THE PROVOST’S CHARGE

Provost Patricia Beeson delivered the Council’s charge. She asked Council members to:

- Continue to support trips to Washington DC, these trips are important to continue:
  - To enable faculty to gain knowledge about current funding climate.
  - Good opportunity to talk to agency representatives for proposal submission guidance.
- Central University Research Fund
  - Focus should be on new faculty to help them get their research projects started
- Create new ideas to assist young faculty
- Grant Writing
  - Develop material to help young faculty to be more competitive with grant proposals.
- Assist the Schools for Humanities and Social Sciences:
  - They have less research funding resources available.
  - Need to help their faculty get recognition they deserve.
  - We need to encourage the faculty to apply for more grants.
- Undergraduate Research
  - We have experienced strong progress in this area at Pitt, but we can do more.
  - Anything we can do to expand progress will benefit the university.
- Collaborations
  - Pitt has a very collaborative environment.
  - Determine what is inter- and multi-disciplinary research?
- Competitive Funding Environment
  - Pitt is a great research university.
  - Pitt is more than competitive with all public universities.
  - We need to look at emerging areas of research – where is research going?

Comments from Committee to Provost Beeson’s Charge:

- It’s important to help young faculty with their careers but senior investigators are also having problems securing funding later in their careers.
- Bridge Funding is a good resource for senior investigators.
- Concern is how to support senior faculty to stay competitive.

Graduate and Undergraduate Student Resources

Mark Redfern brought up the question whether we should expand resources for undergraduate research across campus. Some committee members thought this was a good idea, but we should find out more about what is currently available and ongoing. Other committee members brought up graduate student funding and wonder if this should be considered as funding students in laboratories is becoming increasing difficult. Catherine Greeno brought up the point that it may be better to look into more faculty development, instead of concentrating on funding students. Robert Gibbs also would prefer to invest in faculty versus student funding. It’s not
critical to pay students a stipend rather it should be the experience that should be the focus. We should concentrate on supporting the project instead of the student.

**Research Funding for Senior Faculty**

It was discussed how research funding opportunities have changed over the past 5-10 years. In addition to junior faculty issues for launching their research careers, it has become difficult for senior faculty to obtain grants/contracts later in their careers. Mark Redfern agreed and acknowledged that it is increasingly difficult for them to continue at the levels they had early on in their careers. It was discussed how much research funding has decreased for senior faculty, and stated that we need to consider developing a strategy to help faculty with this issue.

Mark Redfern mentioned NIH seems to be awarding less Program Grants and are gearing towards smaller investigator grants. Allen DiPalma mentioned that the Office of Research now sees more non-traditional grants and contracts being awarded and many are from other agencies besides the NIH.

Some other comments:
- Robert Gibbs mentioned many senior investigators are looking for collaborators. Senior investigators need to know other senior investigators’ expertise right here at Pitt.
- Mark Redfern suggested setting up a system where investigators can meet other investigators for developing future collaboration projects. We could also organize various faculty lab tours across campus in the future.
- Robert Gibbs suggested forming special discussion groups across campus for faculty – this could help inform faculty about ongoing research projects here at the University.

**ACTION ITEM:** Plan future presentation on Pitt’s Digital Vita Program recently developed.

**Undergraduate Summer Research Experience Programs**

Mark Redfern showed the video of the Swanson School of Engineering Undergraduate Summer Research Program presentations from this past summer. Some of the highlights that resulted from the program were:
- All posters presented at the October Science 2012 event
- All students prepared 2-page abstracts of their research
- All students prepared video for their research project
- Great opportunity and experience for students

A discussion occurred about what other type of undergraduate programs are in place across campus. In the School of Arts & Sciences they have a program called “Gain Experience.” The School of Nursing also has an Undergraduate Research Excellence Fair that runs through their Student Services office. Robert Gibbs mentioned these programs are a real advantage to laboratories, especially if students stay with the same laboratory for an extended period of time. Mark Redfern mentioned he would hesitate to recruit freshman for these internships, noting that the focus after the sophomore year may be more ideal.

**ACTION ITEMS:**
- Obtain information on other Undergraduate Summer Research Programs across campus and distribute to committee.
-Find out what other universities have Undergraduate Summer Research Programs and if it’s possible to train students between Pitt and these outside universities.