

Hallmarks of Research, Scholarship & Creative Activities



**A Report to the University Provost
Dr. Abe Harraf**

Conducted by
Members of the Graduate Council
University of Northern Colorado

Graduate School Dean
Robbyn Wacker

2008 Graduate Council Chair
Jennifer Clarke

Council Members

*Michelle Athanasiou
Kacy Guill
Dianna Gray
Ellen Gregg
Brian Johnson*

*Rutilio Martinez
Tracy Mueller
Robert Murray
Sean O'Halloran
Hanna Schertz*

University of Northern Colorado

Mission Statement

The University of Northern Colorado shall be a comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university with selective admission standards. The University shall offer a comprehensive array of baccalaureate programs and master's and doctoral degrees primarily in the field of education. The University of Northern Colorado has statewide authority to offer graduate programs for the preparation of educational personnel.

Vision Statement

The University of Northern Colorado strives to be a leading student-centered university that promotes effective teaching, lifelong learning, the advancement of knowledge, research, and a commitment to service. Graduates are educated in the Liberal Arts and professionally prepared to live and contribute effectively in a rapidly changing, technologically advanced society.

As a Carnegie Research Intensive Institution, the University of Northern Colorado's graduate programs emphasize *advanced scholarship within a discipline* and acquisition of professional abilities for career advancement. Graduate education includes a variety of master's degrees that complement the University's mission and purposes and a select number of doctoral programs that emphasize scholarship and research, clinical practice, pedagogy, or performance. The University provides a full range of student support services and recreational opportunities. The James A. Michener Library and the Music Library provide information resources through sophisticated technology and established collections.

Values, Purposes and Goals

Regarding the preparation of graduate students in specialized fields of study:

1. Students will acquire an appreciation for and ability to work in an increasingly diverse population.
2. Students will engage in scholarly activity, research, and creative endeavors to advance the knowledge and practices of the discipline.
3. Students will acquire advanced knowledge and skills consistent with the professional preparation and standards of the discipline.
4. Students will develop a commitment to scholarship and life-long learning.
5. Students will develop those competencies essential to assuming leadership positions in their professional fields.

PROCEDURES

Purpose:

The purpose of this research was to ascertain the characteristics of an institution whose culture, mission and structure support intellectual curiosity and in so doing, to chronicle the University of Northern Colorado's *Hallmarks of Scholarship*.

Protocol:

Graduate Council members queried their faculty colleagues, asking the following four questions:

1. What are the hallmarks of an institution that promotes research and scholarship?
2. What is UNC currently doing to promote research and scholarship?
3. What barriers exist at UNC that prevent excellence in research and scholarship?
4. What changes can be made at UNC that will promote research and scholarship?

Data collection took place from January through March, 2008. Responses were coded and categorized by themes. Faculty respondents reflected the diversity of the university in gender, ethnicity, academic rank, and college and school membership.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the months of January, February and March, university faculty members were invited to respond to questions focused on university scholarship in the context of graduate education. Both electronic and face-to-face interviews were conducted in gathering responses to four questions that would help members of the Graduate Council characterize the *Hallmarks of Research and Scholarship* at UNC.

Hallmarks of Institutional Research and Scholarship

An initial analysis of the responses of faculty indicated that the culture of the university and its concomitant support of research are seen as essential for faculty engagement in research. Specifically, resources that support faculty in their efforts (i.e., graduate research assistants, facilities, and travel support) are mandatory for a productive and intellectually engaged faculty. Further, a climate that acknowledges the time, effort and energy that is required to produce quality scholarship is desirable, as is an evaluation and merit system that respects and rewards faculty for various types of research activity.

The division of workload responsibilities for UNC faculty is typically defined as: teaching (60%), scholarship/professional activity (20%) and service (20%). In addition to the provision of sufficient institutional resources, faculty respondents indicated that policies that support a distributive or flexible workload are needed for faculty to engage in high quality research. More specifically, institutions that have a reputation for research excellence are more likely to have a workload ratio of teaching to research that allows for more dedicated time conducting research.

Current Practice at UNC to Promote Research and Scholarship

There are a number of past and current initiatives that provide UNC faculty with support for their research and scholarship, some implemented university-wide and others that reflect unique unit level practice. A concern echoed by a number of faculty is the disparity in the amount of support for research that can be provided by various units. However, although unit-level disparities exist, the faculty is cognizant of the fact that one approach in support of research is not necessary, nor even desirable.

Most recently, the increased allocation of funds for distribution to faculty via FRPB was enthusiastically received, as have been increases in support for TAs and GAs. The Summer Graduate Research Assistantship program, whereby faculty compete for research funding in support of graduate students, is also highly valued.

Another practice in support of research, although administered differently by each college, is the return of indirect cost recovery funds (IDCs) from grants and contracts and the distribution of salary savings as enhancements to the salaries of Principal Investigators. The Deans of the respective Colleges determine how the IDCs and salary savings will be distributed, and actions range from the College's entire portion of the

IDCs being awarded to the investigators, to a predetermined portion (in some cases this could equal zero dollars) of the IDCs going to the primary investigator/s. In the latter case, some of these “recovered” funds are then used by School Directors to support other faculty research projects. Salary enhancements range from 50% of salary savings after replacement dollars and SPARC’s levy are applied, to no enhancement at all.

Examples of unique opportunities initiated by various Schools in support of research include: (a) targeted support activities guided by faculty research mentors, (b) reassigned time for research advisors following the successful completion of three dissertations, (c) credit for graduate student advising or serving on dissertation committees, and (d) predefined reductions in teaching workload for newly hired faculty (ranges from 1 to 2 course release in the first year) so that they may focus on developing or expanding on their line of research.

Barriers at UNC that Prevent Excellence in Research and Scholarship

A common theme in faculty responses to this question was related to workload distribution. There is little disagreement among faculty respondents that the ratio of teaching to research, *in light of the other necessary but not calculated responsibilities of graduate faculty status, such as serving as the research advisor for graduate students’ dissertations and theses*, serves as a considerable barrier to both the quality and quantity of research efforts.

Changes that Would Promote Research and Scholarship

It is no surprise that the most commonly opined change is the adoption of some form of differentiated workload or an across-the-board reduction of teaching workload for Graduate Faculty. Another common change theme from faculty respondents was a re-evaluation of the role of SPARC in support of research and competitive grants procurement, to include an assessment of both its structure and functionality. Finally, greater support, both in terms of university culture and tangible resources, should be directed toward collaborative research efforts (whether via Research Interest Groups (RIGs) or university institutes).

Note: A complete list of faculty responses can be found in the Results section of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institute a differential workload model for faculty who prefer to engage in more research and those who prefer more teaching.
2. Provide university-wide research incentives for grant PIs (e.g., reward PIs with a proportion of indirect funds (facilities and administrative) costs and salary savings that accrue to the university and/or college). Incentives have the potential to bring additional income into the university for the benefit of all, *if faculty know that they exist*.
3. Examine the structure and function of the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center (SPARC). (Disseminate David Bauer's evaluation conducted in Fall 2007 as a first step.)
4. Consider staffing SPARC with personnel with specific expertise in writing, reviewing, and implementing grant projects.
5. Provide greater support for grant development.
 - a) Funds for grant development are important and available to some extent, but equally important is individualized support for writing of application narratives. Support is available for budget development, but as the number of applications increases, SPARC's resources for these functions will need to be enhanced or reassigned. Support for budget development (SPARC does this competently).
 - b) Provide research design and statistical support for grant writing, either by contracting with faculty to perform this function, or by using an external consultant.
 - c) Provide program evaluation and assessment support for grant writers,
 - d) Develop models for letters of support
 - e) Create boilerplates for components of application narratives, particularly describing university and college resources.
 - f) Provide Ph.D.-level support for conceptual development of project narrative, perhaps by creating cross-disciplinary faculty teams (RIGs) to generate and respond to ideas.
6. Provide greater post-award support.
 - a) Direct and timely online access by PIs to grant accounts would assure accurate tracking and planning.
 - b) Provide monthly budget reports to PIs until such time as an online reporting system is available.
 - c) Assist with hiring and Human Resource management of grant personnel.
 - d) Provide systematic reminders of critical points in grant implementation (budget status, end-of-project-year reports, etc.).
 - e) Provide semester reports of student support awarded from grants.
 - f) Facilitate timely distribution of student financial support.
 - g) Develop checklists for various funding agencies that inform faculty about grant restrictions and limitations in a clear and unambiguous manner.

RESULTS

1. What are the hallmarks of an institution that promotes research and scholarship?

I. University Culture and Research Support

- Passion among faculty regarding their research
- Professors producing high quality scholarly works
- A thriving community of professors and graduate students engaged in joint research projects in state-of-the-art facilities
- An evaluation system that recognizes quality scholarship and which reflects respect for the various types of research activity of faculty members across disciplines
- Resources (time, financial support, respect) directed toward faculty scholarly endeavors
- University culture that reveals an understanding that research is part of what a professor is
- Recognition of the significant investment of time and energy required by a comprehensive research program promotes research and scholarship
- Adequate funding of graduate student assistantships
- Adequate funding for faculty/student travel to professional conferences
- Statistical Support for research
- Effective support in seeking and obtain grants from outside agencies

II. Teaching Load and Salaries

- Workload practices that have flexibility to enable quality scholarship to the extent that it is valued by the university
- Reasonable teaching loads for graduate faculty
- Salaries that attract new faculty and that keep established faculty at a competitive level, absence of salary inversion and its attendant destructive side-effects

2. What is UNC currently doing to promote research and scholarship?

- Increasing FRPB support for faculty research and travel was a huge help
- Increasing stipends for TAs and GAs
- Summer Graduate Research Assistantship program aids research
- Library Support, i.e., access to on-line journals and increased efficiency in getting articles through web-zap has speeded the research process
- A percentage of indirect cost recovery (IDC) funds are “returned” to the Deans of the Colleges for distribution to faculty PIs (to further support their research or as an incentive/reward for successful grant writing), school faculty to collect pilot data for prospective grant submission, and/or funding of start-up costs associated with faculty research projects.
- Research Interest Groups (RIGs) in the College of Natural and Health Sciences seek to facilitate collaborative research opportunities for faculty
- Research Institutes, such as the Social Sciences Research Institute and M.A.S.T. also serve to provide collaborative and interdisciplinary research opportunities for faculty
- The following are **not** university-wide but are unique solutions being used by different programs/departments/schools:
 - Establishment of a faculty mentor to support new faculty in their scholarship, this is led by the most productive scholar on our faculty who receives a course release (support from foundation funds) to spend 1-2 hours weekly with four faculty members to promote their scholarship development
 - After a faculty member has chaired three dissertation defenses, he or she is eligible for a one course reassignment
 - FTE credit for advising graduate students and serving on graduate student committees.
 - Flexible workload reassignment, with a faculty receiving increased research FTE, and decreased teaching FTE, when appropriate.
 - New faculty in two Colleges are awarded course reassigned time for research during the first semester or first year of employment.

3. What barriers exist at UNC that prevent excellence in research and scholarship?

- **Excessive teaching workload, insufficient research FTE allocation** (this was the NUMBER ONE RESPONSE, submitted over and over again)
 - High teaching loads consume huge amounts of time, making research endeavors difficult if not impossible
 - Lack of flexibility in FTE assignments
 - Teaching loads of graduate faculty are too high, particularly considering there is no credit for thesis/dissertation advising
- Inadequate faculty salaries for attracting and retaining high quality research faculty
- The prevailing attitude of the administration: "*we want everyone to do more of everything*"
- Limited availability of student research assistants
- Insufficient professional technology resources, both hardware and software
- Training grants (awarded) do not provide faculty with the same level of reward (IDCs) or peer recognition as do research grants; however, training grants do provide funding to support students.
- Excessive use of term faculty

4. What changes can be made at UNC that will promote research and scholarship?

I. Workload

- Research is "promoted" at UNC but the reality of getting it done is impossible with all the other demands on faculty time. "Redistributed workload" would greatly facilitate scholarship.
- Modify teaching FTE for faculty engaged in substantial research, grant writing, and/or scholarship appropriate to his/her discipline.
- FTE credit for advising graduate students
- Full FTE credit for teaching labs and practica in various disciplines.

- Grant course release for major faculty writing projects. Per our Senate spokesperson, this is allowed in policy but is not consistent with current evaluation criteria.

II. Funding and Grants

- Adequate funding for faculty and graduate student research.
- Keep active, established faculty at a competitive level, without salary inversion
- More information regarding grant possibilities and sources of funding (beyond the standard government sources)
- Budget management for grants needs great improvement and faculty must be informed regarding grant budget status. PIs need direct/ immediate access to grant budgets and expenses as they are incurred
- Improve functionality of SPARC
- Internal informal grant review program
- Supportive assistance is needed from SPARC and competitive SPARC grant development awards need to be larger
- Current travel reimbursement procedures require excessive time and detail that wastes valuable faculty time

III. University Culture and Other Factors

- Developing a community of scholars, students and faculty members, that value research
- Statistical Support for research endeavors
- Standardize and maintain a single policy (that does not change yearly) regarding grant submission procedures through the Dean's offices and SPARC
- Make research incentives known to all faculty