

ARD Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2020 | 3:00 pm | Zoom

In Attendance: Kurt Piepenbrink, Patricio Grassini, Rezaul Mahmood, James MacDonald, Gary Brewer, Richard Wilson, Maria de Guzman, Daran Rudnick, Archie Clutter, Tala Awada, Hector Santiago, Kaitlyn Smejdir

Meeting opened at 3:00 pm

Welcome new members – Gary Brewer & Richard Wilson. James MacDonald's membership has been renewed for another term.

Updates from the Deans:

Archie Clutter:

- A primary purpose of this council is for ARD to listen, so while we give updates at each meeting, we also want feedback from you all. This helps inform us on what is important to our faculty and what we should prioritize and champion.
- Thank you for your dedication to safety and making reopening plans to help us keep research going.
- We are still figuring out the full impact of the pandemic on our budget. Thankfully we have some time to plan before we will need to take actions for reduction/strategic investment.
- One of the reductions that has already been made is to not fill the director of global engagement. Instead, the global engagement office has been restructured with Tala leading.
- There has been a review of the statewide strategic plan, which has informed some changes. One of these changes is that Hector is the primary contact now for the REEC, Research Extension and Education Centers (previously REC, Research and Extension Centers) directors.

Tala Awada:

- We continue to have the same or better submissions and awards.
- Today a list of new committee appointments was distributed. Contact Tala with any questions or feedback. If you have a conflict of interest now or in the future, please let Tala know so that we can alter plans. Appointments can be viewed here: <https://unl.box.com/s/s83874e2c5ga3voq7j819u16ushf4gfs>

Hector Santiago:

- There is a new model for the Research and Extension Centers, which Hector now oversees. We don't know all the details of how this will impact the day-to-day activities, but overall, the change is aiming to bring more synergy throughout and a heavier focus on teaching & education.
 - Awada and Brewer suggested that language for the purpose and opportunities that these changes offer would be useful for grant applications if posted online.
 - Rudnick added that faculty working at REEC's now report to their academic department head officially, rather than the director of the REEC.
- Hector has been working heavily on IANR PPE needs and supply. We had a large shipment come via the CARES Act and are now in the process to apply for more items.

Discussion on Graduate Education/Recruitment:

- Brewer asked about APLU (Assoc of Public and Land Grant Universities) & graduate student opportunities. Response was that we aren't aware of any right now with APLU, however with the University and Industry Consortium (UIC) UNL graduate students were able to become fellows in a Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) program.
 - Awada mentions that there was an announcement emailed last week with a request for application for new fellows.

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- Clutter mentions that ARD is focused on innovation in graduate education and building industry relationships. With the restructuring that brings global engagement into the ARD fold, we are pushing ways that all of those efforts can be tied together.
- Brewer suggests an information piece around recruiting international graduate students to faculty.
- Piepenbrink mentions that he saw a new (higher) salary requirement for H1B visas. There is concern that it is easier to raise salaries than lower and with the possibility that this new order could be rescinded. Awada answers that in order to get a student, the visa requires the salary and there is no way around it or to change it later as any change to the contract would require a new visa submission. Mahmood and Rudnick bring up that this could bring about disparities in salary from international vs domestic employees.

Old Business:

- Piepenbrink explains the priorities this council has been working on in the last year: (1) providing opportunities for professional development for faculty – particularly mid-career faculty and (2) recruiting graduate students and then making the best of them once they are here.
- Piepenbrink asks if we sent the mid-career survey. Guzman responds that we did not and that sending it now would possibly be giving us skewed data since it would be gathered during such a strange time. MacDonald agrees that the other proposed priorities for this committee are more logical to pursue this year.

New Business:

- Piepenbrink proposes that this year, this council looks in to some of the best practices for remote workshops, interviewing, and recruitment for graduate students.
- Awada and Clutter agree that looking at this topic would be great for this committee to tackle.
- Clutter brings up the university's diversity and inclusion initiative and proposes that this council discuss ways to be part of this initiative. For example, adding a diversity and inclusion member to the council. Awada adds that there are many things to consider – how would this person be elected?
 - Piepenbrink suggests that a current member is elected to serve on the committee in this capacity rather than bringing in a new member solely for this purpose.
 - MacDonald raises questions around defining the responsibilities of this role.
 - Clutter puts the question back to the council to gather input on what the council sees as the best way forward.
 - MacDonald brings up that there are experts, researching these topics who may be able to bring education on this matter.
 - Awada explains that we are interested in understanding what minority people are facing so that we can know what ARD can do in this area.
 - Brewer cautions that we don't want to fatigue our diversity faculty to where they have to do more than their fair share of committee work.
 - Clutter tables the topic asking the committee to think about this topic for future discussion.

Approval of 04/08/2020 minutes – Approved

Piepenbrink proposes putting together a survey regarding best practices for remote activities (graduate recruitment and workshops) and distributing it before the next meeting. At the next meeting taking place in the spring semester, the council will review the collected responses.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 pm

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kaitlyn Smejdir