

April 23, 2024 FSB&PAC with ORED

A quorum was present.

Members in Attendance: Judith Sylvester (Chair), Robert Cook, Wei-Ling Song, Joan King, Mike Martinez, Dana Hollie James Canfield, Fabio Del Piero and Ad Hoc member Tommy Smith

Guests: Robert R. Twilley, Vice President; Holly Carruth, Executive Assistant to the Vice President; Janna Oetting, Humanities, Social Sciences & Allied Fields Associate Vice President; and Darya Courville, Office of Sponsored Programs Executive Director.

Introduction:

This meeting was requested following the March meeting with Vice President and Chief Data Officer Keena Arbuthnot and Vice President for Enrollment Management & Student Success Danny Barrow in which multiple committee members expressed alarm and frustration with the sudden inaccessibility of LSU data required for grants and research. VP Arbuthnot recommended that we meet with ORED leadership to express our recommendation that boilerplate information be made accessible on the ORED site and in the most useful format.

Grant Writing Data Issues:

After the minutes from the March meeting was approved and introductions made, committee members detailed the issues they have encountered while writing large grant proposals, some in collaboration with other universities. These included:

1. LSU's DEI statement
2. Concern that grant writer will be held accountable for erroneous data supplied by LSU.
3. LSU does not provide wording or templates that are available at other universities. (Texas A&M, for example, provides a template detailing all the institutes, commitments and numbers to which the university will commit.) In short, all the elements that must be a core component of the proposal.
4. An additional faculty complaint is that the system in place now requires putting in ticket requesting the required data, waiting 5 to 10 business days to see whether the data will be supplied. This timeline is not doable.
5. Communication about the changes in how data would be handled was non-existent. None of the faculty had been provided information about these changes in data availability.
6. Links are sometimes broken. Where do we go when we encounter a broken link? Who is responsible for maintaining links?

The ORED team said they want to expand proposed resources and tools—a toolkit. They said they want to share with the committee (and the faculty) the resources already

available, and then get some recommendations of how ORED can build tools and make them more useful. They have a Moodle page and a Google page where they are trying to build out useful information, but often the information comes from faculty to ORED. ORED has an advisory group with representatives from various departments/schools. But not all these positions are filled across the university or faculty are not informed as to whom their representatives might be. Also, ORED is currently dependent on VP Arbuthnot's office for technical assistance to build webpages. ORED also faces constant updates to federal regulations and accountability of how money is spent. It's a different world!

IRB Issues

1. Data originally available on the Office of Planning and Budget website was no longer on the office's site. This included student enrollment information by gender, race or classification. An inquiry was answered with a PDF brochure with the requested numbers. This information is necessary to pull a survey sample for LSU students, as form must be filed with the Registrar's Office specifying how the data should be supplied. The IRB form has to be approved before the Registrar's Office will pull the requested sample.
2. Current faculty data, such as race, gender and faculty classification are also not only available through VP Arbuthnot's system.
3. The IRB has become overly concerned about subject privacy, which has made focus group parameters restrictive. The electronic forms on the ORED Website are complicated and unclear. Links to instructional videos are broken. This is especially problematic for students who often have to make correction to IRB form multiple times before approval is obtained. Faculty also can be caught between best practices and an IRB whose members do not understand the purpose and value of focus groups. For example, approval was only granted for focus groups involving students if the session was ONLY audio recorded. The inability to video the group means matching demographics to speakers and capturing reactions to materials (ads, social media messages, scenarios, etc.) very difficult, if not impossible. The negotiation on the format delayed the focus groups past the time when graduate assistants were available to help recruit and conduct the groups. This interferes directly with faculty research, sometimes changing the requirements for studies that are longitudinal in nature.

Training Issues

1. VP Arbuthnot said her office was planning to offer training sessions about where to locate and request data. However, these likely will not be available before Fall 2024. She suggested that this committee should meet with ORED to discuss what data should be supplied directly to ORED (and which templates/tools should be

- available). Clearly little communication had occurred directly between VP Arbuthnot's office and ORED.
2. ORED offers grant writing workshops and training, especially with new/junior faculty. However, committee members would like to see more facilitation of partnerships between campus units for grant proposals. For example, the Manship School and College of the Coast and Environment have had a couple of faculty interactions to discuss what each has to offer. These efforts were not facilitated through ORED, so more effort to inform schools and departments about collaborations would be helpful, especially to non-STEM units.
 3. ORED makes an effort to communicate with faculty and to increase opportunities and make obtaining official data easier. However, deans and faculty also need to communicate with ORED about problems they are encountering and impediments to successful grant writing.
 4. Committee members also emphasized difficulties with the emphasis on terminal degree student support at the expense of master's students. Post Docs may now be cheaper to include in grants than Ph.D. students. (Some instructors are now making less money than Ph.D. students.) ORED staff are watching the effects of this policy and pointed out that some departments (Art, Music, Business) have applied for exemptions to the current rules, but other professional programs are not eligible. More equity between STEM and non-STEM programs may be needed.

Deam Twilley said that they believe the Pentagon aspirations help recruit higher quality students and faculty and help with faculty retention.

Conclusions

The committee strongly recommended that ORED create a template or a toolkit as a way to provide the data required for government-related grants to relieve the burden on and frustration of faculty who spend much of their time writing grants.

We want much more communication between VP Arbuthnot's office, ORED and the faculty. This is especially important now that the Graduate School, in addition to Data Management, is under VP Arbuthnot's jurisdiction.

We commended ORED director and staff for their willingness to listen to our concerns and share their plans and efforts to make grant writing and research easier or at least more manageable for the faculty.

We suggested reviewing how other research universities are handling and providing their data.