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**2017-18 Review of the status of research at the California State University, Fresno**

Prepared by the Research Subcommittee of the APP (“the committee”)

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**Executive Summary** This report provides a snap-shot of the state of departmental level research support at Fresno State, as perceived by department chairs across campus.

The committee finds that departments have limited means to support faculty and students in research at the department level. There is a generally waning prominence of research from a funding perspective as faculty progress through the tenure and promotion process. In addition, the expectation of continuing research throughout the faculty’s career is heterogeneous across departments, ranging from none to that of pre-tenure levels. Scholarly activities, collaborative research and student research supervision are supported in spirit, but often with very little tangibles.

The committee concludes that (i) there is a need for clearer directives (comparable to a probationary plan) and stable support mechanisms for research at the department level during the post tenure career cycle, along with meaningful and periodic assessment and recognition, and (ii) departments seem to be strangled in their autonomy to financially support research, perhaps due to the current funding model of academic affairs and the university.

We invite all involved parties to engage in a discussion that will result in (i) the creation of clear research goals for faculty across ranks, and (ii) in a better and fair accounting for research work and supervision in the faculty workload.

**Activities for the 2017-18 review**

**Goal:** To address the charge of the committee to write a yearly review and report to AP&P and the VPAA on the state of current research activity on campus. As outlined in the committee’s charge, this review shall include, but is not limited to the reporting on (i) successful research, (ii) perceived barriers to research, (iii) space availability, (iv) computer services facilities, (v) library and (vi) equipment budgets for research related activity. This task of writing the review may be accomplished in cooperation with school research committees and appropriate administrative groups.

**Interpretation of goals for this review.** In this report we focus on the department level research atmosphere and support, as reported by the chairs. We do not address items (i)-(vi) separately. Instead, we report on those as part of the responses we received from the chairs through a campus-wide survey.

**Description of the chair survey.** The committee, in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, created a short survey (see Appendix A for the survey questions and their analyses) with the aim understanding the type and level of research expectations and recognition departments have for their faculty. We also sought to understand the kind of support various departments provide their faculty with in order to help them meet departmental research expectations.

The survey was administered in the middle of the Spring 2018 semester. We allowed three weeks for completion, and there were follow-up emails sent to chairs who had not yet completed the survey. The survey was sent to 39 department chairs. Of these, 26 finished the survey, 4 partially completed the survey, 1 started the survey and 8 did not respond to our request. The survey closed with an overall response rate of 77% (30/36), lending it institutional validity.

**Summary of results of the faculty survey.** When asked about expectations regarding faculty remaining active in research throughout their career, departments fall in two major categories: those who expect faculty to remain active throughout their career (with possible expectations in presentations and publications), and those who would like faculty to remain engaged throughout career but realize productivity declines.

Departments across campus have consistent research requirements for tenure purposes (multiple papers in peer reviewed journals of high quality), likely a result of the campus wide use of the probationary plan, and the review of these by deans and the provost. The picture becomes much more heterogeneous when it comes to post-tenure research requirements. Only about half of the departments highlighted some specific ways (travel support, ‘kudos to faculty’ etc.) through which faculty research accomplishments are recognized outside the RTP process.

Research at the department level is underfunded. Most departments dedicate only a small (if any) portion of their budget to research support, and rely on their colleges, CGE funds, indirect funding, and external grants for faculty research support. Examples of departmental research support include direct (at the discretion of the chair, such as assigned time, space, favorable teaching schedule) and indirect (college fund pass through, encouragement) venues. Departments do on the whole overwhelmingly support collaborative research, although it is not clear whether this really means ‘allow’, ‘encourage’ or ‘tangibly support’ as there were no clarifying examples provided.

Accounting for faculty research supervision of undergraduate and graduate independent studies, projects and theses is not uniform across departments, with some 40% of departments not accounting for such supervision in the faculty workload at all. Finally, students appear to be supported in research (within the constraints of departmental budgets), be that part of a course or independent research, at both the undergraduate and the graduate level.

For a qualitative analysis of the survey questions see Appendix A.

**Appendix A – Chair Survey Analysis**

Q1. What are your departmental expectations regarding faculty remaining active in research throughout their career?

There were 26 responses for question 1 (What are your departmental expectations regarding faculty remaining active in research throughout their career?). Overall responses fit into to two broad categories, (1) Expectation to remain active throughout career (with possible expectations in presentations and publications), and (2) would like faculty to remain engaged throughout career but realize productivity declines.

* Expectation to remain “active” throughout career/ ongoing research agenda
  + Some also outline publishing and presenting specifically
    - Clear guidelines for probationary faculty for publishing
    - Expect faculty to publish one peer-reviewed journal article every 2 years
    - 2 peer reviewed articles and another item like a book review in order to get tenure. Same required to get promoted to full.
    - 2 double-blind peer reviewed journal articles every 4 years in journals that have an acceptance rate no higher than 40%
    - encouraged
    - at least one creative activity (artistic performance) every year
    - 2 publications every 5 years to remain faculty in doctoral program
  + Expected to remain consistent from probationary to associate and associate to full
  + Poster and oral presentations expected throughout career at national and international conferences
  + Expectation of student co-authors
  + Expectation to remain relevant to their research and application to their fields, which enables them to teach what’s relevant
  + Remaining research active tied to accreditation
  + Research will continue to rise in significance by the time they research senior status
* Would like to see faculty engaged throughout career but realize that once tenured or full they may decrease their activity
  + Encourage but do not expect throughout career
  + No real expectations after tenured
  + Some are practitioners so they do community service instead
  + Not a lot of support for research outside of probationary faculty

Minority

* Applying for external grants
  + Sometimes probationary requirement
  + Associate to Full promotion – expectation of applying to 3 external grants
* A lot of expectations that are moving in line more with a research 1 school, but no time to do it. System is broken.

Q2. How do you assess the value and quality of faculty research for tenure and promotion purposes?

There were 26 responses received for Question 2.

Overall, the responses were consistent with the requirement of publication of multiple papers in peer-reviewed journals of reasonably high standards.

The criteria to evaluate the quality of journals differed. Most commonly, publishing papers in journals with 40% or lesser acceptance rate were considered by the departments. Few chairs stated that the journal must be included in Casbell’s Directory.

The number of publication required ranged from 0 to 4 with three publications were commonly required.

Few chairs reported that presentations were also required for tenure and promotion (n=2).

Likewise, requirement of application to grant was mentioned by few chairs (n=2). However, no approval of grant application was required.

At least four responses did not clearly specify the criteria to evaluate faculty research.

Q3. How do you recognize faculty research outside the RTP process?

There were total of 21 responses to question four that focused on how each department recognizes faculty research outside the RTP process. 17 responses highlighted some specific ways through which faculty research accomplishments are recognized in different departments. Most of these responses focused on the financial support provided to faculty members to travel and present their research findings in conferences. Some department chairs mentioned that they send out congratulation emails, make congratulatory announcements during faculty meetings, and post their faculty members’ published articles on the department bulletin boards and social media websites. One department chair mentioned about holding faculty book launch events and promoting scholarship through buying the books that their department’s faculty published. Another department chair mentioned about nominating their faculty members for various Provost and excellence in scholarship awards. 3 department chairs mentioned that they do not recognize faculty research accomplishments at department-level.

Q4. What percentage of the department’s autonomous budget is devoted to supporting faculty research?

Summary

Out of a total of 25 responses, 6 chairs stated that 0% of their budgets supported faculty research. Two stated that some amount supported faculty research (15-20% in one case and 3 WTU in the other). Only three chairs claimed that their budgets dedicated 50% or more to funding faculty research, while two (disturbingly) had no idea how much of their budgets went toward it.

The bulk of the responses (15) fell under the “very little” category. Most of these did not specify a percentage, though 5% and 10% were mentioned in two responses.

The resounding theme here is that faculty research is “severely underfunded,” as one chair put it. Most of it goes toward travel (for conferences, training, etc.). Most departments rely on one or more of the following: their Colleges; CGE; indirect funding, often through CGE (for instance, equipment maintenance, hiring graders to free up faculty time), and external grants.

All responses are listed below in the specified categories.

**50% or more**

50% if I'm understanding that autonomous budget is our discretionary fund. We don't have enough funds to cover everything. Most funds go toward faculty training/travel/membership/materials. The funds relating to research used are materials and travels they take to present their research findings.

Approximately 70%.

Much of our autonomous budget is used to support the many creative activities that our department produces. All of these activities also involve students.

**Some**

By "autonomous" meaning operating budget... it would be about 15-20% of the budget. Unknown. I suppose most of it goes for conference travel. All faculty receive professional development funds that they can use for travel to conferences to present their research, and this money can be used in other ways to help them grow in this area.

Each faculty receive 3 WTU reassigned time to conduct/maintain research agenda. And they are supported for research equipment/supply needs, however encouraged to apply to internal/external grants to supplement.

**Very little**

roughly 5%

Every penny that is not required for some other recurrent/required expense is put toward faculty conference travel. The funding is severely insufficient. We can fund only presentations, not just attendance, and then at a (frankly) token rate. There is no money for research support.

Are you kidding? Operating budgets barely keep departments running. The support comes only in faculty travel.

**Very little: indirect support**

Unless there is a strong donor support, departments usually do not have an autonomous budget other than the operating budget. the math department has dedicated funds coming from the bookstore for the proceeding of book sales for student research which is often connected to faculty research (which is currently a small amount). About 1/3 of the department's CGE funds are used for faculty research/professional expenses although the use of these funds is very restrictive. Also, the department uses 1/4 of the CGE funds to assist faculty to hire graders for their classes which will free up their time for research.

10% for expenditures to support equipment maintenance and equipment fix-ups. CG&E funding can also be used to support instruments and upkeep equipment that are used in research and teaching. An electrical/instrument's technician's time and budget are included in the College budget for the Department.

**Very little: mostly College**

There is very limited discretionary funds available in the Department's "autonomous budget" to support faculty research, but we are glad to be part of a college that has a research grant process and offers faculty sufficient funding for travel to conduct and present research.

Some dollars from a "contingency" fund supported by the dean

Faculty receive funding from the Dean's office for travel/research annually.

Very little since funds are usually provided at the college level.

**Very little: mostly CGE**

About 1/3 of the department's CGE funds are used for faculty research/professional expenses although the use of these funds is very restrictive.

CG&E funding can also be used to support instruments and upkeep equipment that are used in research and teaching.

**Very little: mostly external**

encouraged to apply to internal/external grants to supplement.

Unless there is a strong donor support, departments usually do not have an autonomous budget other than the operating budget either the college level or is through outside funds.

A very small percentage. Our dept. budget is extremely small. Most of the financial support for research in our College comes t either the college level or is through outside funds.

**None:**

No Budget to support research

None. The $40,000 operating budget that the EES Dept receives annually covers office supplies, copier, student assistants, etc. with little to no money to support other activities.

Zero (0) percent Department has a bare minimum budget for the basic operation of the department

0%, because we can't afford anything. 0%

Zero

0%

**Miscellaneous:**

1. Evasive response that translates to “none”:

Faculty receive funding from the Dean's office for travel/research annually. Faculty receive monies from publication of research articles in acceptable journals. These policies are all in the CSB policy manual.

2. Chair has no idea:

Idk

Unknown. I suppose most of it goes for conference travel.

Q5. Please provide some examples of the ways you support faculty research in your department?

Findings

There are total 21 responses. Table 1 lists the key words for the supports mentioned by the Chairs. The supports are classified into two categories; direct and indirect. The direct support is defined as the support that is directly offered by the department and involves at the discretion of the Chair. All other supports are classified as indirect support. Please note that some direct supports may be a result of indirect support. For example, assigned time is generally offered by the college but the initial screening process is done at the department level. About 57% Chairs provide direct support including space, logistics for posters, webpage, research friendly schedule, assigned time, weighted teaching load, some travel cost. Although about 67% Chairs mentioned about indirect support like encouragement, college level support, professional development etc, it is almost evident that all the Chairs provide this kind of support. Space, assigned time, research friendly flexible schedule, weighted teaching load are considered to be the most effective supports for the faculty considering the nature of a teaching university. This most effective support is provided by only 40% of the respondents.

Table 1. List of support key words

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Respondents** | **Example Key Words** | **Direct Support** | **Indirect Support** |
| 1 | Space, poster, webpage, graduate program | Space, poster, webpage | Graduate program |
| 2 | College level, part time lecturer |  | part time lecturer,college level |
| 3 | Encourage by asking to apply for the grant |  | Encouragement |
| 4 | Nominate faculty for award |  | Nomination |
| 5 | Assigned time, summer salaries, highlight good research on social media | Assigned time, summer salaries, highlight research |  |
| 6 | Meet once a year to discuss research progress, praise faculty in meeting, assigned time, negotiate with dean for sufficient start up fund, discourage summer teaching | Assigned time, negotiate with dean for start-up fund | Encouragement |
| 7 | Purchase Nvivo for qualitative research, pay for half of their conference travel | Purchase data analysis tool, half of the travel money |  |
| 8 | Encourage for grants, professional development and joint IPEC projects |  | Encouragement |
| 9 | Flexible research friendly schedule, | Research friendly schedule |  |
| 10 | No direct support, some support for travel, flexible schedule | Research friendly schedule |  |
| 11 | No direct support |  |  |
| 12 | Assigned time, professional development for travel support, supplies, student assistant | Assigned time | College level |
| 13 | Professional development, support to attract fund |  | College level |
| 14 | Travel support for conference | Travel support for conference |  |
| 15 | Providing letters for proposal, assigned time, dissemination of opportunities | Assigned time | Support letter and encouragement |
| 16 | encouraging collaborations |  | Encouragement |
| 17 | some travel cost (about 20-25%) for conference | Some travel cost | College level |
| 18 | Only college level |  | College level |
| 19 | Creative Activities receive weighted teaching units | Weighted teaching units |  |
| 20 | Funding to purchase rights to image to use in publication, faculty book launch | Some publication money such for image, book launch | Encouragement |
| 21 | Being involved |  | Encouragement |

Q6. How does your department count 190/198/290/298/299 supervisions toward the faculty workload?

About 40% of the department do NOT count these courses in the faculty workload while the remaining 60% account for these courses one way or another. In a couple of instances chairs take care of these courses and the associated supervision. Even among departments which account for these courses in the workload, there is no uniformity in the method of accounting. Some give 0.5 WTU per student, some give 1/3 WTU per student. Some impose no cap on the total WTUs earned this way some do (typically up to 3WTUs can earned this way). 1/3 WTU for undergraduate, and ½ WTU for graduate supervision is also mentioned. Finally, it appears that the ‘banking’ supervision units is not a common practice, and is only done at the discretion of the dean.

Themes

* Not counting independent studies/project/thesis supervision (11/24) and the work is done essentially as voluntary overload.
* Counted on a ‘per student’ basis, with varying weights (1/3, 0.48. ½ or 1 WTU) 6/24
* Counted on a ‘per course’ basis, with varying weights (4/24)
* Total number of WTUs earned through these courses may or may not be capped.
* In two cases the department chair takes care of these
* WTU for supervision is sometimes awarded to faculty who have published a peer reviewed journal article within a certain time frame

Q7. Do you encourage collaborative research within and outside the department, college and university?

There was an overwhelmingly positive response to this question, but the vast majority of the answers were simple ‘yes’-s. Without explicit examples of support, it is impossible to tell whether these departments do in fact support collaborative research in any substantial manner, or simply wrote ‘yes’ to mean that they won’t stand in the way. A few chairs indicated that lack of funding prevents them from supporting collaborative research in any substantial way.

Themes:

* Yes (unqualified) 17/25
* Yes – but it is a token encouragement, no substantial way to support it with release time or otherwise. Faculty are on their own in doing this. Existing silo mentality and probationary plan specifics(!) discourage faculty from engaging in collaborative research (5/ 25)
* Yes, with details of support: signing off on grant proposals, making introductions to engaged faculty from other departments (2/25)
* No active encouragement, sporadic individual initiatives (1/25)

Q8. What are specific ways in which you support student research?

Themes are broadly grouped by graduate students and undergraduate students.

**Graduate Students:**

* Thesis or project based research
* Faculty mentor
* Some research is grant supported – Research Assistantship (RA)

**Undergraduate Students:**

* Course-based research projects
* Senior thesis in some departments
* Student research committees in some departments
* Promoted during preview days, Dog Days, etc
* Active in college level Honors Program

**Reccurring Theme:**

* More research and conference travel support needed