

To: Faculty Council

From: 1997-1998 Faculty Committee on Research

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Date: November 2, 1998

Re: Final Report from 1997-1998 Faculty Research Committee

The Research Committee's major activity during the 1997-1998 academic year was to collect information on the faculty's perceived research needs. Here are our major recommendations regarding the faculty's research support needs, based on the Research Committee's work during the past year, especially on our questionnaire study. Attached please find a brief summary of the results. Faculty Council members wishing additional information on the survey should contact Arne Kalleberg (Arne_Kalleberg@unc.edu).

Background

The Faculty Committee on Research conducted interviews with faculty and administrators in various parts of campus during the 1997-98 academic year, in order to find out about their research needs. These open-ended interviews yielded useful insights about the faculty's research needs. These open-ended interviews were also seen as a first step toward producing a questionnaire that was sent to all faculty in late March 1998. 2,337 questionnaires were sent out (1,158 in Academic Affairs; 1,179 in Health Affairs). 718 questionnaires were returned. Our recommendations below are based primarily on the results of this questionnaire study.

Recommendations Regarding Top Priorities for Research Support

(1) Time for Research. Faculty consistently rated this as their top priority, regardless of rank, school, etc. The way in which time was needed was expressed in various ways, including: research leaves and sabbaticals, buying off courses for research purposes, summer research support, reversing the trend toward lengthening the academic year, and reducing the administrative burden and "paperwork" required of faculty.

(2) Funding for Graduate Research Assistants. Graduate students were widely viewed as critical to a successful program of research. The ability to attract the highest quality students and to support them financially was rated of high importance across the university. Examples of needed support included provision of tuition and tuition remission, stipends, and health insurance for graduate research assistants.

(3) Direct Research Support. Several additional research needs were emphasized, though their relative priority depended on rank, school, etc. These include:

- A. seed money
- B. bridge funds
- C. travel monies
- D. funding for research equipment

If \$2,500,000 were made available to support campus research activities, we recommend, based on the questionnaire results, that these monies be allocated in the following way:

\$1,000,000 for faculty research time (leaves, course-buyouts, summer support);

\$1,000,000 for funding of graduate research assistants;

\$500,000 for direct research support to expand significantly the University Research Council grant program. We recommend an increase in flexibility in the use of these funds so that they can be used for a wide range of research support needs, and that the ceiling on URC grants be raised to at least \$5,000.

Recommendations Regarding Research Infrastructure

Several additional needs related to the research infrastructure emerged from the study.

1. The inequitable distribution of overhead monies was a major source of discontent. It would be useful for the University to conduct a study of how overhead is distributed in various units and to educate faculty as to what overhead is and how it is distributed.
2. Faculty also expressed high levels of discontent about the following University services or practices:
 - A. Lack of administrative support for submitting grant applications.
 - B. Overly bureaucratic purchasing rules.
 - C. Inflexible personnel policies.
 - D. Inadequate funding for department/unit administrative support staff.

The Research Committee appreciates the opportunity to gather this information from the faculty. Clearly, faculty at UNC-CH value research and external funding, and the university overall has been highly successful in this enterprise. A number of comments made by respondents, however, indicated deep frustration with various aspects of research support, as well as a skepticism as to whether the results of this survey would really lead to anything. We believe that the priorities we have identified reflect real needs of a broad array of faculty. If monies could be allocated to support research in the ways we have recommended, we believe that this would be viewed by

faculty as a significant response on the part of the administration and is likely to provide a tremendous boost to both morale and productivity.