 2024 Undergraduate Research Faculty Fellows program
- Organizing and facilitating the Annual Research Celebration (including lightning talks)
- Reviewing and managing the UW Tacoma's Founder Endowment Funds, which serve as catalysts for external funding and partnership
- Reviewing the limited submission opportunities (LSOs) for the Tacoma campus
- Supporting the UWT Distinguished Research award
- Enhancing the research connections for the tri-campus community (collaboration with undergraduate research office at the Seattle campus)

This change would be helpful to help the RAC become a permanent body on campus as part of faculty governance. Dr. Peter Selkin led this conversation with Faculty Assembly. The revisions to the bylaws were sent out for a full faculty vote in spring 2025. The RAC also requested 1) a change to the service timeline, that three years would be preferred so that the past-chair could continue to serve and provide advice; 2) that Faculty Assembly use the original application process they set-up for future nominations and selections; and 3) aim for more diverse representation from schools across campus.

The RAC also approved the recommendation of the Vice Chancellor for Research to add a member of the library staff as an ex-officio member of the committee.

Additional Duties

In addition to these main items, the RAC also accomplished several minor tasks. RAC members met with candidates for the Director of Research position and provided feedback to the search committee.

Future Work

The RAC had another busy and productive year. We have identified several tasks for next year that align with the planning we did this year.

1. Formalize the criteria for the Excellence in Undergraduate Research Mentoring Award at the campus level.
2. Create an ad hoc committee or subcommittee to begin planning a UWT undergraduate research showcase event. The event could be modeled after the UWS event, but should be thoughtfully developed to leverage existing events on campus (SAMERS and SET quarterly showcase). Dr. Jim Gawel has offered to lead this committee and Julie Masura to participate as well, and other prior members of the RAC may wish to serve.
3. Continue to support the Founders Endowment award process.
4. Continue to support review of limited submission opportunities (LSOs) for the Tacoma campus
5. Continue working with FA to revise the bylaws to make the RAC a permanent part of the faculty governance structure.
6. Continue to support and promote UWT research and scholarship in community. This includes events, celebrations, and informal gatherings that allow faculty to find joy in research and one another.
7. Continue meeting with campus leaders especially the AVCR and the Director of the Office of Research and including the EVCAA, the Advancement team, and other units to coordinate research collaboration across campus.

Acknowledgements

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