

Date: October 3, 2002

To: Faculty Council

From: Faculty Committee on Research

Vincas Steponaitis (Anthropology), chair
William Glaze (Carolina Environmental Program)
Laura Janda (Slavic Languages and Literatures)
Arne Kalleberg (Sociology)
Mark Peifer (Biology)
Michael Stegman (Public Policy Analysis)
Richard Superfine (Physics and Astronomy)
Jenny Ting (Comprehensive Cancer Center)
Jonathan Wahl (Mathematics)

Re: Report of the committee's activities during the 2001-2002 academic year

The Faculty Committee on Research held five meetings during the 2001-2002 academic year. The principal issues addressed during these meetings are summarized below.

Consultations with Vice-Chancellor Waldrop. The committee received regular updates and progress reports from Vice-Chancellor Tony Waldrop on a range of important campus issues involving research. These sessions provided the committee an opportunity to ask questions and to provide advice. Among the issues discussed were:

- the reorganization of the Office of Contracts and Grants and the Office of Research Services to form the Office of Sponsored Research;
- the planning process for Carolina North (a.k.a. the Horace Williams tract);
- the issues surrounding UNC's effort to retain control of Facilities and Administration funds(a.k.a. "overhead") in the context of the state's fiscal crisis; and
- the controversy precipitated by PETA's allegations concerning the treatment of lab animals at UNC-CH.

Carolina Research Initiatives Fund. The committee continued its effort to promote fund-raising in the Carolina First Campaign for the purpose of enhancing seed monies for research. The committee remains convinced that this aspect of research support must remain an important priority in the Campaign. The committee's chair met with staff from the Development Office to raise their awareness of this issue. The committee also continued to push for the publication of a brochure for potential donors touting the "Carolina Research Initiatives Fund." Thanks to support from Provost Shelton and Vice-Chancellor Waldrop, as well as the design and writing talents of

Neil Caudle, we expect this brochure to be printed and available in the near future. (A draft of this brochure was presented to Faculty Council as part of last year's report from this committee.)

Core Facilities for Research. At the request of Vice-Chancellor Tony Waldrop, the committee spent considerable time looking into the problems faced by "core facilities," that is, units that provide centralized research expertise and instrumentation to multiple departments. As a way of exploring this matter, the committee met with the heads of four such units, two from Health Affairs and two from Academic Affairs: David Lee (Biochemistry and Biophysics), David Fenstermacher (Center for Bioinformatics), Ken Bollen (Odum Institute for Research in the Social Sciences), and Rick Peterson (Office of Arts and Sciences Information Services).

One common theme that emerged from these meetings was the difficulty that all core facilities face in recruiting and retaining professional staff. The dominant reasons for this difficulty are: (1) the lack of job security due to a heavy reliance on soft or otherwise unstable funding; (2) salaries not competitive with those in the private sector; and (3) a lack of respect or status that professional staff sometimes feel in relation to faculty, even when their training and credentials are comparable. Other problems that were identified, although not consistently across all units, included shortages of space, shortages of staff, and shortages of funds for replacing instrumentation.

Based on this preliminary exploration, the sense of the committee was that these problems deserve additional study. Core facilities play an essential role in campus research, yet often lack the stable support accorded to conventional teaching departments. This makes core facilities particularly vulnerable in times of fiscal constraint.

Acknowledgments. In closing, we wish to express our gratitude to the many individuals who met with us or otherwise helped in the committee's work during the past academic year: Ken Bollen, Neil Caudle, Margie Crowell, David Fenstermacher, David Lee, Louanne Long, Bob Lowman, Mark Meares, Rick Peterson, Andi Sobbe, Pam Teer, and Tony Waldrop.