

Report (2021/2022)

Research, Scholarship and the Creative Arts Committee
UVM Faculty Senate
May 10, 2022

Membership of the Committee. The committee membership included:

Raju Badireddy (CEMS), Mildred Beltre (CAS, Fine Arts Rep), Brandon Bensel (Postdoctoral Association), Vicki Brennan (CAS), Thomas Borchert (Faculty Senate President), Marieka Brouwer Burg (CAS), Mary Cushman (LCOM), Rachelle Gould (RSENR), Jen Hurley (CESS), Dmitry Krementsov (CNHS), Christie Slikotch (LIB), Joe Owuor (GSS), Jill Preston (CALS), Daniel Weiss (LCOM), Sarah Wood (SGA), Chun Zhang (GSB)

The committee meet 8 times, the first being on September 9, 2021 and the last being May 12, 2022.

CHARGE OF THE RSCA

This committee is responsible for matters relating to research activities, scholarly work, and creative and performing arts carried out at the University, including graduate education and items referred to in Sections 1.1c, 1.2b, 1.2g, and 1.2k in the Faculty Senate bylaws. The RSCA reviews, recommends, and participates in the formulation of policy with respect to resources related to these activities, including physical facilities and allocation of appurtenant space, library resources and resources for graduate programs, and makes recommendations to assure effective use of these resources. The RSCA serves as liaison between the Senate and the administration on such matters as, but not limited to: the broad role of the University in advancing knowledge through research, scholarship, and the performing arts; external and internal support for encouraging these activities, including graduate and undergraduate research; intellectual property, and technology transfer; ethical issues and issues affecting the academic environment as these arise in research or scholarly work. The RSCA consults frequently with other University and collegiate committees that are charged to initiate, maintain, and monitor institutional support programs for research, scholarship, the creative arts, and graduate education, as well as maintains close liaison with appropriate administrative offices in its areas of responsibility.

KEY RSCA ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

At its first meeting, the committee discussed its commission and member responsibilities. Major themes of proposed activities for the year were discussed in a brainstorming session, and prioritized and adjusted as the year progressed. The committee has strong interest in, and had several discussions about, promoting humanities at UVM, the graduate college, Sponsored Project Administration (SPA), Reorganization, the Libraries and the Academic Freedom policy for faculty.

- **Representation of the Committee to UVM entities.** Co-chair Cushman and co-chair Beltre served on the Research Advisory Committee convened by Vice President of Research (VPR) Kirk Dombrowski, and Dr. Cushman served on the UVM Reorganization Committee. Liaison to the Libraries Committee was vacant this year. Dr. Cushman served on the Senate Executive Council and UVM Board of Trustees Educational Policy and Institutional Resources Committee (EPIR).

Meeting Topics

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Amer Ahmed visited the committee to discuss the work of the University Diversity council:

- developing a five year plan
- faculty senate representation will be added to council
- more accessible campus climate survey is being developed
- RSCA will work on developing tangible ways to promote DEI on campus

Fellowship, Opportunities, & Undergraduate Research (FOUR)

Ann Kroll Lerner and Vivien Enriquez visited to discuss new programs for 2022

- Food SURF – focused on food systems research, \$6000 stipend (summer undergraduate research program)
- Agroecology Extension research fellowship program, AX – expanding number of student awards, \$4000 stipend + housing or housing allowance
- CALS Life Science research fellowship program – continuing for a second year, \$4000-\$4500 stipend
- Student Research Conference was discussed.

SPA

Brian Prindle from Research Administration presented at one meeting

- Unscheduled staffing shortage and updates on greatly needed additional positions
- Update on services the office provides and what staff provides them
- Accountability and improvement in overall award management

Libraries

- Dean Geffert visited the committee in the fall. Purchasing power of the libraries is down and UVM was unable to renew Science Direct subscription.
- Libraries draft strategic priorities and initiatives were reviewed in the fall.
- At a later meeting, President Thomas Borchert presented a resolution in support of the Library Budget: “The Faculty Senate calls on the leadership of the University of Vermont to support and fund the UVM library system to an extent commensurate with our peer and aspirant universities and that supports growth to an R1 level, due to the critical intellectual infrastructure that the libraries represent.”

The motion carried with a vote of 7 approve, 0 abstain/oppose

Institutional Review Board

IRB personnel Matthew Price, Donna Silver, Theodore Marcy, and Melanie Locher visited the committee.

- Rachelle Gould and Vicki Brennan collected comments from faculty and offered brief introductory thoughts about the reason for the discussion.
- The discussion centered around a potential poor fit between the biomedically focused history of the IRB and its role in evaluating work that is rooted in critical, constructivist, or interpretivist paradigms.

- The discussion was positive and mutually supportive; the IRB staff expressed strongly that they are “on the researchers’ teams” and will work to support research and ensure that it is ethical. They are open for discussion about all protocols.

Agroecology Institute

Ernesto Mendez and Colin Anderson (CALS) visited to update the committee about the nascent Agroecology Institute.

- They described the three pillars of the Institute: Transforming food systems for just sustainability; participatory, transdisciplinary, and action research; and centering equity.
- They described their approach of being “locally rooted, globally connected”

Decolonizing Research

The Committee discussed decolonizing research at multiple meetings in winter and spring 2022. Decolonizing research means centering concerns and world views of non-Western individuals, and respectfully knowing and understanding theory and research from previously “Other(ed)” perspectives.

- A sub-committee formed to learn more about decolonizing research, and to consider how we at UVM might take steps to decolonize our research.
 - Members of the subcommittee: Rachelle Gould (organizer), Jennifer Hurley, Raja Badireddy, Christie Silkotch, Marieka Brouwer Burg.
- When Kirk Dombrowski visited the committee in April 2022, decolonizing research was one of three primary topics addressed. Dr. Dombrowski’s primary interest was in how to take action on this important topic.
- The committee hosted a lunchtime discussion for the campus community (primarily faculty) in May 2022. Over 30 people attended.

Academic Freedom

- President Thomas Borchert lead the committee in discussions about a proposed Senate resolution on maintaining the ability to conduct research and teach about issues related to race and ethnicity.
- The committee revisited the language multiple times in Winter and Spring 2022, offered input on language and resolution details, and supported the measure.
- There were also discussions about the UVM Academic Freedom Policy and possible revisions.

Vice President of Research Office

Vice President Dombroski visited the Committee twice. Several topics were covered:

- Reviewed the newly expanded Office of Research Development, which assists with grant preparation and strategy, and produces a newsletter for funding opportunities
- VPR internal funding calls and awards:
 - Funding opportunities can be found on the [OVPR website](#)
 - Discussed the development process, and method whereby the committee could offer input on future covered topics. The committee recommended consideration of interdisciplinary research challenges.
- Status of UVM’s effort to become a Carnegie R1 institution. Great progress was made toward this. Growth is needed in number of social sciences and humanities PhD programs; 3 new PhD programs have launched. The next evaluation will be in 3 years
- Decolonizing research at UVM
- Vision for Humanities research was discussed.
- The Henderson Program was discussed, more information can be found at this [site](#):

Graduate College

Dean Forehand visited the committee twice. Topics of discussion

- Support for postdoctoral position
- Graduate assistant stipends
- Mentoring workshops
- Admission statistics
- New programs

Burack President's Distinguished Lecture

The committee was not asked to review nominations this year.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Cushman, Mildred Beltre, Rachelle Gould
May 10, 2022