

Council of Principal Investigators and Research Administrators
Monthly Meeting
November 20, 2025, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Zoom
MINUTES

Attendees: Rose Bond, Faye Bruun, Oliver Cruz-Milan, David Essian, Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan, John Gamble, Jennifer Garza-Cuen, Jim Gibeaut, Olga Gil Barrientos, Anna Gongora, Jordan Greer, Anabel Hernandez, Sining Kong, Yajuan Lin, Ruby Mehrubeoglu, Julie Parish Cantwell, Miguel Perez III, Debra Plowman, Phebe Raglin, Pablo Rangel, Sarah Scott, Samuel Sugarek, Trent Thigpen, Feiqin Xie, Jin Zhao

Alternates: Deidre Williams (for Lucy Huang), Renae Schumann (for Amy McClure), Patrick Larkin (for Mark Olson), Tianxing Chu (for Mike Starek and Devon Steffan)

Absents: Albert Bejarano, Jessica Parra

Quorum present.

1. Guest Speakers: *Ben Soto, Associate Vice President for Information Technology & CIO, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, (20-minute presentation, 10-minute Q/A).*

The speaker provided an overview of research-related topics, current initiatives, and plans moving forward.

- **Research Computer Area**
Ben Soto oversees three directors responsible for user support services, student information systems, and research and infrastructure computing.
- **Dugan Data Center**
The data center is a reliable, well-tested facility that includes backup power and communications, and serves as an emergency operations site, with strong security and systems in place to ensure continuous operation.
- **Research Computing**
The IT team assists with data management planning for large storage needs, provides IT consulting for grant proposals, and supports connectivity to global research and education networks.
- **Network Services and System Administration**
—Brad Bowman’s team manages all network services, including LAN and internet access, monitoring, security, and access control, and is adding a geographically separate backup connection to improve reliability.
—Bowman’s team manages and secures all Windows and Linux servers, including physical and cloud systems, web and email services, and reliable on-site and off-site backups.
- **AI Initiatives**
—A system-wide AI platform from College Station is currently being tested, with access available upon request. Early-access campuses can compare multiple commercial AI models, create workspaces, and review data security details, with plans to launch the platform for faculty and staff in the spring once testing issues are resolved.
—It is being evaluated for future access by students pending governance approval. This is the website <https://tamucc.tamus.ai>.

- **CREST HPC**
The on-campus HPC system includes high-memory GPU nodes, modern job scheduling tools, and large-scale storage (over 2.6 petabytes).
- **DAO and ISO Changes**
The DAO and ISO roles are now shared across the A&M System, helping speed up software reviews and IT purchases by using already approved resources.
- **New IT Governance**
—The IT governance group was reestablished with a new model led by the President’s Cabinet, with subject-matter experts and IT support, to streamline software approvals and reduce duplication—this is its first semester of implementation.
—IT emphasized the importance of early engagement with researchers through a new questionnaire to ensure legal and security compliance while supporting research needs before proposals are developed.

Q&A

- Access to the TAMU AI platform will be opened broadly by linking permissions to active directory, with availability provided to faculty and staff in the spring.
- Are there people who have access to it already?
Yes, and those interested in joining the current testing group can email Ben Soto their names to be added.
- Is an AI-related policy being developed specifically for our university or is the policy from College Station being adopted?
An AI working committee is developing local guidelines while adopting College Station and system-level AI policies that the university must follow.
- Regarding the CREST HPC, is the current increase in storage and nodes sufficient to meet faculty research needs, or are additional resources and funding planned?
There is currently no funded plan for additional CREST upgrades, but growing storage needs are being evaluated and future planning will be developed through the research and HPC committees to support long-term research growth.
- Given that some faculty need resources available at College Station, is there a strategy to access those systems, or is the plan to continue building our own capacity?
There is concern about relying solely on the local data center, and options such as using College Station’s data center are being considered as part of long-term planning for future hardware upgrades.
- The decision to use Zoom was made collaboratively. While having both Zoom and Teams can be confusing, Zoom is included in the enterprise license and continues to be supported, especially since many faculty prefer it for teaching.
- The Proposal Intake Form created by Dr. Donaldson is hosted in Qualtrics (https://tamucc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8x0eHyCqZLfY2kS) and collects project, facilities, and IT needs, with IT requests automatically sent to the IT team for early review.
- Have others raised concerns about the frequent software update pop-ups on university computers?
Although complaints have decreased, more frequent updates are needed because cybersecurity threats are increasing and protections must stay current.

Meeting called to order by Feiqin at 11:39 am.

2. CPIRA alternates

- Deidre Williams for Lucy Huang
- Renae Schumann for Amy McClure
- Tianxing Chu for Mike Starek and Devon Steffan
- Patrick Larkin for Mark Olson
- Jin Zhao is temporarily replacing Valarie Franco

Feiqin thanked Drs. Williams and Larkin for serving as alternates during the fall semester.

3. Approve Meeting Agenda

- I. Agenda was approved.
 - **MOTION: First-Faye, Second-Jennifer, All in favor**

4. October 2025 Meeting Minutes were approved.

- I. Minutes were approved with a minor change. There was a discussion/explanation about salary savings vs. salary reserves.
 - **MOTION: First-Faye, Second-Jennifer, All in favor**

5. Ex-Officio Faculty Advisory Council Update(s) (Oliver Cruz-Milan)

- I. The FAC met on October 17, and there was no guest speaker.
- II. The university is among the first to comply with the required adjustments under SB37.
- III. The Provost's Office and Institutional Excellence are addressing SB412 by working with specific courses involving minors in the classroom.
- IV. Core courses will undergo a review, excluding upper-level courses, and Dr. Susan Murphy will serve as the university liaison.
- V. Student liability for volunteer work in laboratories was discussed, and updates are expected after the October 30th meeting.
- VI. The provost announced plans to adopt Simply Syllabus to standardize syllabi and integrate them with Canvas and SAILS.

6. Ad-hoc Scholarly Librarian Update(s) (Lisa Louis)

- I. The Open Access Publication Fund opened with \$70,000; 20 applications received, with 17 approved and 3 denied, and 2 articles covered through transformative agreements with Wiley and Springer Nature.
- II. Approximately \$32,000 remains available, and discussions are underway to expand transformative agreements, including with Frontiers.
- III. The funding is available basically until it runs out—probably before the end of FY26.
- IV. Approved funding is reserved on a first-come, first-served basis and will be carried over if publication is delayed, but reapplication is required if the article is not accepted.

7. CPIRA Committee Updates

Members were encouraged to join a subcommittee, and those who have not yet selected one were asked to email their choice to Olga or Fei.

- I. Research Administration Development & Training (Jordan Greer)
 - i. Valarie Franco is no longer in CPIRA—she changed jobs.
 - ii. Jin Zhao will be temporarily taking Valarie's position.

- iii. Jordan Greer kindly agreed to be the new committee chair.
- II. Operations & Communications for Sponsored Projects (Jennifer Garza-Cuen)
- i. No updates.
 - ii. Jennifer and Jordan will meet with Dr. Donaldson prior to her departure and asked council members to share any questions they may have for Dr. Donaldson.
- III. Facilities (Debra Plowman)
- i. The committee chair will be on FDL and invited interested members to serve as chair during her absence.
 - ii. Committee could add a new member.
 - iii. Hazardous waste remains a major issue, R&I is willing to work with department chairs and deans to identify and address unplanned costs caused by waste containers.
 - iv. Updates to the shed are very limited, and infrequent pickups continue to create capacity and timing issues.
 - v. The committee plans to draft a letter summarizing the issues to encourage deans and departments using the waste pickup service to address them at a broader institutional level and invite additional input from council members.
- IV. Bylaws, Elections, Rules, & Procedures (Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan)
- i. Two revised policies on controlled unclassified information and research misconduct were reviewed and reported back to Kevin Houlihan with some comments.
 - ii. A newly revised policy on postdoctoral research associates was distributed to all council members for review and asked to submit comments on the document to Shannon by December 4.
- V. Graduate Recruitment & Retention (Ruby Mehrubeoglu)
- i. Committee requested a meeting with Dr. Mahdy to discuss potential next steps.
- VI. Roles and Responsibilities (Jordan Greer)
- i. Committee is on hold until the AVPRI position is filled.

8. Other Business

- a. R&I updates
- Compliance
—Export Control position for an additional staff member has not been filled yet.
 - AVPR Position Update
—Dr. Donaldson will remain on campus through the end of the semester. The position advertisement has been posted, and Fei will serve on the search committee.
 - TUF Update
—The PhD student target has been adjusted to 51.
- b. CPIRA filing Ad-hoc Committee (Trent Thigpen)
- Trent and Olga met with Brad Bowman from IT to discuss options for file storage, archive organization, and file sharing.
 - Existing CPIRA Teams channels and a potential CPIRA Laserfiche account will be evaluated as possible solutions for file storage and organization.

—Organizing CPIRA files will require internal effort, including establishing naming conventions and reviewing, renaming, and organizing many years of existing files.
—A standardized procedure was suggested for CPIRA and committee chairs to submit committee files/history to CPIRA administration to maintain continuity as members and leadership change over time.

c. Research Computing Committee Update

—There is a new form available for requesting additional storage space for HPC.

—IT is testing a secure, system-based large language model prototype from Texas A&M System, with limited access during the pilot phase.

—Users of high-performance computing were reminded to join the relevant listserv.

d. December CPIRA Meeting

—There will be no regular Council meeting in December; the next meeting is scheduled for January 15.

e. Open Share

▪ International Conference

—There is a strong possibility that the International Conference on Electrochemistry and New Materials will be held in Corpus Christi. Dr. T.J. Ulrich from TAMU and Los Alamos National Laboratory is visiting Corpus Christi to evaluate potential venues. Planning is underway, and the conference would present a valuable opportunity for interested faculty.

▪ Auto-check

—Auto-check and tire air filling services available on campus starting on Nov. 19. Service offered at the Hammerhead parking lot.

▪ Research Excellence Fund

—A future agenda item was suggested to discuss recent changes to the Research Excellence Fund distribution across the A&M System.

9. Adjourn: 12:35 pm.

MOTION: First-Faye, Second-Ruby, All in favor