

## **Report of the Faculty Research Committee (April, 2010)**

The Faculty Research Committee consists of three members from each A&S area and one member from Business, Education, and Law, in addition to the Vice Provost. The committee had two major charges for the 2009-2010 academic year: (1) to evaluate and make recommendations on the summer research grant applications, and (2) to evaluate proposals for "limited competitions" and make recommendations as to which proposals would be permitted to go forward as full proposals to the funding agency.

### **Summer Research Grants:**

The committee was instructed to follow the guidelines posted on the Grants Office site for evaluation of the summer research grants. A total of 44 proposals (from 15 different departments and from the School of Education) were submitted for possible funding in summer 2010. Of these 25 were recommended for funding; the top two in each "area" were recommended for Matthews grants. (Funding is \$4000 for a summer grant, \$5000 for a Matthews grant). In addition, two proposals were recommended for subventions. The recommendations broke down as follows:

Area 1: 18 proposals / 9 funded, 2 subventions funded

Area 2: 15 proposals / 9 funded

Area 3: 8 proposals / 5 funded

Education: 3 proposals / 3 funded

Except for two proposals in Area 1, all faculty members being recommended for funding were in their first years of service at W&M. All first year faculty members who applied received funding.

In subsequent discussions, the committee noted some problems with the Summer Grant program. This was conveyed to the Provost and Dean, and to the DAC at their February 4, 2010 meeting. Significant issues include:

1. New faculty hires are being told that they are more or less assured of two summer grants within the first three years at the college. While this used to be accurate, with more applicants and less money, this is no longer the case. The current level of funding is simply insufficient to guarantee this.
2. Faculty who wait to apply for their first grant in their second year are at a serious disadvantage under the current guidelines given that three "youth points" are awarded to first year faculty members and only one "youth point" to second year faculty members, and no "youth points" for third year faculty members.
3. Productive faculty members in their first three years do not get "credit" for their productivity given the stipulation, "For faculty still in the first three years of their academic careers, proposals are evaluated solely on the basis of their proposal's intrinsic merit." This does not take into account the productivity of our junior faculty at all. Moreover, this criterion is somewhat inconsistent with other aspects of the evaluation criteria, given that we ask for those who have had a grant to describe outcomes and productivity, but this is not officially "counted."
4. Composition of the committee, in particular for Area II is problematic. This subcommittee has members from Business, Education and Law.

5. There are also problems with the evaluation procedure. The first step involves each subcommittee ranking their own proposals and bringing their ranking to the full committee. This does not allow for full discussion of “discrepancies.” In addition, there are still no transparent guidelines for how to divide up the grants among areas.

In order to address many of these issues, the Faculty Research Committee has been in discussion with the Provost’s Office regarding summer grants. We are all in agreement that eventually the summer grants should become automatic, that is, that new faculty will be guaranteed two grants within their first three years. However, financial pressures preclude this from being implemented within the next two years. As an interim solution, the committee recommends that three youth points be awarded to faculty members in their first three years who have not yet had a grant, and two points to those who have had one summer grant. Productivity will also be taken into account.

### **Limited Competitions**

For many federal initiatives, there is a stipulation that only a limited number of proposals may be submitted by a given institution. In the middle of the fall semester, the Faculty Research Committee received a new charge, namely to organize the internal competition for limited competitions and to make recommendations to the Vice Provost for Research on which proposals should go forward to the funding agency. The committee developed a set of guidelines (posted on the Grants Office website) and stipulated the criteria for evaluation. In order to employ the broad expertise of the faculty, the guidelines state that evaluation will be carried out by a member appointed by the department chair from each of the science departments (assuming it was a science proposal). The full Faculty Research Committee would then be asked to approve the decision of the subcommittee.

This year there was one limited internal competition overseen by the FRC, the Major Research Instrumentation program sponsored by NSF. Five groups applied and three were selected to proceed with full NSF proposals. The Faculty Research Committee welcomes any feedback on the policy for limited internal competitions.