

Report (2020/2021)

Research, Scholarship and the Creative Arts Committee UVM Faculty Senate May 11, 2021

Membership of the Committee. The committee membership included:

Mildred Beltre (CAS, Fine Arts Rep), Brandon Bensel (Postdoctoral Association), Vicki Brennan (CAS), Christopher Burns (Faculty Senate President), Mary Cushman (LCOM), Katie Gough (CAS), Rachelle Gould (RSENR), Britt Holmén (CEMS), Micah Hundley (GSS), Dimitry Kremontsov (CNHS), Christie Silkotch (LIB), Daniel Weiss (LCOM), Chun Zhang (GSB)[^], Erik Monsen (GSB) Tammy Kolbe (CESS), Jill Preston* (CALs), Vacant (SGA) Mary Cushman (LCOM), Thomas Chittenden (fall) and Christopher Burns (spring) (ex officio) The SGA spot was vacant.

[^]Sabbatical fall, covered by Dr. Monsen

*Sabbatical spring

The committee meet 8 times, the first being on September 12, 2019 and the last being May 13, 2020.

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. A calendar outline was made at the start of each semester. The committee has strong interest in, and had several discussions about, promoting humanities at UVM, interdisciplinary research, the graduate college, the Libraries and the Academic Freedom policy for faculty.

- **New Representation of the Committee to UVM entities.** Chair Cushman served on the new Research Advisory Committee convened by Vice President of Research (VPR) Kirk Dombrowski, the UVM Strong Research and Graduate Education working group (for

pandemic response), and the UVM Reorganization Committee. Vicki Brennan served on the Libraries Advisory Committee. Daniel Weiss served on the Review Committee for the Dean of the Graduate College.

- **Libraries**

Dean Bryn Geffert visited the committee twice with the following topics discussed

- Updates were given on pandemic modifications for safety and access.
- Budgetary challenges leading to difficulties in renewal of UVM's expensive contract with Elsevier were discussed and RSCA approved a resolution at a Special Meeting that was subsequently passed in the Senate supporting UVM's negotiations and possible non-renewal of said contract.
- Later in the year, after UVM did not renew with Elsevier, Dean Geffert returned to discuss access and how interlibrary loan (ILL) services were progressing. Some high demand Elsevier titles were purchased and the library is researching a 3rd party ILL fulfilment service. Committee members reflected positive comments on the excellent ILL services.
- The committee was interested in advancing the concept that the library provide funds to faculty for open access publishing and this is being discussed, although current budget doesn't allow, it remains a possibility for future.
- Discussion of humanities at UVM (see below)

- **VPR Dombrowski Updates**

VPR Dombrowski visited twice with the following topics discussed:

- Modernization / reorganization of the OVPR
- New OVPR Award Programs to support research and scholarship.
- New opportunity for a Research Fellowship in OVPR. Ernesto Mendez, Agroecology and Food Systems Institute, was selected.
- UVM funding reached a record high for FY 20 (\$181,675,417).
- OVPR is building a hub and spokes program for SPA to support grant preparation across units, more uniform support for faculty.
- R1 status and planning and needs to gain this status.
- Research Institutes and infrastructure
- Working with Federal Relations to support research
- Planning a Fundraising campaign for research

- **Graduate College.**

Dean Forehand updated the committee on the following topics:

- Postdoctoral Fellows will transition to similar benefits as postdoc associates in terms of employee class. This will provide equity and should encourage more postdocs to seek external (i.e., NIH F32) and internal (i.e., NIH T32) fellowships
- Working on graduate student stipends to align with cost of living.

- **Post Doc Association (PDA)**

- Dr. Bense reported results of a survey of the PDA. Participants are interested in opportunities for grant-writing workshops, non-academic career workshops, opportunities for teaching, and skills in management and science communication.
- Goals have been set to engage postdocs more in the PDA, provide programming and building partnerships with RSCA and OVPR.

- **FOUR Update, Ann Kroll Lerner**

Ann Kroll Lerner visited twice, introducing the committee to Vivien Enriquez, the new Undergraduate Research Coordinator in FOUR (hired following encouragement from RSCA last year). Robust discussions took place regarding undergraduate research.

- The Student Research Conference was virtual in 2020 and 2021. They were deemed very successful. <https://www.uvm.edu/four>
- FOUR awarded 30 undergraduate fellow scholarships (SURFs) in summer 2020 with plans to award 35 in 2021.
- UVM had 9 Fulbright winners and 6 finalists for the past year, the most ever.
- The RSCA would like to see more support and resources toward:
 - Grant writing and feedback.
 - Trained writing center tutors with a 3-hour workshop to help with grant writing.
 - Have mini grants that allow for repeated submissions as a learning process.
 - Increasing effectiveness of student communication
 - FOUR website
 - Targeting communications to faculty to recruit students

- **IRB**

The committee initiated discussion about the IRB and how it could better serve community-based research specifically. They invited IRB representatives to attend a meeting but scheduling did not permit. The topic will be taken up next year.

- **UVM Office of Engagement Academic**

Dr. Chris Koliba, the director, visited RSCA.

- Office of Engagement (OOE) aims to be the “front door” to UVM, amplifying Land Grant mission and increasing the value of UVM broadly in Vermont. Works across a number of domains ranging from workforce development, technical support and services, applied research, economic development and entrepreneurship and service learning internships.

- **Humanities at UVM**

Leading from ongoing discussions of achievement of R1 designation, the committee had several conversations about Humanities (and Social Sciences) research and how to grow this to meet the goals for R1, including absence of PhD programs in this area.

- Humanities Center leaders Luis Vivanco and Ilyse Morganstein Fuerst visited to share information and discuss strategies to support humanities and creative arts. <https://www.uvm.edu/humanitiescenter>. Programs for faculty and undergraduate research were discussed. Barriers to success and possible solutions were discussed.
- The committee had 2 additional discussions. Primary barriers to success are time, space and funding. Some key points:
 - Most research is done during breaks and summers, which is not optimal.
 - No teaching assistants
 - Research is time intensive and the product takes time to develop and is typically one thing (book, monograph, art installation etc).
 - No labs, and travel often needed, which is a challenge to support.

- Library resources are limiting. A Research library for humanities would be helpful, as would filling the open position of humanities librarian.
- The committee concluded that increasing awareness and support of humanities and creative arts is important. Resource allocation, grantmaking support, facilities support, and evaluation of equity compared to other areas are needed.
- The committee discussed specific library-related needs of Humanities faculty with Dean Geffert and envisions a Hub or program that can bring together people from STEM/Medicine with Humanities. Discussion will continue with the OVPR next semester.

- **Academic Freedom**
The committee reviewed and made edits to the faculty manual section 103, primarily to incorporate points related to digital communications. This was approved and passed to the Senate for approval.

- **Interdisciplinary Research.** The committee discussed their desire to be active in promoting interdisciplinary activities in research, scholarship and creative arts, and developing joint strategic planning with VPR Dombrowski, such as that described above in the Humanities section

- **University Distinguished Professors.**
The RSCA did not review nominees this year.

- **Burack President's Distinguished Lecture.**
The Spring and Fall Burack nomination reviews were canceled due to the pandemic.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Cushman
May 14, 2021