During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Faculty Research and Development Committee consisted of the following faculty:

- Ghazi Abuhakema; Associate Professor; Asian Studies
- Mike Braswell; Associate Professor; Accounting and Legal Studies
- Marcello Forconi; Associate Professor; Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Heath Hoffmann (Secretary); Professor; Sociology and Anthropology
- Mukesh Kumar; Assistant Professor; Mathematics
- Michael Larsen (Chair); Associate Professor; Physics and Astronomy
- Tom Ross; Professor; Psychology
- Jeffrey Triblehorn; Associate Professor; Biology
- Kelley White; Associate Professor; Teacher Education
- *Ex-officio*: Deanna Caveny; Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs

**Committee Activities**

Due to the ongoing global pandemic, all committee meetings in 2020-2021 were held virtually through zoom videoconference.

Throughout the year, the chair continuously engaged in a variety of activities on an *ad hoc* basis including but not limited to:

1. Communicate with previous grant award winners about COVID-19 based accommodations (including extensions, changes in scope, and/or changes in budget).

2. Work with new provost budget liason (Claire Bassin) to understand the financial side of our allocations and develop a new record-keeping and financial tracking system.

3. Follow-up with previous awardees about submitting final reports.

4. Follow-up with proposers to obtain extra information for committee deliberations including but not limited to information about flexible timelines to deal with uncertainties from COVID-19, willingness to accept partial funding, clarifications regarding often misread or misrepresented elements of the guidelines (like IRB status, submission of previous final reports, updates of impacts from previous awards, faculty CV and budget inclusion, etc.)
5. Pre-review proposals from colleagues who plan to submit a proposal for review to give advice about form, structure, and content of proposals. (On occasion, other committee members did this as well).

Committee Meetings

1. April 15th, 2020, 9 AM
   - New committee members welcomed to the committee.
   - Official charge of the committee was reiterated
   - Brief discussion of committee’s workload/responsibilities
   - Discussion of COVID-19 complications and accommodations
   - Officers nominated (Mike Larsen, Chair and Heath Hoffmann, Secretary) and elected unanimously.
   - Decided to wait on setting dates for 2020-2021 application deadlines until the fall due to the uncertainty induced by the ongoing pandemic.

2. August 4th, 2020, Discussion via email
   - Committee conducted an email vote on some accommodations associated to complications from COVID-19

3. September 16th, 2020, 11:30 AM
   - Review of annual budget.
   - Set dates for 2020-2021 application cycle.
   - Discussed and implemented accommodations for 2020 summer and Fall award recipients.
   - Committee voted (unanimously) to modify language in guidelines to clarify rules regarding sabbatical salary.
   - Committee voted (unanimously) to allow chair to modify guidelines as needed, including modifying graphics in the guidelines document and to wordsmith changes to reflect the general sentiment of the committee perspective.
   - Chair tasked to create “training” materials for new committee members to aid in proposal reviewing process.
   - Committee discussed extension of the Research Award’s scope to be related to “Research and Creative Activity”
   - Committee decided one critical role for the secretary is to work with appropriate campus personnel to manage the FR&D webpage.

4. November 6th, 2020 (4-5 PM)
   - Committee discussed and voted on funding proposals for work to be done in Spring 2021.

5. February 9th, 2021 (3:30-5 PM)
   - Committee discussed and voted on funding proposals for work to be done in Summer 2021.
6. April 19th, 2021 (10-11:30 AM)

- Committee sequentially talked through each of the round 3 proposals in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses, and to compile questions that needed clarification prior to vote.

7. May 6th, 2021 (10-11 AM)

- Committee discussed and voted on another round of COVID-based accommodations for Summer 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 awardees.
- New budget perspective was discussed.
- Committee discussed and voted on funding proposals for work to be done in Fall 2021.
- Committee met and discussed and voted on candidates for the campus-wide Distinguished Research Award. After deliberation over 5 excellent candidates, the committee voted to recommend this year’s award go to Anthony Varallo (English).

Significant other Activities

As alluded to above, the main focus of this year’s activities above and beyond the normal grant proposal and evaluation cycle was in maintaining contact with previous awardees to try to ensure we were coming up with suitable accommodations for previous awardees who had their scholarly plans interrupted or altered by COVID-19. In many cases, this involved moving award funding sources from state funds to indirect funds (and vice versa) so that those investigators who needed a longer time to complete their work had a funding basis that could roll over from one fiscal year to another. With only a few exceptions, we were able to come up with accommodations for all awardees that will allow them to complete some version of their proposed research without having to return the award.

Another event that significantly impacted this committee was that the person who handled the budgeting for this committee’s allocation in the provost’s office (Beth Murphy) left the college at the end of 2020. Over the spring semester, the committee chair has been working with the new person in that role (Claire Bassin) to come up with an organizational structure that is sustainable and will facilitate effective communication between the committee chair and the provost’s office. One small element of this is that the nomenclature the committee has frequently used for funding (e.g. “round 1” for awards to be administered in the spring, “round 2” for awards to be administered in the summer, and “round 3” for awards to be administered in the fall) doesn’t make a lot of sense because the fiscal year division occurs halfway through what we have been calling “round 2”. As such, Claire encouraged us to avoid that language going forward and just use terminology corresponding to when the award will be carried out instead. (I have attempted to do this in an informal manner, without making any formal changes to policy).

Finally, several committee members approached the chair in early 2021 showing some concern at the fact that there has been a trend in recent years for all meaningful committee-wide conversation about proposal quality to occur after committee members have submitted preliminary votes/rankings. In an effort to try something a bit different where we “talk before we vote” instead of “vote before we talk”, the meeting on 4/19 was arranged to discuss the proposals associated with work to be done in Fall 2021 prior to people submitting their rankings to the chair.
2020-2021 Funding Summary and Results

Requests for work to be done in Spring 2021 and Summer 2021 were down significantly for the second year in a row, though we again suspect this is a result of complications from COVID-19. Requests for work to be done in Fall 2021 outnumbered any requests in the past 5 years, and the committee is cautiously optimistic that there will be a strong bounce-back in proposal submissions during the next academic year while many faculty try to jump-start their research coming out of the pandemic.

Proposals for Spring 2021

In the first round – for work to be done in Spring 2021 – we received 3 proposals with requests totaling $7,363. Based on the high quality of the proposals, we were fortunate to be able to fund all of these requests in full.

Proposals for Summer 2021

In the second round – for work to be done in Summer 2021 – we received 15 applications with requests totaling $70,890. Most of these proposals were quite strong and, since requests for Spring 2021 were quite modest, we were able to at least partially fund all but one of these proposals. (10 of the proposals were funded in full, and the 4 proposals that requested summer salary were funded at a level $500 below the associated requests). This left us spending $60,828 in this round.

Proposals for Fall 2021

In the third round – for work to be done in Fall 2021 – we received far more applications than normal. We received 12 applications with requests totaling $45,251. Based on our conversations with the Provost’s office regarding our expected appropriation for the next academic year, the quality of the received proposals, historical trends for the rankings of proposals that have been funded in this round, and in order to protect the committee’s ability to fund strong proposals for work to be done in Spring 2022 and Summer 2022, the committee limited itself to recommending funding for the top 5 ranked proposals only. Thus, in this round the committee funded awards totaling 9,980.

Updated Quantitative Summary

Starting with the 2018-2019 final report of this committee, the chair included some quantitative information that broke down requests and awards based on school and rank. For reference, including this information
each year may be of benefit to future committees as well as other stakeholders, so we re-state some of those results here and update with this year’s numbers.

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Table 1: Award breakdown by school.

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Table 2: Award breakdown by rank.

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Table 3: Breakdown of requests and awards by round.