

RESPONSE

to the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Dean

on the

Report on Research Support Facilities
Program Review Committee of the Graduate Council
May 2009

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I would like to thank the Program Review Committee of the Graduate Council for their careful, thoughtful, and timely review of the five research support facilities (“shops”) under ORDA and the OVCR/GC (Central, IMAGE, LAP, Mass Spec, NMR), plus the DNA Sequencing and Allele Facility. It is evident that the committee members (Nancy Mundschenk, chair; Leslie Lloyd, Eileen Meehan, Elyse Pineau, Donna Post, Michael Young, and Tomasz Wiltowski) took their responsibilities seriously in understanding these complex facilities’ missions and the various constituencies involved in their uses and functioning. I also thank the facilities’ directors and users for taking the time to participate in the review process. Four major concerns were raised in the review: administrative support, adequacy of equipment and space, workload and staffing, and physical plant.

With regard to **administrative support**, as we all know, the SIUC campus as a whole lacks sufficient funds to meet our varied space, staffing, and equipment/instrumentation needs. Over the past years, ALL units on campus have had to absorb budget cuts that have limited effectiveness. Thus, the solution for many of the research shops’ problems, as for many campus problems in general, would be “to throw money at them.” More money would provide more and better space, more staff and graduate assistants, and more and better instruments to meet our research as well as our instructional needs.

Since FY05, the research support facilities have been supported by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research with \$568,934.99 and the Office of the Provost has provided \$105,717.50. These totals cover miscellaneous costs including GA salaries, equipment, repairs, matching funds, training, and so on. These costs are paid from F&A cost returns. Directors’ salaries are paid by state funds. It does not include funds provided by the School of Medicine to the Laboratory Animal Program.

Aside from these administrative contributions, I heartily commend the facilities’ directors, staffs, and users for their collaborative and creative efforts to continue functioning under what can only be described as sub-optimal conditions. In particular, I commend those directors, faculty, and staff who have repeatedly been successful in winning external funds for new research instruments in these shops.

In any case, given this general condition of insufficient funds, and the many competing demands on those funds that are available, it becomes upon all of us to **set priorities and plan strategically** for future developments, expected and unexpected. I propose the following:

- Each of the five research support facilities will be asked to develop five-year **strategic plans**. These plans must identify and **prioritize** current and anticipated needs for equipment, space, and personnel over the next five years, based on current and anticipated growth, age of equipment, planned retirements, space renovations, and so on. These plans, which should also include teaching commitments and details about how the funds to meet these needs will be obtained (user fees? external grants?), will give ORDA and the OVCR/GD an overview of future directions and anticipated budgets.
- Each of the facilities will be asked to develop **user groups**, if they do not already exist, to provide advice and suggestions to both the facility and ORDA/OVCR on such things as fee structures, equipment needs, operational improvements, etc. They will also provide input to the shops on developing and implementing their strategic plans and emergent research needs. It is incumbent upon the facilities to develop realistic user fee schedules to cover operational costs.
- Each facility will be asked to submit an **annual report** to ORDA, to be forwarded to the OVCR/GD, in which they assess progress toward meeting their needs and reaching their goals. This report will also include a catalog of all projects for which services were provided and assessments of user satisfaction (see p. 5 of Report). ORDA will assist in preparing the assessment instrument.
- The Director of ORDA and/or the OVCR/GD will meet at least annually with the individual Directors of the facilities to discuss needs, progress, users' evaluations, and related matters.

With respect to concerns about the **physical plant**, renovations to power, water, gas, exhaust, duct work, etc. involve major renovation costs. For example, the OVCR and LAP have been working with Plant and Service Operations (PSO), among others, to develop two proposals to NIH to renovate LSII, especially the Vivarium facilities in the basement. Total costs for renovations are projected at ca. \$19 million. Other renovation/upgrade proposals have also been submitted to federal funding sources. The University has an 8-member Facilities Advisory Committee (members include three deans, the ORDA Director, the Provost, and members of PSO) which meets twice annually to prioritize facilities needs for state funding. These are only recommendations, however, and the prioritization is often changed as the list moves up through the administration (needs of SIUE and SOM-S must be included) and on to the state. A major problem has been the lack of a state "capital bill" and stagnant state funding for capital improvements for several years. This year, the capital bill has been signed but not appropriated.

- ORDA will schedule a Fall semester meeting of facility directors and PSO to discuss general issues about maintenance and renovations of campus physical facilities.

With respect to **visibility** (pp. 5-7), many of the suggestions can be implemented by the facilities themselves (e.g., tours), without central administrative oversight. Otherwise:

- ORDA currently has a brochure about research services and support, which includes information on all five shops reporting to ORDA plus other support services.
- Information about the shops and their services is also available on the VCR website, with a link through ORDA: <http://www.vcresearch.siuc.edu/support.html>

Finally, it is important to correct a few generally minor **misconceptions** about what ORDA and the OVCR/GD can and cannot do with respect to the research support facilities:

- P 1 - the DNA Sequencing and Allele Facility does not report to the OVCR/GD.
- P 2 - the two recommendations under "Teaching Mission" contradict themselves. There is no point in centering directors' appointments in their facilities if they are expected to hold faculty

status. Faculty status is granted in individual departments and it is those departments, not the OVCR/GD, who should be petitioned for faculty status for individual directors.

- P 3 - The research shops DO operate as independent units and report to ORDA. Their operation is, at least partially, on a cost-recovery basis, meaning that it is expected that these units will generate part of their operating funds from user fees. ORDA has no matching funds; these are handled by the VCR, who also handles the distribution of F&A cost returns.
- Pp 12, 36 - matching funds for external proposals come from the OVCR/GD, who *always* asks the PI/PD to investigate the possibility of securing departmental or college monies before making his own commitments (this is required on the Matching Funds request form: <http://www.orda.siuc.edu/internal/matching.pdf>). In August, the VCR committed \$85,000 for a service contract on a new instrument for IMAGE requested in a proposal to the NSF Major Research Instrumentation program.
- P 26 - the NMR Director's salary is paid 50 percent on state funds through the OVCR/GD, 25 percent by the College of Science, and 25 percent by the Department of Chemistry. This has been true since 2005. **None** of his salary is paid from overhead recovery/user fees.