



FACULTY WORKING GROUP

January 6, 2016

9:00-10:30

RAHC-Harlingen, Room 1.100

Issues/Concerns and Recommendations regarding Processes that Impact Teaching, Research/Scholarship, and/or Service

Part II

1. There are significant delays in the IRB approval process. There is also only one “gatekeeper” at the IRB, which results in additional delays. It needs to be determined if the current IRB structure represents what is needed in a larger, distributed, and more complex institution aspiring to become an emerging research University.
 - Recommendations:
 - Offer more IRB “open houses” to learn how to properly submit IRB proposals/requests.
 - Establish an efficient online process for submission and approval of proposals.
 - Establish multiple IRB sub-committees focused on different substantive areas to facilitate and expedite reviews.
 - Have faculty members attend IRB meetings to answer questions in person and expedite the review process.
2. Staff hiring approval processes are too lengthy, have too many levels of approval, and experience significant delays. Need a clearly defined process regarding who is involved in approving staff hires, which should be posted on the UTRGV website.
3. Generally, there are too many levels of approval, including hiring staff, international travel, purchasing, review and approval of proposals and grants, etc., which significantly delays these processes.
 - Recommendation: Reduce the number of required approvals.

4. Review of grants, purchasing materials/equipment, etc. takes too long and jeopardizes externally-funded research.

- Recommendations:

- The Office of Sponsored Research and Grants and Contracts need to work more closely and communicate, coordinate, and collaborate on these processes. In some cases, grant funding has not been dispersed for months due to “back-and-forth” exchanges between OSP and G&C.
 - Develop a step by step process on how to get contracts approved quickly.
5. Many institutional processes (e.g., website creation, registration, advising, etc.) encounter delays due to lack of sufficient staff. There are limited staff in essential offices, including registrar, advising, etc.
 6. Generally, we have low, non-competitive salaries for staff. Need to increase staff compensation to retain staff. Also consider hiring staff on “soft money.”
 7. The School of Medicine is paying significantly higher salaries to staff relative to other UTRGV colleges, departments or other units; these units are unable to retain their staff.
 8. Staff training is required to facilitate and improve institutional processes and services.
 9. Need more staff support and resources at the department/college level in order to enhance advancement initiatives.
 10. IT should reconsider its policy on “Administrative Privileges” to make program/software changes to computers as this creates many inconveniences; delays processes to download necessary software; and impacts teaching and research.
 11. There is a general lack of understanding among advisors regarding degree plans, course substitutions, and articulation agreements, which delays graduation. Also, when graduate applications are being reviewed, the staff don’t understand Brownsville degree programs. Need an electronic tracking system for both degree programs and graduation applications.
 12. Need to increase the number of teaching and research assistantships, as well as the amount of the stipends, which are very low and not competitive relative to other institutions. This is especially critical as we build new graduate programs. **The Provost indicated that although much more needs to be done, the amount of funding in this area essentially doubled for UTRGV relative to the legacy institutions; travel funds for graduate students are also available in the Graduate College on a competitive basis.**

13. A concern was raised that as a result of the transition to UTRGV the GA stipends on the Brownsville campus were lowered. **We consulted with the Graduate College and were informed that “*The stipends for assistantships awarded by the graduate office [at Edinburg] and in Brownsville were exactly the same.... \$5,000 per semester for masters’ students and that continues for UTRGV.*”**
14. A concern was expressed regarding creating doctoral programs. **The Provost discussed that while we are not forcing faculty to build doctoral programs, we need to satisfy student demand, serve the needs of the region, and build an emerging research institution that will benefit from increased external research funding and philanthropy. In order to become an emerging research university, we must meet certain thresholds in a number of areas, including: 1. Number of PhD programs; 2. Number of doctoral students; 3. Number of doctoral degrees awarded; 4. External research dollars; 5. Funding generated through philanthropy (e.g., gifts, endowments, foundation funding, etc.).**
15. Faculty salary inversion-compression needs to be systematically addressed.
16. Establish a university-wide process/committee to have peers provide feedback on proposals before being submitted for external funding; establish an internal rigorous review process; committee members should receive release time depending on how many proposals they review.
17. Process for granting access to students, especially graduate students, to research facilities, labs, etc. needs to be reviewed/revisited. Current process can take up to 2 months for approvals; this is an issue on both campuses. Allow these approvals to take place at the college level.
18. Need more information on availability of facilities, resources, and training to offer ITV courses when face-to-face courses are not available/feasible on both campuses. **The Provost indicated that in the Fall, 2015, Biomed, Nursing, and Physics provided a few courses via ITV; there were some initial technology issues that were and are being systematically addressed; pedagogical issues also need to be addressed.**

Updates/Resolutions after the Last Faculty Working Group Meeting, 12/10/15

1. IDCs generated at UTPA during the 2014-15 academic year will be disbursed, according to pre-existing UTPA guidelines, during the next few weeks. IDCs at UTB were distributed on a quarterly basis and on a yearly basis at UTPA.
2. IT is working on updating classroom technology on the Brownsville campus; some work was conducted over the 2015 holiday break; additional work will take place over spring break and during the first few weeks in the summer.



3. The Provost provided a detailed update on the UTRGV Strategic Planning Process and emphasized the need to engage the faculty workgroup in providing feedback to this group.