MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 14 AUGUST 2008

PRESENT

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor D McEachern) - Chair
Nominee of the Chair of the Academic Board (Professor K Simmer)
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) (Professor R Owens)
Professor H Barrett
Associate Professor A Lynch
Professor N Morgan
Professor D Pannell
Professor C Raston
Associate Professor L Vidovich

By invitation in an Observing Capacity:
Professor J Davidson
Dr W Maier
Associate Professor I McLean
Dr S Stewart

Dr J Berman
Dr C Thomson (Executive Officer)

Apologies
Professor S Anderson
Associate Professor S Broomhall
Mr D Bond
Dr A Buti
Associate Professor R Cardell-Oliver
Professor K Croft
Professor K Miller
Professor Z Rengel
Professor A Robertson
Mr T Shanahan
Professor J Sweeney

1. MINUTES – REF F14660

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 3

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 8 May 2008.

2. UWA SUPPLEMENTARY TRAVEL GRANTS FOR NEW ACADEMIC STAFF – REF F896

Members noted the attached (Attachment RC1) final reports of Dr Tobias Schoep, Biomedical, Biomolecular & Chemical Sciences, Dr Jason Wu, Medicine & Pharmacology, Dr Martina Kocan, CMR/WAIMR, Dr Marianne Peters, Animal Biology, Dr Wendy Davis, Medicine & Pharmacology, Dr Juliana Hamzah, CMR/WAIMR, and Dr Esther Ooi, Medicine & Pharmacology, for their UWA Supplementary Travel Grants for New Academic Staff.
3. CENTRAL RESEARCH ALLOCATION – REF F19621

Members approved by circular the 2009 budget request for the Central Research Allocation (CRA). This CRA budget request is supported by a detailed rationale of each budget line.

RESOLVED – 4

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC2) 2009 CRA budget and to forward it to Planning and Budget Committee for their approval.

4. STATISTICS CLINIC QUARTERLY REPORT – REF F19621

Members noted the attached (Attachment RC3) report by the Director of the UWA Statistical Consulting Group on activities of the Statistics Clinic for Postgraduate Research Students for the period 1 October 2007 to 31 December 2007.

This Report is relevant because the Statistics Clinic is funded as part of the Central Research Allocation approved by the Research Committee each year.

5. OUTPUT IN THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS – REF F23570

The allocation of funds to reward Output in the Performing and Visual Arts (OPVA) was $118,000 in 2006 and $122,000 in 2007. Responsibility for the allocation of these funds is delegated to the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences by the Research Committee, and members noted the attached (Attachment RC4) report on the deliberations and outcomes of the OPVA Audit Committee meetings in both years.

6. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)

(a) Government Reviews

There is a number of high profile Government initiated reviews currently being undertaken, including the Review of Australia’s Innovation System and the review of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) program.

The latter report has been released and the recommendations are expected to help refocus the CRC program to ensure it is more effective for all participants including universities, other research providers and industry. In particular the report recognises the need for:

- A range of different CRCS including those for the public good, those which tackle big challenges in the Australia context and pre-competitive industry CRCS
- Flexible requirements over governance and governance structures
- Annual rounds for the ARC Centre of Excellence Scheme
- Better perspectives on commercialisation and the definition of benefits from a CRC

(b) Australian Research Council

The recent announcement of ARC Future Fellowships is welcome but as yet there are no guidelines or rules for the scheme.

The ARC has also recently called for nominations for their College of Experts and only three names have so far been put forward from UWA. There will be a more targeted approach over the coming week.
(c) Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) Initiative

The Journal ranking exercise has closed with about 460 recommended changes to the list of 19,500 journals. Only 10 journals were recommended to be ranked lower than they were listed. Advice from the ARC is that they will be sending the final ranked journal list for expert international peer review.

(d) Senate Paper – Characteristics of a Top 50 University

A Senate paper has been prepared which defines the characteristics of the current top 50 research universities in an effort to identify areas of research performance that UWA should focus on if it is to achieve its strategic goal of becoming one of the world’s top 50 universities by 2050.

In 2008 UWA slipped from 120 to 127 on the Shanghai Jiao Tong world rankings, although adjusted for size UWA is ranked 99. Members were reminded that the main parameters influencing the Jiao Tong rankings are:

- Alumni winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals (10%)
- Staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals (20%)
- Highly-cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories (20%)
- Articles published in Nature and Science (20%)
- Articles appearing in the ISI Science Citation index, Social Sciences Citation Index (20%), and
- Size adjusted institutional performance (10%)

The Senate paper will be brought to a future meeting of the Research Committee for a discussion about appropriate strategies to implement as part of the 2009-2013 Operational Priorities Plan (OPP), in an effort to move UWA up the Jiao Tong world ranking.

7. DEFINITION OF RESEARCH ACTIVE

At the May 2008 meeting of the Research Committee it was agreed that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) would convene a working party to look at the conjunction of the different elements of research active, including research publications, research income and HDR student load and completions, and how this might be impacted by academic level and discipline. The purpose was to propose a framework in which Faculties can review their definitions of research active within the context of some generally accepted principles.

The working party has now met and Professor Robyn Owens reported that the reasons UWA was wishing to clarify what staff are research active is because:

- The number of research active staff is reported to the Commonwealth Government and used as a denominator in determining the overall research performance of a University.
- It should be a consideration in the assessment of whether academic staff can take study leave for research purposes.
- Demonstrated research activeness is a condition for undertaking the role of ‘primary supervisor’ for HDR students.
- As the University aspires to international excellence in research, and aims to achieve Top 100 status on the basis of research output, an appropriate definition of research active is necessary for performance management.

The initial call for Faculty definitions of research active by the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor resulted in a wide variety of responses. However, on the basis of the Faculty inputs it is possible to determine common factors that should be considered, such as discipline cluster, academic seniority, FTE status and early career researcher (ECR) status.
What is proposed is a new measure of the Socratic index, which takes into account the identified factors for consideration of research activeness, to help visualise staff research performance through a set of agreed-upon indicators of achievement. The new elements of the Socratic index are still being drafted and will be brought back to a future meeting of the Research Committee for discussion, but once these elements are agreed the Faculties will be asked to again review their definitions of research activeness. The aim should be to achieve two classification tables for minimum levels of research active: those appropriate to laboratory-based sciences; and those appropriate for other disciplines. In addition, faculties may wish to define aspirational levels of research activeness to guide staff wishing to seek promotion.

During subsequent discussion members had the following comments to make:

- Consideration needs to be given to disciplines in which consultancies and not grants are the norm, and where publishing in book chapters is more common than indexed journal articles.
- What is the relevance of the proposed definition of research active for research-only staff who do not receive study leave entitlements.
- How will this new process intersect with current activity happening within faculties based on the previously promulgated definition of research active.

The Chair concluded discussion by inviting members to provide any further feedback directly to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training).
ITEM FOR THE ATTENTION OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL FROM A MEETING OF THE
RESEARCH COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2008

8. UWA RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRES

(a) Centre for Genetic Epidemiology and Biostatistics (CGEB) – F24513

Members were asked to consider a proposal to establish the Centre for Genetic Epidemiology and Biostatistics as a UWA Research and Training Centre in the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences. The proposed Centre will focus on the application of genomic knowledge to complex human diseases, combined with novel biostatistical methodology. It involves collaboration with staff in a large number of UWA schools and centres in the Faculty, as well as external medical organisations. It has a budget of around $9 million over three years, including VCDF support of almost $1 million. The proposal has the support of the Dean. Details and costs of accommodation are yet to be finalised and will be provided by the Faculty as soon as possible.

RESOLVED - 5

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC5) proposal to establish the Centre for Genetic Epidemiology and Biostatistics for a 3-year period and to forward this application to Academic Council for their approval.

(b) Centre for Marine Futures

Members were asked to consider a proposal to establish the Centre for Marine Futures as a UWA Research and Training Centre in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. The proposed Centre will focus on marine resource assessment, mapping and diversity surveys in Western Australia. It involves collaboration with staff in a number of schools and centres in the Faculty, as well as with industry, state government and the community. It has the support of the Dean and a budget of around $3 million over three years.

RESOLVED - 6

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC6) proposal to establish the Centre for Marine Futures for a 3-year period and to forward this application to Academic Council for their approval.

(c) International Centre for Plant Breeding Education and Research (ICPBER) – F24515

Members were asked to consider a proposal to establish the International Centre for Plant Breeding Education and Research (ICPBER) as a UWA Research and Training Centre in the School of Plant Biology, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. The proposed Centre will focus on research and training in genetics and plant breeding at an international and national level, addressing an emerging international deficiency. It involves collaboration of staff from a range of schools and centres within the Faculty with international, national and state organisations. It has the support of the Dean and a budget of over $1 million over five years.

RESOLVED - 7

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC7) proposal to establish the International Centre for Plant Breeding Education and Research (ICPBER) for a 5-year period and to forward this application to Academic Council for their approval.

(d) Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy (CEEP) – F24747

Members were asked to consider a proposal to establish the Centre for Environmental Economics and Policy (CEEP) as a UWA Research and Training Centre in the School of Agricultural and Resource Economics, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. The
proposed Centre aims to improve the cost-effectiveness of Australia’s policy programs for land, 
water and biodiversity conservation. The stimulus for the Centre was the award of a Federation 
Fellowship to Professor David Pannell for his interdisciplinary work bringing together economics, 
social science and bio-physics to work closely with environmental managers and policy makers. 
The proposal has the support of the Dean and a budget of over $5.2 million over five years.

RESOLVED - 8

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC8) proposal to establish the Centre for Environmental 
Economics and Policy (CEEP) for a 5-year period and to forward this application to Academic 
Council for their approval.

(e) Centre for Mining, Energy and Natural Resources Law (CMENRL) – Ref F4617

Members were asked to consider a final report for the Centre for Mining, Energy and Natural 
Resources Law (CMENRL) for the period 2003-07 and a proposal to re-establish it as a UWA 
Research and Training Centre in the Law School. The Centre, currently established until 
November 2008, aims to promote, encourage and publish research in mining, energy, 
environmental and natural resources law in collaboration with professional and industry groups. 
The Centre has developed a successful conference and seminar program which it wishes to 
continue at a state, national and international level. Its activities are regarded as central to the 
Faculty’s research and research training program. The proposal has the support of the Dean and 
the President of the National Environmental Law Association of Australia.

RESOLVED - 9

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC9) proposal to re-establish the Centre for Mining, Energy 
and Natural Resources Law (CMENRL) for a 5-year period and to forward this application to 
Academic Council for their approval.

Confirmed

CHAIR

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