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Faculty Research Committee proposed revision to the Grant Competition Guidelines

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Approved by the Senate: 4/24/2003 Motion was tabled.

Not Approved by the Senate:

Approved by the President:

Not Approved by the President:

Faculty Research Committee proposed revision to the Grant Competition Guidelines

Submitted by Karen McCurdy

4/11/2003

Motion:

That the Faculty Senate approve the proposed changes to the faculty research grant competition guidelines.

Rationale:

The current faculty research grant competition guidelines contain ambiguities that impede the ability of the Research Committee to efficiently make distinctions between those proposals that should be funded through internal funding. Additionally, the grant and stipend cycle that was designed for the quarter system produces duplicative effort for faculty members, an imbalance in the workload for committee members. and unnecessary confusion about the availability of funds in the fiscal year.

Senate Response:

Minutes 4/24/2003: Report and Recommendation from Karen McCurdy, Faculty Research Committee: On Grant Competitions

McCurdy (CLASS) noted problems that led to these recommendations: Two separate competitions – Grant and Stipend – created a situation where the Stipend part had no actual budget in Spring, yet was allocating \$60-75,000. Hence, in Summer '02 they consolidated the two into one Grant competition for the Fall, and one for Spring. This has led to faculty comment and administrative difficulties. Also, in Spring '02 the committee concluded the timing of the competitions was geared to the quarter system and no longer worked well. Gathering information from the University community via meetings and forums, and checking the fiscal responsibility of their proposals with Graduate School Acting Dean Charlie Hardy and the Provost, they prepared the proposed guidelines now before the Senate. She moved they be approved; seconded. Cyr (CLASS) asked how this would affect longitudinal studies. McCurdy pointed out that provisions were made on page 6 for this, but no perpetual funding; usually, once would not receive funding two years running, but even unusual circumstances would have 5 year maximum support.

Allen (CLASS, Senate Moderator) asked about faculty response to the consolidation of the competitions, especially re: how this consolidation affected those looking for funding elsewhere when those grants ran on a different schedule.

McCurdy noted the past method had three competitions: One in Fall for grants; one in Spring for grants; one in Spring for stipends. Even consolidating the two Spring competitions into one did not affect the fact that the Spring competition allocated 72%-90% of available funds, so the Fall competition affects very few people. In effect, Spring was the only substantial competition, hence the proposal to make the de facto situation de jure and have one competition per year only.

Still, a number of faculty had voiced concern on this issue. She also noted that this does not address the confusion and uncertainty involved in allocating funds in Spring without knowing for sure what funds actually will be available in Fall.

Mark Edwards (COST) asked if the new proposal barred temporary faculty from funding. McCurdy answered yes. Edwards was concerned this would negatively impact temporaries with hopes of becoming tenure-track.

McCurdy noted the committee's difficulties with unclear guidelines re: elements affecting grant proposal evaluation, such as comparing across disciplines and weight to be given level of seniority. For clarity's sake, and to support those unambiguously part of the Georgia Southern research faculty, temporaries were excluded. She noted the Senate could amend this, though.

Krug (CLASS) noted examples of temporaries who moved into tenure-track positions and, because of time served counting into their tenure schedule, were hard-pressed to produce the scholarship typically required for tenure. However, she also acknowledged that temporaries given funding might take that funding if they move to another institution. LoBue (COST) pointed out there was no guarantee a tenure-track person would not also move; also, temporaries can receive funding anyway, for travel and via reimbursement for earning course credits even at another school. He supported including temporaries in the competition. Edwards (COST) noted we often hire a temporary hoping a tenure-track line will open soon; including temporaries in the grants competition is a way to nurture such people. President Grube reminded the Senate to beware creating expectations for temporaries that may conflict with our overriding commitment to thorough and fair job searches.

Allen (CLASS, Senate Moderator) noted that as well as temporary status, seniority was also an issue of faculty concern in the new proposal, and cited page 7: "Proposals by faculty with less than five years service at GSU or who have not received funding from the Faculty Research Committee will be given a higher priority in funding compared to proposals of an equal quality by faculty who have received prior funding." He further noted that page 8 lists and defines five evaluative categories: excellent, very good, good, fair, poor. He then asked if X number of proposals are judged "excellent" and some come from junior and some from senior faculty, are all those proposals considered of equal merit? McCurdy answered that many distinctions between proposals are mighty fine indeed and that ". . . the question is, how do we distinguish then between someone who writes a very excellent proposal who's been receiving funding from the committee regularly versus someone who is brand new, and is making some rookie mistakes in, in proposals and do we, how do we break the tie?"

Allen asked if the language on page 6 re: not supporting a single project on a continuing basis did not already address that problem. McCurdy answered that the committee deliberately built in redundancy to offer clear guidelines to the rotating constituency of the committee and hence enhance consistency from year to year. She also affirmed that all proposals in a given category are considered of equal merit no matter what the proposer's seniority.

An unidentifiable voice noted the conundrum that exterior funding is hard to come by in many areas, and it would be a pity to penalize senior faculty re: this on-campus source;

yet it is in Georgia Southern's interest to have a reputation for moving faculty toward tenure and promotion.

Krug (CLASS) noted some seemingly contradictory passages: On page: "Research Grants provide support for early stage scholarship leading to faculty growth and development, middle and late stage scholarship leading to the dissemination of ideas . . ." etc. On page 6: "Faculty who have received a faculty research award during the previous three funding cycles are unlikely to be funded," which still lets anyone at any stage of his or her career be eligible, but lets him or her know be careful about going back to the source too many times. On page 7: "Proposals by faculty with less than five years service at GSU or who have not received funding from the faculty research committee" will be given a higher priority. Krug proposed cutting the "less than five years" language and consistently using "faculty who have not received funding from the faculty research committee in the past three years will be given a higher priority" since that automatically gives a priority to first, second, and third year faculty.

Cyr (CLASS) supported Krug's proposal, partly because McCurdy had made remarks that suggested that seniority, or lack thereof, would not be just a tiebreaker between proposals of equal merit; she appeared to have said that "rookie mistakes" in a junior faculty member's proposal would not prevent that proposal from being ranked as equal to a better prepared, better presented proposal from a senior faculty member.

Provost Vandegriff suggested that proposal forms require an explanation of what the investigator has accomplished with past funding; this might give a rookie a leg up.

McCurdy noted that such a section is part of the new proposal. She also said that there is much deliberate ambiguity in the language to give the committee clarity yet flexibility re: decisions made in years when good proposals outstrip funding, and years when funding outstrips the number of proposals judged worthy of support.

Cyr questioned the wisdom of revising the motion's language on the fly, and moved it be tabled so the committee could put in revisions in a coherent fashion. Seconded and approved; the motion was tabled.

Attachment: [FRC Draft Grant Guidelines rev 4-8-03.doc](#)