

University Planning Committee
Annual Report
2022-2023

Members -

*Bonnie Burr, Chair - CAHNR Extension, *Amvrossios Bagtzoglou, - Engineering Civil & Environmental, *Oksan Bayulgen - CLAS Political Science, *Joanne Conover - CLAS Physiology & Neurobiology, *Carl Rivers - Office of the Registrar, *Mike Shor - CLAS Economics, Ahmad Al Zouabi - Undergraduate Student Government, Lindsay Barnum - Graduate Student Senate, Tutita Casa - Neag School of Education, Bethany Javidi - OVPR's Office, Gladis Kersaint - Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives (Ex-Officio Member, Spring semester), Jessica McBride - CAHNR Communications Office, Jeffrey Shoulson – Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (Ex-Officio Member, Fall semester), Rachel Tambling - CLAS Human Development & Family Sciences

*Senate Member 2022/2023

The University Planning Committee began its year finalizing the subcommittee report ***Strengthening Pre-Award Infrastructure and Facilitation of Grant Application Submission***. It was submitted to the University Senate at the end of last semester but needed to be formatted differently so had not been taken up by the Senate. Those working on this issue were Joanne Conover, Tutita Casa, Bethany Javidi and Daniel Stolzenberg. Senator Joanne Conover presented the Resolution in Support of Strengthening Pre-Award Infrastructure and the Facilitation of Grant Applications at the February 6, 2023 meeting of the Senate where it was accepted.

The following issues have been brought forward for possible action.

IRB - While the UPC appreciates current staffing is an issue and outside consultants are used, these consultants may have different perspectives on what needs must be met versus helping faculty get results from IRB in a timelier manner. Committee members understand the requirements but feel there is a high cost to the university of not getting IRB requests done in a timely and judicious manner. This impacts not just UConn faculty but holds up multi-state grant partnerships as well. Different schools and colleges have been reaching out to IRB seeking solutions to this problem but it continues to be an issue. We understand IRM has been to talk to the Senate Executive Committee to identify ways they will work to increase speed of requests for review.

Next Steps – Senator Mike Shor is preparing a resolution that will be forwarded to the Senate for consideration.

Graduate student readiness for industry, commercial R&D and nonacademic positions – GSS representative Lindsay Barnum kicked off discussion and offered there is strong interest from graduate students who are very interested in learning what industry is looking for in workforce ready R&D scientists versus what students are being trained for who will go into academia. To strike a balance there needs to be technical classes/training opportunities which align with current and cutting-edge industry goals and standards. Graduate students want exposure to industry and to learn more about entrepreneurial applications of their chosen field. The UPC discussed the necessity for multiple tracks for graduate students. One for academia that also instructs graduate students how to teach in the

classroom if that's the direction they chose to take, accepting everyone does not go directly to the lab and focus on their research agenda. There should also be a track lined up for R&D for students who chose to seek employment in private industry targeting commercial applications and economic development. There is acknowledgement that when faculty agree to take on graduate students, there should be clear discussion on what the goals of the graduate student are. Not all prospective students may want to take their advanced degree(s) and follow a similar career path of their potential faculty advisor into academia.

Next Steps – GSS representative Lindsay Barnum created a survey that she has shared with other graduate students identifying what career paths they have interest in, results continue to come in. A subcommittee including Lindsay Barnum, Amvrossios Bagtzoglou and Bonnie Burr met with Kent Holsinger – Graduate School, Karen Bresciano – Graduate School, Kay Gruder - Center for Career Development and Nancy Bilmes – Center for Career Development. The group felt a larger survey needs to be developed to encompass graduate students, faculty advisors and industry. We need to identify what questions will be asked and who will carry out the survey This will help identify what career paths may look like and what opportunities may already exist for graduate students to explore career options. They will also be reaching out to schools and colleges who have been identified as addressing career paths to see how they carry out these activities.

Shared Governance between the UConn Board of Trustees and University Senate – Discussion focused on seeking ways for the University Senate to have greater structural inclusion in the development of policies, not just make recommendations. Committee members felt this would lend itself to greater transparency. The Senate should have the right and the responsibility to participate and collaborate in advancing the university, especially in areas where major financial decisions are being made. This can lead to greater communication and understanding on items such as resource distribution, facilities, selection of the University President as well as more input on strategic visioning and planning. Senator Joanne Conover is a Senate Representative to Board Committees and serves on the Academic Affairs Committee.

Next Steps – Reviewing what other universities have in place.

Navigating Cumbersome Business Functions - Anecdotally challenges are constantly identified with working in a variety of systems necessary to university operations. Post award processes are still vital to increasing our research expenditures, but faculty have challenges in carrying out grants given the way some systems are set up in places like purchasing and HR. Running efficiently managed labs and programs can be very difficult and are rarely intuitive. Perceived redundancy in some sectors and positions, especially in a very budget conscious era is also noted. Turnover and vacant positions in these business sectors has defied faculty and staff in navigating in an effective manner. If the funder has approved a grant and authorized steps and processes needed to have timely completion of the grant, faculty need to find ways to align those grant outcomes with UConn policy as well as state statutes and regulations. Purchasing still presents a problem if a grant partner is named *and approved in a grant*, when the PI seeks carry out the grant with the funder approved partner. Purchasing requires PI's to still go out for bids for new partners. There needs to be a mechanism for allowing approved/funded grants to address exceptions to protocol. While the committee understands these are a result of having to comply with state mandated legislative action, there should be ways to meet needs and accomplish intended goals of the grants. Other issues are found with turnover in administrative oriented

departments as well as identifying the return on investment for time when faculty and staff do not get consistent or easy to follow instructions. Some other challenges identified are in the use of the UConn name and emblem and why only one company has been granted use when compliance training addresses the importance of being inclusive and doing business with minorities, women and veteran owned small business. More minorities, women and veteran owned small businesses should be identified to grant use of the name and emblem.

Next Steps – First there needs to be a university wide survey to identify what challenges are found with various business functions. Senior financial and administrative leaders in college and school business offices should meet (or continue to meet) in a formalized manner to identify solutions in helping our research agenda be more competitive and easier to navigate. One suggestion is for a UPC subcommittee to meet with this group of senior level administrators and listen to the challenges they are facing in supporting faculty and staff. This may require bringing forward ideas including legislative changes and prioritizing what administrative functions have the largest hurdles. Other ways to address university systems is still under discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Burr, Chair