Academic Senate Research and Professional Development Committee - AY 2011-12 Report

During the 2011-2012 Academic Year, the committee met each quarter every other week for about one and a half hours. We had no CAED representative during the academic year.

This report briefly describes the main issues discussed in the committee meetings.

Resolutions Submitted

- The committee submitted a report on "Human Subjects in Research," which was presented to the Senate during the May 1, 2012 meeting, followed by a discussion.

Charges from the Senate Chair

The committee addressed the following charges it was given by the Senate chair at the beginning of the Academic Year:

Human Subjects in Research

Review current policy and procedures regarding research and human subjects.

- Continuing the work on this topic from the previous year, the committee provided an informal status report to the senate chair during the Winter 2012 quarter. At the suggestion of the chair, the committee presented its findings to the Senate as a report, and not as a formal resolution.

Support Mechanisms for Teacher-Scholar Model

During the F11 and W12 quarter, the committee reviewed the documents below in order to identify support mechanisms for the implementation of the Teacher Scholar Model. During the S12 quarter, the committee met with the new provost, Dr. Kathleen Enz Finken, where one of the primary discussion topics was the Teacher-Scholar Model, and how an institution like Cal Poly can implement it, especially given the current budget situation. Since there was significant effort involved in the Teacher-Scholar Model topic over the last few years, resulting in two recent resolutions (AS-725-11 and AS-691-09), the committee had reservations about formulating another resolution that would largely duplicate previous efforts. Our suggestion is to continue the discussion of this topic in coordination with the provost, who expressed interest in additional meetings for this purpose. Among the specific issues to be discussed are the following:

- the potential involvement and role for our committee in developing a process for competitive faculty research grants
- the consideration of TSM aspects in the RPT guidelines, in coordination with other Senate committees (such as Faculty Affairs) and university entities
- the exploration of a simplified SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) or Kayzen analysis concerning the status of RSCA/TSM at Cal Poly
- work towards a regular status report on scholarship at Cal Poly (similar to the one done by Research and Graduate Studies in 2004)
- coordinate an informal yearly survey similar to the one on instructional technology done by the IACC
- champion the systematic collection of relevant information; at the moment, this is done only on a limited basis, such as grants information by the Grants Development office; this also requires coordination with similar activities for RPT purposes

Related Documents

- WASC Report and the respective Resolution on Defining and Adopting the Teacher-Scholar
Model by the WASC/Academic Senate Teacher-Scholar Model Task Force, which was accepted by the Senate on March 8, 2011

- **AS-691-09 Resolution on Research and Professional Development at Cal Poly**, which was based on a R&PD Committee Report to the provost in 2008
- **Self-Study Report** produced by the WASC team
- **Cal Poly Strategic Plan**
- related older Senate resolutions
- similar documents by other institutions

In addition, at the request of the senate chair, the committee examined a document regarding the Policy on Use of Professional Development Funds, distributed by The Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. The specific issue to be examined was a proposal made to the senate chair to route such documents through relevant senate committees before their distribution. That particular document clarified the criteria applied to the use of professional development funds. In the committee's judgment, an examination by a senate committee prior to distribution was not necessary. It was deemed sufficient to evaluate such documents after distribution, and only if objections or reservations are brought to the attention of the senate.

**Committee Organization**

The committee continues to use a Wiki as a repository for committee documents, see [http://wiki.csc.calpoly.edu/senate-research-prof-def/wiki](http://wiki.csc.calpoly.edu/senate-research-prof-def/wiki). Available through the Wiki are this report, as well as meeting agendas and meeting notes. The Wiki also contains more detailed information on specific issues on the agenda, but those documents are restricted to committee members only.

**Franz Kurfess**

*Chair, Academic Senate Research and Professional Development committee*

*June 21, 2011*

**Attachments**

- [2012-03-12-Report-Human-Subjects-Research.pdf](http://example.com) (62.5 KB) - added by fkurfess 30 minutes ago. "Report on policies and procedures concerning Human Subjects in Research at Cal Poly"
Report on Human Subjects Proposal Reviews

This report describes the outcome of an examination of the policies and procedures concerning Human Subjects Research at Cal Poly, conducted by the Senate Research and Professional Development committee at the request of the Senate chair.

Background

As a polytechnic institution with an emphasis on undergraduate education, Cal Poly's requirements and resources concerning research involving human subjects are different from those of research institutions. However, there are mandates imposed by federal regulations and funding agencies that need to be satisfied. On the other hand, Cal Poly's emphasis on the Teacher-Scholar model in combination with the interests of faculty and the participation of students is likely to increase such research activities, and program reviews and continuous improvement are taking on a greater role in the internal operations of university entities as well as with external reviews. This change in context in combination with concerns about the policies and procedures for research involving human subjects led to the request by the Senate chair, Dr. Rachel Fernflores, to have our committee examine this issue.

Survey on Satisfaction with Human Subjects Policies and Procedures

During the Spring 2011 quarter, this committee conducted a survey to collect feedback from people who during the prior five years had submitted proposals for review by the Human Subjects committee. This included primarily faculty at Cal Poly, but also a few staff members, plus some external collaborators. The survey together with a summary of the results is added as an appendix to this document.

Out of 170 invited participants, 47 chose to participate. It should be noted that overall respondents were generally satisfied with current procedures. Reported concerns may reflect their experiences prior to the date of the survey (Spring 2011), and the transition to the new Web site hosted by the Research and Graduate Studies Office. The overall tenor of the responses was mostly neutral to positive, but also indicated several possible areas of improvement. In particular, responses indicated the following concerns:

1. The Human Subjects Committee proposal submission, review and renewal processes, are unclear to some proposal submitters.

2. The mission and scope of the Human Subjects Committee is not well articulated.

3. The emphasis of the reviews should be on the protection of human subjects, and address aspects like scientific merit and research methodology only when relevant for human subject issues.

4. Members of the Human Subjects Committee should serve terms of limited and defined duration, and new members should go through an orientation or training process.
Recommendations

There have been significant changes in the procedures applied to the review process for human subjects research that address several of the above issues. After a joint meeting between the Research & Professional Development committee and the Human Subjects Committee, our committee reviewed the above concerns in light of those changes. In the following, we will briefly compare the concerns above against the current status in policies and procedures of the Human Subjects Committee:

1. The proposal submission, review and renewal processes are described on the Cal Poly Human Subjects Research Web pages at http://rgp.calpoly.edu/indexHS.html. As with any Web pages, the organization and formulation of those pages can be improved, but it is our impression that prospective proposal submitters should be able to find the essential information about policies and procedures.

   Suggestions:
   a. Expand the Frequently Asked Questions section as new issues emerge.
   b. Add information about committee meeting dates agendas and meeting notes to the Web pages, possibly subject to confidentiality or privacy constraints. This will help submitters plan for submissions and potential appeals.
   c. Revise the Policy section to separate policies from procedural aspects (which may change more frequently, e.g., with the use of different technology).

2. The mission and scope of the Human Subjects Committee is described in the Policy section of the Web pages, although the distinction between the committee itself and the role of the office of Research and Graduate Studies may not always be clear.

   Suggestions:
   a. Describe the role and responsibilities of the Human Subjects Committee, and its relationship to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies, especially since the committee is different from others on campus (e.g., Senate committees).

3. Although the emphasis of the review is on the protection of human subjects, such reviews also serve the purpose of protecting the university and researchers from negative consequences, most importantly liability issues. This may result in comments or suggestions concerning scientific merit and research methodology for some projects.

   Suggestions:
   a. Explicitly state in the policy statement and scope that the Human Subjects Committee considers it to be in its purview to provide feedback on scientific merit and research methodologies to balance costs and benefits of research, and to protect the university from liabilities.
   b. Add an entry to the FAQ section to explain the potential need to address issues that appear to go beyond the scope of human subjects in research.
   c. In situations where the committee deems it warranted to address scientific merit and research methodology issues, provide an explanation.

4. In contrast to other committees, it is essential for Human Subject committee members to have experience and expertise in areas where research involving human subjects is conducted on a regular basis. Although additional training may enable members without that background to function on the committee, it is preferable to have members with relevant expertise. This restricts the pool of potential members significantly.

   Suggestions:
a. Specify requirements and duration for committee membership, and indicate the terms of members on the committee Web pages (http://rgp.calpoly.edu/committeeHS.html).

Beyond the suggestions above, our committee believes that efforts should be made to increase awareness among faculty, staff and students for the need to get approval for research activities involving human subjects. This may be beyond the scope of the Human Subjects Committee itself, and clearly will be limited by available resources. As much as possible, communication should be sought with faculty engaged in such activities, but who may not be aware of these requirements. Even if the committee itself may not be able to engage in such activities, it could examine additional avenues and opportunities for such engagement, e.g. via deans and department chairs, or in collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Conclusions

In total, based on the feedback obtained through the Spring 2011 survey and additional investigations, the Research & Professional Development committee believes that under the given circumstances and resource limitations, the policies and processes concerning Human Subjects Research are reasonably well defined and implemented. The related procedures have undergone some changes over the last years, and the transition of the Web pages to the Research and Graduate Studies office makes it easier to find relevant information. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we encourage the Human Subjects Committee to collect feedback from their constituents, e.g. through focus groups or periodic surveys similar to the one conducted by our committee in Spring 2011.

Appendices

1. Spring 2011 Human Subjects in Research Survey - Summary of Results
2. Form - Feedback on Human Subjects in Research Policy at Cal Poly SLO
3. List of links to IRB and Human Subjects in Research Policies at similar institution