

Council of Principal Investigators and Research Administrators
Monthly Meeting
June 12, 2025, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Zoom
MINUTES

Attendees: Mark Besonen, Faye Bruun, Tianxing Chu, Oliver Cruz-Milan, Heather DeGrande, Jennifer Epley Sanders, Valarie Franco, Jennifer Garza-Cuen, Jim Gibeaut, Olga Gil Barrientos, Anna Gongora, Jordan Greer, Jim Lee, Yajuan Lin, Amy McClure, Mark Olson, Jessica Parra, Debra Plowman, Pablo Rangel, Devon Steffan, Matt Streich, Samuel Sugarek, Trent Thigpen, Peggy Valdes, Feiqin Xie

Alternates: Gina Concannon (for DeAnna Crites), Stephen Doolan (for Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan)

Absents: Sining Kong, Ruby Mehrubeoglu, Tye Payne, Mike Starek

Quorum present. Meeting was held via Zoom.

1. Guest Speakers: *Dr. Mark Besonen, FDP rep for CPIRA, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, (20-minute presentation, 10-minute Q/A).*

- **What is the FDP**
 - The FDP is a group of 10 federal agencies, research organizations, and academic institutions working to streamline and support the administration of federally funded research.
 - This group typically meets three times a year.
- **Plenary sessions**
 - There are growing administrative and funding challenges in research, with concerns about research security, international interactions and collaborations, calling for stronger partnerships and clearer federal policies.
 - Limiting indirect cost rates to 15% forces institutions to rethink funding strategies, but it ultimately reduces overall grant support—shifting costs from indirect to direct funding and leaving less money for actual research.
- **Federal Agency Updates**
 - Federal agencies like NSF, NIH, and NASA are working to modernize their grant systems by developing a more user-friendly platform, simpler.grants.gov, to replace outdated interfaces.
 - Due to growing concerns about foreign involvement, federal agencies now prioritize tracking international collaborations and protecting research security.
 - On the administrative side, major changes are coming to 2 CFR 200, the federal rules that govern grant management, costs, and audits.
 - Institutions receiving over \$50 million in federal funding must implement research security training in four key areas, though agencies are still working to standardize the requirements.
 - There's a growing push to use ORCID ID as a unique digital identifier to help track federal research funding, especially in relation to foreign collaborations.
 - For NSF grants, annual MFTRP certification is now mandatory on an annual basis.
 - Foreign travel poses increasing cyber and human threats, so institutions should prioritize pre-travel risk assessments, training, coordination, and the use of clean devices or travel kits.
- **Fundamental research**
 - As research security becomes a top priority, institutions must go beyond compliance to

build a proactive culture, while federal agencies work to promote transparency and standardize disclosure practices.

- **Foreign influence**
—Agencies are coordinating on research security—especially in the context of foreign collaborations—emphasizing that full disclosure is essential. Institutions should strengthen internal processes and promote a cultural shift beyond compliance.
- **Institutional strategies and considerations for navigating recent administrative changes**
—The federal grant landscape is increasingly unstable. Navigating these changes requires institutions to build centralized infrastructure, involve both researchers and administrators in compliance, and invest in communication and people to adapt and stay ahead.
- **Faculty forum**
—The faculty forum emphasized the need for clear science communication to build public trust, called for consistent and stable compliance policies, and encouraged stronger collaboration and communication between faculty, administrators, and funding agencies.
—Public support for science depends on media perception, and institutions need clear communication, internal collaboration, and transparent leadership to guide faculty and meet research security needs.

Q&A

- **Does the \$50 million in federal funding refer to an annual amount or a total over time?**
It refers to an annual amount. Institutions receiving around \$50 million per year in federal funding—especially emerging research institutions—are strongly encouraged to follow research security policies, even if not yet legally required, as broader compliance requirements are expected soon.
- **Is a specific guideline given, such as creating an administrative role to address these issues?**
Each institution must develop its own research security program based on evolving guidance, including training and other key components. As universities test different approaches, the process is expected to improve over time through feedback and adjustments.
- **Was there any discussion about Hispanic-serving institutions or support for underserved communities?**
Most sessions attended were focused on research rather than DEI, though concern was expressed about DEI-related funding being cut due to executive orders. However, in some cases, legal challenges may be pursued by institutions to contest cuts and potentially recover funding if DEI elements are essential to a grant's objectives.

Meeting called to order by Faye at 11:35 am.

2. Alternates, guests

- Gina Concannon alternate for DeAnna Crites
- Stephen Doolan alternate for Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan

3. Approve Meeting Agenda

- I. Agenda was approved.
 - **MOTION: First-Jim Gibeaut, Second-Jim Lee, All in favor**

4. May 2025 Meeting Minutes were approved.

- I. Minutes were approved.
- **MOTION: First-Heather, Second-Jordan, All in favor**

5. Ex-Officio Faculty Senate Update(s)

- I. No updates—Faculty Senate is on summer break.
- II. Oliver Cruz-Milan is the new Ex-Officio Faculty Senate representative.

6. Ad-hoc Scholarly Librarian Update(s)

- I. Phebe Raglin is the new Library Ad-Hoc. She will start in September.

7. CPIRA Committee Updates

- I. Research Administration Development & Training (Jordan Greer)
 - i. No updates.
- II. Operations & Communications for Sponsored Projects (Matt Streich)
 - i. No updates.
- III. Facilities (Debra Plowman)
 - i. No updates.
 - ii. Faye will send Scott a copy of the May meeting minutes for his review and to follow up on his notes.
- IV. Bylaws, Elections, Rules, & Procedures (Tianxing Chu)
 - i. Elections are underway in two colleges—CLA and CONHS—and are currently in the nomination stage; elections will only be held if there are more nominees than available positions.
 - ii. HRI, CBI, and ARI have already appointed their new Pls. CASA is still in the process of appointing a new representative, and CBI also needs to appoint a new RA.
 - iii. Council will invite the new members to the August meeting.
 - iv. VOTE: Approve the proposed CPIRA bylaw revisions, which include:
 - Adding a definition for an Ad Hoc member from the Library.
 - Clarifying the role and voting responsibilities of an alternate, including who may serve as one.
 - Increasing the number of RAs from 4 to 5, adding SAMC, and separating COS and COECS into distinct entities.
 - v. Tianxing reviewed with council each of the proposed CPIRA bylaw edits, and the council voted on them after discussion. All suggested changes were approved.
- V. Graduate Recruitment & Retention (Ruby Mehrubeoglu)
 - i. No updates.
- VI. Roles and Responsibilities (DeAnna Crites)
 - i. No updates.
 - ii. Committee needs a new Chair.

8. Other Business

- a. R&I updates
 - Compliance

—No updates.

b. Vice Chair Nominations

—Debra Plowman will be the new Vice-Chair.

c. Vote: Accept and approve revised CPIRA Bylaws

—Already voted.

d. July 2025 Council Meeting

—July 2025 meeting cancelled.

e. Ad-Hoc for Technology Committee Update

—The Ad Hoc committee is still working on resolving the issue of saving the files. While it hasn't been resolved yet, it remains a priority and will not be forgotten.

f. Open Share

▪ Recognition to CPIRA members

—Faye acknowledged Tianxing and Sining for getting P&T.

▪ Retirement

—Dr. Lee will be retiring in a few months, and the council expressed their gratitude for his service.

▪ BRIDGE (Business Resource and Innovation Development Group Exchange)

—The university's accounting department is organizing a workshop to improve processes and address issues in areas like purchasing and accounting, likely in response to ongoing concerns that have been raised. One CPIRA member will participate.

9. Adjourn: 12:38 pm.