

I. Introduction

The charge to the University Senate Research Committee is given in the Senate Rules. It reads:

The Committee on Research shall be responsible for reviewing University research policies and their implementation. In addition, it shall make recommendations to the University Senate regarding those policies and the priorities for them.

We have taken this charge to imply that the Committee should comment on the general health of the research program at the University of Kentucky; and recommend, both a general policy to improve it, and specific items which may serve that end. We believe that the University of Kentucky must promote excellence in both research and in pedagogy; and that these two functions along with service are essential features of a modern university which aspires to excellence.

In this report we suggest that the University can profitably increase the amount of publicity given to research; that it should consider an administrative structure which would better address future opportunities and argue for the modern support services necessary to promote and expand it, and that it establish a research staff series of professorial rank similar to those in many other Universities.

II. Background

The stated functions of the University of Kentucky are teaching, research and service. The Administrative Regulations state that a major consideration in faculty appointments or promotions that carry tenure must be balanced superior achievement in these University functions.

Over the past 10-15 years there has been significant growth and development in teaching, research and service activities at the University. Whereas in the early 1960's, the University of Kentucky was regarded as a relatively small, unranked teaching institution, by the early 1970's, it had embarked on quite an ambitious research program and its total student population had grown to over 20,000.

Now, however, the combination of many factors including increased enrollments, expanded service demands, inflation and budget problems threaten to erode faculty and student opportunities to engage in research. The kinds of constraints frequently reported by the faculty include: 1) insufficient time to do scholarly work, 2) lack of research space and inadequate support to renovate existing space to meet new research activities, 3) inability to replace or maintain capital equipment, and 4) personnel policies relating to senior research staff and supporting staff that appear contrary to a goal of expanded research activity.

The impact of these problems is diverse and far reaching. It is becoming increasingly obvious to faculty that the priority for research is not in balance with teaching and service activities. In some colleges, at least, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty and attract the best graduate students. We face the distinct possibility that the problems of inadequate time, research space, facilities and equipment will increasingly reduce the opportunities for faculty career development and meaningful student research experiences and will further reduce our ability to compete successfully for extramural funding.

The University of Kentucky is presently 47th among the major institutions of higher learning with respect to Federal obligations. Unless we take steps now to resolve the problems noted above the University of Kentucky will not only fail to achieve its research potential as the state's principle institution of higher learning but it will very likely be unable to sustain its present level of research activity. In the long run, reduced scholarly activity will hurt the quality of our teaching and service functions. In the next section, we outline some of the steps which could be taken to reverse the trend we perceive.

III. Discussion and Recommendations

1) The public image of the University's role as a research institution needs to be reviewed. Research is mentioned in general terms on p. 11 of the current University of Kentucky Bulletin but this statement does little more than say that we should be doing some. The Graduate School catalog doesn't mention it at all. Occasional articles appear in Communi-K, the Kentucky Kernel and the state newspapers, but they tend to glorify the subject and they do not reach the national research community where our reputation surely must be built.

It is clearly important to reach the groups that these publications do, but we recommend that other vehicles should be tried that reach the academic community at other institutions. Examples which come to mind are a multi-disciplinary semi-popular research bulletin featuring review articles written by University of Kentucky faculty and/or a monograph series comprising indepth studies of significant research areas. These publications would show that the University of Kentucky has a significant role to play in the nation's academic research arena.

2) In the present academic structure of the University, responsibility for research is vested in each academic administrative unit along with responsibility for teaching, service, facilities, etc. No separate unit is charged solely with overall responsibility for research on a University-wide basis, however, it is one of the responsibilities of the Graduate School. Even in this case, however, the lack of authority associated with the sub-cabinet level of the unit and a lack of staff and resources makes such a structure rather ineffective in accomplishing the broad objectives we believe should be the University's goal. A number of functions essential to research are administratively housed in units uninformed on the needs of research. In many instances, these units make what amounts to academic decisions according to non-academic criteria.

We recommend the formation of a cabinet level unit to be charged with responsibility for research. It should be directed by an individual with personally outstanding scholarly credentials. Its functions should include overall assessment and coordination of research, but in addition it should be responsible for support activities such as computing, purchasing for research purposes, contract administration, research accounting and the personnel policies affecting research staff. The essential close connection between research and the graduate program could be fostered by making the present Graduate School a part of this unit. Moreover, it would be a natural reporting point for UKRF and the various research centers such as the Center for Developmental Change, the Tobacco and Health Research Institute, the Gerontology Center, and the Institute for Mining and Minerals Research.

The research administrative unit should play a key role in seeking sources of external support and interfacing agencies with investigators. The UKRF now does some of these things, but since they have no academic function, their effectiveness is severely compromised.

3) The University has one regular professorial series in three ranks plus the little used instructorship and part time lectureship positions. A Special Title Series, parallel to the regular professorial series is available to those departments that request it, but the series has been used primarily for positions which do not require research.

Research is expected of all who hold regular title series appointments, but the expectation is not always met and the fact of the matter is that not all regular faculty do research. On the other hand, research is an essential component of the criteria for promotion and seems to be uniformly required and competently judged. With the exception of the Special Title Series, the common denominator, across the University, of the professorial series, appears to be balance between teaching, research and service. The regular title series was not developed for individuals whose primary function is research.

The University cannot build a research program of national stature as long as this situation continues. Steps should be taken that will allow the formation of a competent research staff which will place the University of Kentucky in the top rank of research institutions instead of in the middle to low rank where we are now.

Many other institutions employ non-tenured research staff at ranks equivalent to those in the regular professorial series. Position titles are Research Professor, Research Scientist or some equivalent designation. The individuals holding appointments in such Research staff series have minimal or no teaching responsibility just as most of our Special Title Series appointments have minimal or no research responsibilities. Such positions allow Universities that have them to adjust research manpower and expertise to match rapidly changing research needs and funding patterns at the state and federal level.

We recommend that the University establish a non-tenured research staff series with ranks equivalent to the regular professorial series. Appointments in the series should be for a negotiated term renewable with the agreement of the University. Funding for the research staff should come primarily from extramural grants and contracts. Risk of University funds could be avoided by the establishment of a contingency fund to provide support during brief periods of low contract activity, and to phase out an area of research which is no longer needed.

We do not make this suggestion lightly and realize that careful planning must be done before it can be instituted. It may be difficult, until the University establishes national stature as a research institution, to attract the best research workers to such positions.

4) Other possibilities exist for increasing the research stature of the University:

- a) Provide more opportunities for the regular staff to engage in research. This could be done through the establishment of a rotating "research semester" every three or four years. Regular faculty awarded these positions would be released from teaching while they hold them. Principle funding should come from extramural grants and contracts.
- b) Allow more flexibility in adjusting Distribution of Effort agreements than now exists. For limited periods of time, faculty should be encouraged to spend 100 percent time in research with a sizeable fraction of the individual's salary paid from extramural funds.
- c) Ensure that recruitment to and promotion and tenure within the regular title series continues to be based on exceptional research and teaching qualifications. The research should be of high quality and the record of the individual faculty member should show evidence of sustained research output and a desire and potential for continued excellence.

d) Make available to the faculty, through the publication of a Faculty Research Handbook, information related to university research. A few of the items which should be covered in such a handbook are:

- University Research Administration and UKRF organization and functions.
- University and UKRF financial support of faculty research through research grants, major equipment grants, emergency funding, symposia support, etc.
- University research policy as related to personnel, budgets, and research accounting, salary reimbursements, indirect costs, purchasing, cost sharing, etc.

IV. Conclusions

The University of Kentucky now enjoys a research reputation of modest national stature. We recommend that action be taken to ensure priorities for research remain on a par with those applied to pedagogy. Steps which can be taken to that end are:

- 1) Improve the quality and quantity of the publicity now given research at the University in such a way that it reaches the national research community. In addition to expanding the coverage given to research in the University catalogs and bulletins, two other methods are suggested: A semi-popular multi-disciplinary research bulletin and a monograph series.
- 2) Establish a cabinet level administrative unit for research.
- 3) Establish a research title series with ranks equivalent to the regular professorial series.
- 4) Establish a rotating research semester to release faculty from teaching duties for limited periods.
- 5) Encourage flexibility in distribution of effort to permit more research activity by the regular faculty.

6) Ensure that strong research and teaching credentials continue to be the criteria for promotion.

7) Publish a faculty handbook on research.

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