

## **RGPEC PROPOSED CHARGE ON GRANT COSTS**

Identify specific grant cost issues that negatively impact the University's mission to conduct research across disciplines, and actively engage its students in that research, including but not limited to: tuition, fringe rate, Facilities and Administrative costs ("F&A," formerly known as indirect costs), support services, and negotiated vendor contracts. Identify and engage stakeholders, and make recommendations.

### **Background and Rationale**

The University's mission is to conduct cutting-edge research, and recognized preeminence in research is a key component of its aspirational goals. Yet the rising costs associated with grants are deleterious to fulfilling University objectives. Despite overall increases in research funding, the Committee on Academic Planning and Review has identified "a significant and serious threat to maintaining a strong core of Ph.D. education and research, namely, a startling and progressive decrease over the past decade in the number of doctoral (Ph.D.) students supported as Graduate Assistants (GAs) on research grants." This problem can be traced in part to disincentives to hire graduate students, and suggests a need for tuition reform; a committee working with the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs is already addressing this, and RGPEC does not wish to duplicate that effort.

RGPEC's initial discussions have indicated that there are also a number of other issues that threaten to jeopardize the University's research mission, its ability to collaborate with other institutions, and its opportunities to conduct interdisciplinary research. Successful recruitment and retention of the best new faculty require a robust and sustainable research program. Yet in the current climate, issues surrounding tuition, fringe rate, F&A, support services costs, and negotiated vendor contracts are threatening relationships with partners and collaborators, and dramatically reducing faculty's ability to fulfil the scope of their grant-funded work, the aims of their research projects, and the university's ability to fulfil its mission to conduct research and actively engage its students in that research. Grant proposals have become highly competitive and awarded grants unattainable. Investigators have no control over rising costs charged to grant that go into effect after a grant is awarded, forcing them to choose which aspects of the proposed work to omit to meet the new budget. There is a lack of transparency, and the disconnect between researchers and decision makers has created a perception amongst researchers that decision makers are not cognizant of and/or sensitive to the ramifications of their decisions on the research mission of the principle investigators and, therefore, the University.

The Committee will look at ways the administration can help the researchers with grants, including (but not limited to) tuition reform, renegotiation of fringe rates, redistribution of indirect cost to departments and PIs, stabilization of charges, and flexible caps on indirect cost rates. As just one example of one issue, academic year-appointed faculty charging summer salaries to NSF grants were once charged 0% fringe for these summer activities. This was suddenly increased to 7% and applied to existing awards. This raises two concerns. First, the PI is then forced to decide to decrease their compensation or decrease the scope of their work. Second, these research activities do not seem to incur additional fringe benefit costs, yet additional fringe benefit charges are being levied against these grants.

The objective of this charge is to determine the basis and rationale for costs identify gaps in resources, articulate what money is needed and where it will come from, specify opportunities for flexibility, and propose alternative approaches that better support the University's research mission.