

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST
OFFICE OF THE FACULTY SENATE
105 HAMPSHIRE HOUSE**

To: John V. Lombardi, Chancellor
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Date: 4 June 2004

From: David Ostendorf, Chair
Research Council of the Faculty Senate

Subject: Administration of Internal Research Program

Summary

The Research Council recommends that Campus research be administered by a Vice Chancellor for Research reporting directly to you, with her own budgetary authority. The Vice Chancellor will control all four elements of the Internal Research Program:

- A Faculty Research Grant Program with a budget equal to 2% of the Indirect Costs.
- A Conti Fellowship Program with a budget equal to 1% of the Indirect Costs.
- An Equipment Matching Program with a budget equal to 9% of the Indirect Costs.
- An Interdisciplinary Research Program with a budget equal to 7% of the Indirect Costs.

These elements were defined in the 5 May 2004 Indirect Cost memo sent to you last month. The Interdisciplinary Research Program budget cited in the May memo has been reduced from 8 to 7% of the IDC base of \$18.3 million. The 1% subtraction will pay for the salary difference between a Vice Provost and a Vice Chancellor, and will reduce the Interdisciplinary budget by \$183,000.

Introduction

The \$3.7 million Internal Research Program (20% of the Indirect Cost base) is defined by the 5 May 2004 Indirect Cost memo. We asked the PIs and Department Heads to vote and comment on Centralized, Shared, or Distributed Alternatives for administration of the Program (Alternatives defined in a 14 May 2005 memo, which was forwarded to you). The Centralized Alternative is described above, while the Distributed Alternative disperses Program control to the Colleges, with some elements controlled by a Vice Provost for Research. The Shared Alternative urges shared control among the Colleges and a Vice Provost for Research.

The respondents welcomed the opportunity to provide input to the Policy initiative, and many gave reasoned opinions on the administration of the interdisciplinary research element of the Program in addition to their votes. We summarize this feedback for you in this third and final memo on Research Cost Recovery Policy for the 2003-2004 academic year. The Council has thus addressed Direct Costs (5 March 2004), Indirect Costs (5 May 2004), and Research

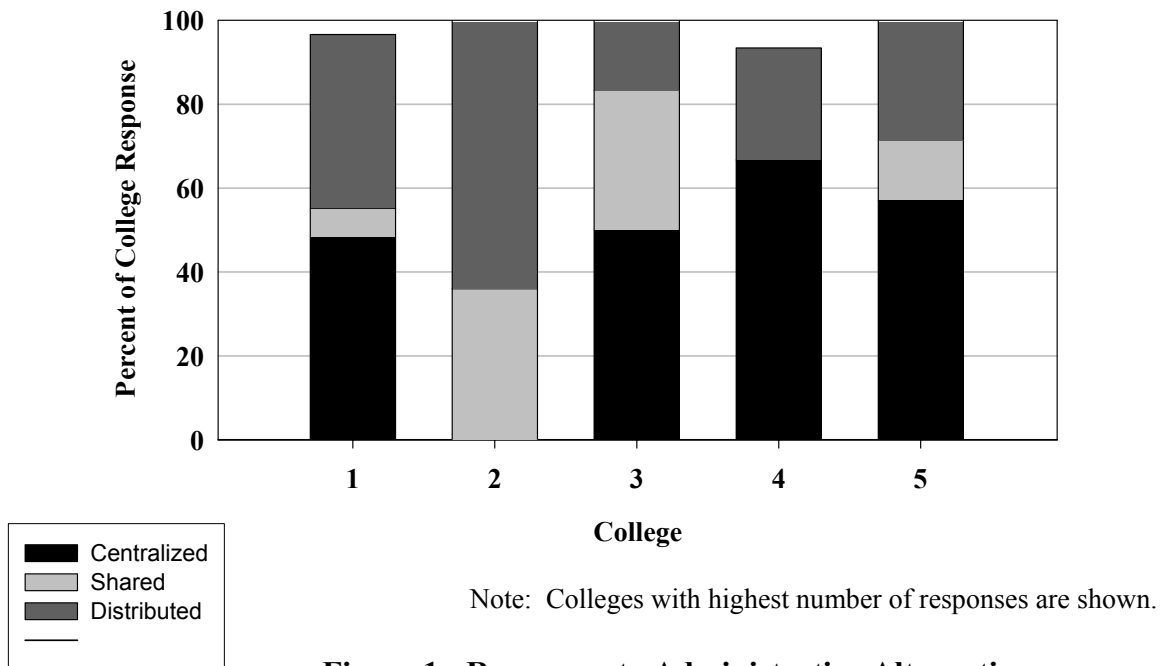


Figure 1 - Responses to Administrative Alternatives

Administration (this memo). As was done with the Direct and Indirect recommendations, we forward copies of this memo to the PIs and Heads in order to maintain communication in the research community. The Council hopes that this dialogue will help the PIs and Heads appreciate the diverse approaches to research taken by their colleagues across Campus.

Results

The total research community response is:

- 46% for Centralized Administration Alternative
- 15% for Shared Administration Alternative
- 36% for Distributed Administration Alternative
- 3% for none of the above

The Council bases the Centralized recommendation on the plurality result. **We inform you and the research community, however, that the PIs and Heads are far from unanimous in their endorsement of a VCR.** Furthermore, we are concerned that the votes vary markedly by College, as suggested by Figure 1. One College favors a Centralized Administrative Alternative (67% of its votes), while a second prefers a Distributed Administrative Alternative (64% of its votes, with no votes for the Centralized Alternative). Several Colleges reach no consensus, as individuals from different Departments take strong (and opposite) stands on the matter.

The tone of many responses suggests that research administration is a serious matter to serious researchers: this issue can unite Departments and Colleges, stimulate growth in

expenditures, and increase the number of tenure system PIs if it is properly managed. Conversely, research administration can divide the Departments and Colleges and alienate the remaining PIs if it is mismanaged. A Vice Chancellor, should you decide to reinstate the position, would need to cooperate more effectively with the Provost and the Colleges to advance the Campus research mission. If you decide to pursue a Distributed Administrative Policy instead, the Deans would need to cooperate more effectively beyond their Colleges, particularly in interdisciplinary areas. The Council suggests that this cooperation would be difficult if the Deans were held individually accountable for their interdisciplinary research efforts as part of a Distributed Alternative.

Interdisciplinary Research

Many respondents stressed the importance of interdisciplinary research, regardless of their stance on its administration. A proponent of the Centralized Alternative writes:

“My choice is the Centralized Administration Alternative. Although I see the value of the Distributed Administration Alternative (local control), my concern is that this Alternative does not adequately address the issue of interdisciplinary grants.....It is very difficult to negotiate with 3-4 different Deans to come up with matching funds, contributions, etc., that are necessary to run these programs and apply for these grants....”

A Distributed Administration voter remarks that:

“My choice is the Distributed Administration Alternative. This is based on the assumption that the administration of the interdisciplinary grants would be done by a consensus process among the Deans. My hope is that this would get the Deans involved in working to bring together researchers from different disciplines to create strong proposals for such research.....”

The comments of a PI currently working in an interdisciplinary area strike with particular force:

“My choice is the Centralized Administration Alternative.....The only way to ensure that interdisciplinary work will get funded is to put the funds in the hands of an authority that is not responsible for an individual College...A VCR/VPR with an overarching view of the University should have the interests of the University as a whole in mind.”

The challenge to the Deans is appreciated by most respondents:

“I choose the Centralized Administrative Alternative....Giving the Deans control over most of the money distribution (the Distributed Alternative) is an interesting alternative. They certainly appreciate, and are most familiar with, local research issues. However, a VCR would be better suited to funding interdisciplinary and/or intercollege projects. Also, the Deans are overworked. We need a VCR who can take charge and make things happen....”

The Council is persuaded that interdisciplinary research, which presents major opportunities for growth, also presents major challenges for any administrative alternative. It accordingly is an ideal measure of the effectiveness of an adopted mechanism, Centralized or

Distributed. If you find it useful, we will track interdisciplinary research expenditures next academic year as a measure of this effectiveness, with proposals and awards as lead indicators for current interdisciplinary initiatives.

VCR Revenue Stream

Two failed searches have convinced the Research Council that you must have a dedicated revenue stream in order to sustain a credible Vice Chancellorate for Research. A plurality of the PIs and Heads has identified the Internal Research Program as a logical element of this required revenue stream. A number of respondents to this and earlier memos suggest that Intellectual Property could provide an important second source of VCR support and responsibility. The Council agrees, and would be willing to address the issue in the 2004-2005 academic year. The issue of Amherst IP autonomy would certainly be a starting point for such an initiative, and we would be happy to press the matter with system governance, if you feel that this would be productive.

cc: CMSeymour, Provost (hard copy)
PTKostecki, Vice Provost for Research (hard copy)
Deans (hard copy)
PIs and Department Heads (email)