

Office of the Provost

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jim Beers, President, Faculty Assembly

FROM: P. Geoffrey Feiss, Provost

DATE: August 16, 2005

SUBJECT: Support for Faculty Research

Consistent with prior conversations with the Executive Committee, this memorandum is a first cut at what I hope will eventually be a restructured Faculty Research Program that addresses the increased demand by faculty for research opportunities, meets the needs of deans and chairs/directors for more predictability in research leaves, and may alleviate some of the increasing pressure on all areas of the university for scarce research dollars. I present some background, some basic guiding principles, and then lay out the essentials of a Faculty Research Program that I hope better serves both the faculty's and the institution's needs. I look forward to our discussions at your retreat and at subsequent meetings on this matter.

Background: At present, the Faculty Research Program consisting of summer research grants (SRGs) and faculty research assignments (FRAs) are funded from two sources: indirect cost recoveries (IDC, also called overhead) on grants and contracts and various one-time private funds. Last year, the former amounted to about \$625,000; the latter, \$275,000 assembled from foundation grants, the BOV challenge grant, and designated private funds. These funds are variable revenue inputs and cannot be guaranteed into the future.

Provost Cell agreed about five years ago to growing the level of support for the FRA/SRG budget to \$1M. Between then and now, several complicating factors have intervened. First, during the budget cuts of 2002-3, the entire cost of the Office of Grants and Contracts, approximately \$500K/a, was shifted to IDC from E&G. Second, sizable investments for connectivity to the National Lambda Rail and to remedy various space needs for faculty research and academic activity including rental and lease arrangements for overflow space, repairs and modifications to existing on-campus space, and construction of new research space such as the NMR lab in Smaller Hall and debt service on the Integrated Science Complex have placed long-term markers against IDC receipts. Nonetheless, we did increase this budget to \$940,000 last year, the largest amount in W&M's history, although it is notable that this was accomplished with one-time funds.

It is my considered opinion that we must continuously review the efficacy and impact of financial commitments in all areas, including support of faculty research. There is a structural problem in meeting \$1M/a under the current funding model since that requires nearly \$400,000 annually in unidentified private funds. For reference, that would require an \$8M endowment – not out-of-the-question, but no donor is in sight and building such an endowment would take time.

A prior question in my mind is: how much do we spend *in toto* in support of faculty research at the College? At present, we have an annual IDC budget of \$3.212M. The entirety of that money is spent in support of faculty research. This does not include additional funds spent by individual deans from discretionary, including their own portion of IDC in some cases, and private funds. Last year, for example, the Deans of A&S, Law, and International Affairs together provided approximately \$1.244M in support of faculty research. In addition, of the approximately \$1.5M in Equipment Trust Funds (ETF) expended by deans, the Provost's Office, and IT, much went in support of research as well.

So, the question is not, are we committed to faculty research at the \$1M level. We already support faculty research at a level closer to \$5M/a (excluding VIMS). The questions are: how do we allocate these funds and how do we grow our ability to support this critical sector of University life? That is, how do we maintain a high level of return on this investment?

Guiding Principles. In the analysis that follows, I make the following assumptions:

1. A well-supported program that encourages and supports faculty research, including research leaves and summer support, is essential to the College's success.
2. While research support for probationary and junior faculty is an important recruitment tool and must be continued, support for research-active mid-career and senior faculty is equally important.
3. Continuing support for faculty research should be based on demonstrated research productivity where applicable (publications, exhibitions, grants and fellowships sought/obtained) as well as on the novelty, importance, and quality of the proposed research. In other words, research support must never degenerate to an entitlement of position, rank, or years of service.
4. The use of IDC to support faculty research is predicated on the idea that this is a strategic investment that will generate returns. These returns need not always be measured by financial benefits; they may be intellectual, academic, or other achievements that enhance the reputation of our faculty and the College and provide important learning experiences for our students. Nonetheless, we must take seriously our fiduciary responsibility to assure that our investments result in a long-term growth in IDC recoveries. If we do not, we will succumb to competitive pressures and our entire research enterprise will become unsustainable.
5. There are inherent "inequities" in any program that supports research across a faculty as diverse and complex as ours. For example, while more expensive facilities and equipment are required for science faculty, these faculty are expected to take advantage of external support once their research program matures. To expect similar levels of external support for some faculty in the humanities and for faculty in the arts is simply not realistic.
6. Support for faculty research comes in many forms including semester research leaves, eminent scholar stipends, summer research grants, new faculty start-up funds, matching funds and other institutional support for external grants and contracts, administrative support for preparing and managing grants and contracts, and one-time opportunity grants and financial support from the Provost's Office, deans, or chairs/directors.
7. A slavish commitment to funding faculty leaves is over-simplistic. A fixed level for individual grants or total grant dollars may well lead to counter-productive constraints on faculty opportunity. Last year, we provided about \$710,000 in support of some 45 FRAs. This returns only \$16,000 to the home unit. In my estimation, the home unit receives an insufficient amount of money with which to do anything significant – this number should

- be at least 2.5 times larger which would mean only 17 FRAs could be funded. Times change; needs change; opportunities come and go. We must be agile enough to support new initiatives, to design new programs essential to the work of the faculty.
8. The current competitive FRA system suffers from a lack of predictability. Faculty cannot plan their research program more than a year or two in advance since they do not know when they might have an FRA. Chairs, directors, and deans have neither control over nor ability to predict when key faculty take leaves and often do not know who is going on leave in time to find qualified replacements. In the worst case, under the current schema, two or more faculty in one sub-discipline may be granted a leave at the same time with no more than a few months notice, leaving serious gaps in our academic program. This wrecks havoc on academic and curricular planning as well as on students who find out too late that an academic advisor or research supervisor is going on leave or that critical courses will not be taught.

Essential Features of a New Faculty Research Program. As I examine our present and future financial obligations and needs and consider what would be an optimal program for faculty research, I ask that you consider the following:

1. SRG program awards should continue to be determined by the Faculty Research Committee (FRC).
2. We should continue the current priority of SRGs for probationary, tenure-eligible (junior) faculty so that they may be reasonably assured of two JrSRGs during the pre-tenure period. Awards to be set at a fixed amount, e.g. \$4500. Current levels of support would require about 30 JrSRGs/a at an annual cost of \$135,000.
3. We should increase the number of SRGs for senior faculty. This should be a separate program from the JrSRGs. SrSRG proposals could require a budget and be funded at an appropriate, but variable level to accomplish the research with a proposed maximum of perhaps \$5000. Summer salary will not ordinarily be taken as part of a SrSRG, except in special cases where it must be carefully justified. I propose up to 40 SrSRGs/a. This is harder to estimate, but using an average of \$4000/SrFRG, this would be an annual cost of \$160,000.
4. Eligibility for SrSRGs should continue to be weighted in favor of years since the last SRG; but, in addition, successful applicants will have a) received or attempted to acquire external funds as appropriate, b) written a proposal or proposals of high quality, c) adequately demonstrated the high likelihood of measurable or demonstrable scholarly or creative productivity as a consequence of the SRG, and d) documented appropriate scholarly outcomes of previous SRGs and FRAs.
5. A report of each SRG will be provided to the Vice-Provost for Research by the end of the fall semester after the SRG. A copy of the two most recent SRG reports will be given to the FRC as they consider future awards. Failure to submit a report may make a faculty member ineligible for future SRG's.
6. There will no longer be a competitive FRA program administered by the FRC. Instead, an FRA will be a periodic and recurring assignment for tenured, research-active faculty in lieu of classroom and other academic responsibilities in order for the faculty member to spend one-hundred percent of his/her time on research, scholarship, or creative endeavor. Eligibility will be decided by unit personnel committees, chairs/directors, if applicable, and the dean. The dean will provide to the Provost's Office their list of FRA eligible faculty each fall. Tenured faculty at various stages of their careers who prefer to emphasize their classroom teaching and mentoring programs will be neither eligible nor obligated to apply for FRAs, but may seek to refresh their teaching effectiveness through

- summer or other grants. It would be the common expectation that promotion to associate professor with tenure in the sixth year would, *de facto*, convey eligibility for a first FRA.
7. About, but no more often than, every sixth year, eligible faculty members should receive a semester FRA at full pay with the timing to be scheduled well in advance in consultation with their chair/director or dean. The dean, department, or program will maintain a current schedule of FRAs for all faculty currently eligible and likely to be eligible for the next six years.
 8. A faculty member may seek a year's leave at 75% pay only if they submit to the chair/director, if applicable, and the dean a proposal that justifies the additional leave time in terms of research objectives to be achieved during the leave. This proposal will be submitted at least one academic year prior to the proposed full-year leave. The dean may or may not grant such a leave.
 9. In addition, faculty scheduled to take a research leave may apply to the FRC one year in advance for additional funds, an FRA-research grant (FRA-RG), to support their research while on leave. This might include, for example, travel expenses, student assistants, or purchases of supplies and materials. Such awards will be competitive and based on the quality of the application, demonstrable efforts to seek funding from external sources, past research record, and the amount of funds requested.
 10. Within six months of the completion of an FRA, the faculty member will provide a report to their chair/director and dean, copied to the Vice-Provost for Research, which describes their research activities and the scholarly work completed and objectives achieved during their leave. This report should be of a quality that might satisfy an external funding agency or foundation of the worthiness for continuing support. Failure to submit a report may make a faculty member ineligible for their next FRA. Faculty are encouraged to update these reports as tangible products of an FRA can be cited, e.g., publications, invitations to make research presentations, grants or fellowships received.
 11. Schools, departments, and programs would not be guaranteed compensation for faculty on FRA; however, the Provost's Office commits to an FRA program that has no negative impacts on the quality of the educational experience of our students. It is my expectation that deans, chairs, and directors will work in good faith to schedule FRAs and adjust teaching schedules so as to minimize the financial impact that would arise from FRA replacements.
 12. A dean may request from the Provost's Office, on a case-by-case basis, remuneration to provide replacement teaching for a faculty member on leave. This request must be made in time to budget these resources. Example: if the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures must find a part-time faculty member to teach two sections of Arabic in spring 2008 because of the scheduled absence of a faculty member on FRA, the dean's request for funds might have to be made by February 1, 2006. Deans may expect that funding will be a collaboration between the dean and the Provost's Office. . Provision of such funds will be made on the basis of the academic impact of the faculty member's absence and demonstrated inability of the academic unit to adjust for this absence in other ways. An incentive to keep this to a minimum will be that the less we spend on replacement faculty, the more funds are available for FRA-RGs and other research support.
 13. The Provost's Office will work collaboratively with the deans and the FRC to provide sufficient FRA-RGs and replacement teaching for faculty on FRA. This will not be a steady-state, fixed budget amount; but, with notice required of not less than one full fiscal year prior to the academic year in which the leave is scheduled, rational budget planning can proceed with the advice of the Faculty Committee on Budget Priorities, FRC, and the Vice-Provost for Research.

14. In general, topping off competitive fellowships from external granting agencies will be the responsibility of the dean. Receiving a competitive fellowship should not impact a faculty member's eligibility for his/her regularly scheduled FRA except that faculty must have the dean and Provost's permission to be on leave for more than two consecutive years.
15. There could be a small number of Faculty Development Grants (FDGs) funded at perhaps \$25,000 to the school, department, or program. These will be awarded by the Provost's Office, in consultation with the dean, to faculty whose current record may not make them eligible for an FRA, but who propose to revitalize their research, move in a new direction in their research, or develop new academic initiatives that will positively impact student learning. All applications for FDGs will have supporting letters from the applicable dean, chair, or program director.
16. The Provost's Office will report annually to the Faculty Assembly on the past year's expenditures of IDC, E&G, and private funds in support of research, including funds allocated to the schools for replacement faculty.