

RSF SUBCOMMITTEE

John Elder, Tim Hushen, Skip Meno, Marilyn Newhoff, Stanley Maloy

Committee charge:

The present allocation of research support funds (RSF) satisfies few. Much of it is enmeshed in arrangements made over years, and these should be inspected. The recent decision to provide RSF only on full F&A awards is also controversial, and should be revisited.

- To what degree can RSF, and the responsibility for managing the functions it is presently serving, be distributed to University units without disrupting successful operations?
- If the Research Foundation stops subsidizing space, and distributes a portion of that subsidy to the Deans, will there be consequences for the rental of Research Foundation space, i.e., will PIs, Chairs or Deans select non-Research Foundation space to house their projects, as some do now?
- The Research Foundation projects that it foregoes \$4,673,000 in rents for projects with full F&A, and that a portion of this is recouped in being able to negotiate a higher F&A rate. How does the higher F&A compare to the foregone rent, and should rentals be managed differently (e.g. rent charged on all projects)?
- What is the appropriate distribution of RSF among PIs, Chairs, Deans, and AA? Investigate the formulae at other research universities.
- Can the Research Foundation continue to subsidize 0% F&A awards, and if so, to what limit?
- Who has precedence for discretionary funds? If unusual circumstances intervene, whose needs are served first: Research Foundation's budget or RSF?

Recommendations:

- At present, the current RSF policy is the most feasible policy for the advancement of the SDSU research agenda. The policy should be continued with a thorough review every 2-3 years.
- A clear, equitable, rationale policy is needed for non-standard RSF distribution.
- RSF distribution is essential for many research-related university endeavors. Many institutions allocate some of the RSF to department chairs to support shared departmental research activities. However, unless a portion of RSF returned to faculty was contributed to this pool, inadequate funds are currently available to provide RSF funds to department chairs.
- The overall cost of administering grants is approximately 14.6%. Hence, the role of the Research Foundation in administering grants with less than 8% F&A needs to be carefully evaluated based upon the following criteria.
 - evidence that the sponsor will not pay a minimum of 8% F&A prior to acceptance of any awards with a lower F&A rate.
 - clear benefit of the award to the University
 - the submitted proposal is related to other grants/contracts of the PI or will benefit ongoing research program.

- the submitted proposal will lead to other grants/contracts with higher F&A.
- Recommendation for low F&A proposals:
 - Limit the number and amount of low F&A projects with a goal of reducing the number of low F&A projects by 50%. Enforcing this recommendation could be the responsibility of the dean of each college.
 - If the number of low F&A projects cannot be limited at the college level, a University-wide committee to evaluate this issue for RSF less than 8% should be formed.

Space:

- Sponsored projects should continue to be housed on-campus or in Research Foundation owned space whenever available. Commercial rental for similar space is more costly and does not add to the net-worth of the RF or University.
- Currently over 60% of SDSU sponsored research projects are housed in RF-owned space. An increased percentage of SDSU sponsored research projects should be housed on-campus to enhance the availability of grant funds for research and to facilitate student participation in research projects.
- Establish a space committee to determine which projects should be housed in Research Foundation space versus housed on-campus. This review is particularly important for projects that either do not pay market rates for rent or are not full F&A projects.
- A pilot project could be considered to determine if allocating a portion of the charges for space maintenance costs to PIs would increase the efficiency of space utilization. For example, cost distribution of 80% Dean / 20% PI.
- Two important caveats are that:
 - Physical constraints sometimes restrict the flexibility of research space.
 - Certain units have on-campus research space, while other units are largely limited to RF space. If the costs are shouldered mainly by PIs who occupy off-campus space, the burden will be unequally distributed. If the costs are distributed across all PIs the impact of rent may be sufficiently incremental to limit the impact. This approach would increase awareness of space usage and would buffer the burden of research space rent.

Implementation of revisions:

- The RSF policy should be thoroughly reviewed at least every three years to determine if revisions in policy or practice are warranted and if prior changes had the desired affect.
- Any changes in this policy should be broadly discussed with the faculty and implementation should be done in a time frame that would allow budget adjustments.