**Research Advisory Committee**

**Annual Report 2023-24**

Committee Members:

Peter Selkin, *Chair*

Sarah Alaei

Alison Cardinal

Sonia De La Cruz

Heather Dillon

Cheryl Greengrove, *ex officio*

Kelly Dyer, *ex officio*

Lisa Isozaki, *ex officio, until November 2023*

This report summarizes the work done by the Research Advisory Committee (RAC) over the 2023-24 academic year. 2023-24 was the fifth year since the creation of the RAC.

Unlike previous years, the RAC chose a focus for its efforts this year. Because of synergies with other initiatives on campus, the committee decided to prioritize undergraduate research. This did not mean that we would avoid other issues, but rather that, for the sake of efficiency, we would be more likely to participate in new initiatives if they focused on undergraduate research. Next year, committee members may choose to prioritize a different issue.

**Founders Endowment**

The RAC updated the Founders Endowment awards to support faculty priorities, including release time and collaboration, with the expectation that this would encourage more applications and more significant projects. In a 2019 survey, faculty had noted that time was one of the most substantial barriers to research productivity at UW Tacoma. So, in consultation with EVCAA Andy Harris, we increased the maximum grant from $5000 (2023-24) to $10,000 (2024-25), approximately the cost of a course release, to allow awardees to spend more time on research projects. We also moved the award deadline to the first week of the Spring quarter to align the application process with faculty teaching schedules. We revised the application so that “interdisciplinary” was a positive characteristic of awards rather than a category of awards, and we changed the name of the awards to “Founders Endowment Funds for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Works” to make clear our intention to support work in the arts and humanities in addition to the fields in which scholarly work is usually described as “research”.

These changes were successful in achieving the effects the RAC wanted: the number of applications nearly doubled, from 11 (2022-23) to 21 (2023-24) high-quality, potentially transformative proposals across four categories (8 Social Science, 4 Social Justice, 4 STEM, 5 Humanities). The increased dollar amount of each grant meant that initially we expected to fund only four awards (as opposed to 10 in 2023-24). However, thanks to additional funding from Academic Affairs, we were able to support seven projects. Three of the awards went to interdisciplinary teams, and most proposed projects were interdisciplinary in some way. In light of our focus on undergraduate research for the year, one project specifically focused on supporting innovative undergraduate capstone projects in Engineering and Urban Studies.

The following projects were awarded Founders Endowment grants this year:

* Emma Rose (SIAS) & Maria-Tania Bandes Becerra Weingarden (SIAS): *Performance as Praxis: Teaching storytelling for career connections*, Humanities
* Cassie Miura (SIAS): *Hajichi Hand Tattoos as Embodied Rhetoric of Resistance*, Humanities
* Jingyi Li (SNHL): *Promoting health equity through cultural adaptation of Alzheimer's Café in Chinese American Communities*, Social Justice
* Alison Cardinal (SIAS): *Language Justice in Communication Design*, Social Justice
* Bara Safarova (SUS) & Nara Almeida (SET): *Community engaged civil engineering and urban design learning experience at UWT*, Social Science
* Amanda Sesko (SIAS): *Capturing Experienced Invisibility Among Individuals with Multiple Stigmatized Identities*, Social Science
* Martine De Cock (SET), Weichao Yuwen (SNHCL) & Ling-Hong Hung (SET): *Privacy-Preserving Generative AI for Equitable Cancer Research*, STEM

We hope that next year’s RAC builds on this year’s model of the Founders Endowment Awards. We received mostly positive feedback from both applicants and interested faculty. However, in a February open forum with the EVCAA, some faculty voiced concerns that the lack of smaller ($2000-$5000) funding sources put early career faculty at a disadvantage. We understand that the change in funding levels for the Founders Endowment grants puts certain types of projects – those in very early or late stages (pilot projects, journal page fees), or those primarily funding conference travel, as well as projects that need to be funded on an ad hoc basis or with very short turnaround times – at a disadvantage. Not only do these funds benefit faculty who are either in the process of searching for external funds or who are working to get a project to the publication stage, but these are also important funding resources for undergraduate conference presentations – an essential component of undergraduate research. Current campus funding resources for undergraduate presentations rely on an SAFC process which does not prioritize research, or specialized funds within units (e.g. the Mary Cline Award in SAM). Although we believe that the benefits of this year’s changes to the Founders Endowment grants outweigh the drawbacks, the RAC does believe that the campus needs to work to develop stable, equitable, and flexible funding sources for faculty and especially for students in the $2000-5000 range.

**Research & Scholarship Celebration**

The RAC, in conjunction with the Office of Research and EVCAA Harris, also planned and facilitated the second annual Research & Scholarship Celebration on May 10, 2024. The focus of the celebration this year was somewhat different than the celebration last year: this year’s event focused on promoting collaborations while still showcasing research the impact and products of ongoing research. In the future, we expect to divide the celebration into two parts, a fall event intended to showcase the outcomes and impacts of faculty research – including presentations from Founders Endowment grantees and faculty returning from sabbatical, and appreciation of faculty who were promoted in the past cycle – and a spring event focused on facilitating collaborations that could then be active over the summer. The two events would, ideally, be coordinated with other events on campus, such as undergraduate and community-engaged research symposia. The Research and Scholarship Celebration was generously supported by funding from the UWT Office of Research and the Chancellor.

This year’s Research & Scholarship Celebration included nine recorded lightning talks intended to allow recipients of Founders Endowment funding from the 2022-2023 academic year to present their research in ways that made sense for the project. These included part of a music video, scenes from field research, and more traditional academic talks. Faculty also participated in facilitated table discussions (topics included finding funding in the humanities, community engagement, undergraduate research, and social justice).

The RAC collected community-sourced notes from the event by asking faculty to post notes on bulletin boards under three broad topics: “Expertise I could share”, “Collaborations I would like to have”, and “What do you need to take the next steps?” In all, we collected 58 notes (a redacted version without names is attached); 18 faculty and staff members listed their names on the notes, but many more attended the event. These notes informed a discussion at the final RAC meeting about priorities for the 2024-2025 academic year.

**Shared Vision of Undergraduate Research**

The RAC’s third substantial achievement this year was to develop a shared vision of undergraduate research at UW Tacoma, in collaboration with members of the High Impact Practices student success strategy team and input from the Office of Undergraduate Research at UW Seattle and the Office of Connected Learning at UW Bothell. The committee is generally in favor of the idea that undergraduate research, viewed from the student perspective, has the potential to be transformative for students and a signature of our campus. Currently, support for UGR is distributed across campus, leaving gaps in terms of communicating research opportunities, advocacy, scaffolding the “hidden curriculum”, financial and personnel support, and unified coordination and scheduling for both students and faculty. Options for credit and financial support for undergraduates vary across units, majors and among faculty researchers. Facets of our vision include the following:

* The nature of UW Tacoma’s student body, our urban-serving mission, our mainly non-residential campus, our curriculum, and our academic strengths mean that types of programs that work at UW Seattle will not necessarily fit UW Tacoma. The RAC believes that UW Tacoma needs to develop structures on campus to support undergraduate research in a way that fits our student body rather than solely relying on those centralized at UW.
* Supporting undergraduate research on campus means supporting students to do the research (financially as well as intellectually) and supporting faculty to mentor those students and supervise that work (financially as well as through planning, professional development, and collaborations).
* Although we enthusiastically back both, course-based research (CUREs) are a more equitable way to involve students in the process of research than independent student projects.
* Significant gaps exist in the interface between undergraduate research and curriculum (e.g. in supporting and scaffolding R courses). We encourage more communication between the RAC and APCC in this regard.
* The role of the RAC is to encourage efforts on campus to support both faculty and students, mainly by facilitating applications to sponsored programs. Where possible, we should encourage cross-campus faculty teams to pursue capacity-building grants (e.g. the S-STEM grant that funds ACCESS in STEM) that promote undergraduate research.
* Regardless of whether we choose to centralize support for undergraduate research or to continue with a distributed model, some coordination – of symposia and curriculum in particular – will improve the experience for students and faculty as well as for community partners looking to learn about undergraduate research on campus. Staff administrative support is necessary to coordinate undergraduate research efforts across campus.

Representatives of the RAC met with several stakeholders to discuss aspects of this vision, including VP for Research Mari Ostendorf (10/2023), EVCAA Andy Harris (11/2023), Office of Undergraduate Research Director Sophie Pierszalowski (2/2024), and the Student Success HIPS working group (2/2024). RAC members are also participating in the Undergraduate Research Community of Practice with the UW Office of Undergraduate Research, and are working to start a faculty professional development opportunity focused on course-based undergraduate research on the UW Tacoma campus. At least one representative of the RAC will be participating in the American Association of Colleges and Universities’ 2024 Institute on High-Impact Practices and Student Success.

**Additional Duties**

In addition to these main items, the RAC also accomplished several minor tasks. The RAC has as part of its charge that it facilitates “application and review process of UW Tacoma’s Distinguished Research Award”. This year, there was an RAC representative on the Distinguished Research Award committee (this was not the case in 2022-2023). RAC members also provided guidance to UW Foundation Relations on applications to a limited submission call for proposals from the Mellon Foundation. Finally, RAC members met with candidates for the Director of Research position and provided feedback to the search committee.

The RAC is currently an ad hoc committee of UW Tacoma’s Faculty Assembly. As the campus grows, and as our research needs become more complex, we believe that the RAC should become a more permanent part of Faculty Assembly, and should have a more streamlined mandate and clearer reporting policy. In the past, RAC chairs have suggested that the committee should become a standing committee of the Faculty Assembly. In discussions with Faculty Assembly Chair Huatong Sun and Vice-Chair Anne Taufen, I (RAC Chair Peter Selkin) discussed an alternative designation: that of “advisory council”, a shared governance committee named in the bylaws but without the general policy oversight responsibility of a standing committee (e.g. being able to trigger a full Faculty Assembly meeting to discuss a piece of policy) and with looser membership and meeting requirements. We expect to add this designation in an upcoming revision of the Faculty Assembly bylaws.

RAC membership will be changing next year. Two of us are at the end of our terms this year (Sonia De La Cruz and myself) but have volunteered to remain on RAC until replacements can be found. Dr. De La Cruz has also volunteered to serve an additional year if necessary, and if the Executive Council agrees. Furthermore, Alison Cardinal will be on sabbatical in 2024-2025 in what would have been the second year of her term. Faculty Assembly will therefore need to find replacements for two or three RAC members as soon as possible. For continuity purposes, we strongly recommend that, going forward, the Executive Council call for, nominate, and charge replacement RAC members before the end of the academic year when the outgoing members’ terms expire.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Heather Dillon for volunteering to chair the RAC for the 2024-2025 academic year. I would also like to thank all of the RAC members for their service this year, as well as Cheryl Greengrove, Lisa Isozaki, and Kelly Dyer. Our activities were only possible because of everyone’s efforts.

Appendix A: Notes from Bulletin Boards at Faculty Research & Scholarship Celebration (Names redacted)

What do you need to take the next steps…

* Equalizing support to be equal to UW Seattle levels
* Funds for research-related travel
* Humanities book proposal workshop
* Time
* More interdisciplinary capstone projects
* Research faculty spotlights to help identify mentors
* Stipends for undergraduate researchers
* Office of Research 5 min visits to faculty meetings
* Post award support
* Graders
* More support for co-instruction of research courses
* Undergrad research highlights OR newsletter
* Money
* Course buyouts
* Office of Research happy hours
* Research staff support in SIAS and SET
* Student stipends for summer
* Peer facilitators
* Professional development sessions for PIs (esp junior faculty)
* Tag courses for faculty who want to link up with each other
* Core instrumentation technician
* Shared facilities for research with other local institutions
* More collaboration gatherings (happy hours)
* Identify in kind support services offered at UWT
* Funding for student RA’s to engage in: marketing, engagement, report writing, etc.
* Institutional support for creating a community media center
* More conference funds for students
* More scholarship PDF funding

Expertise I could share…

* Grant process resources
* Boats
* IRB
* Course-based undergraduate research
* Institutional data
* Historical UWT wisdom
* Finding Humanities funding
* Grant timeline coaching
* Urban & labor politics
* Dept of Ed grant writing
* How to do community engaged scholarship
* Course based research projects
* Community college connections
* Drafting a book proposal
* Media industries
* Media & cultural policy
* Undergraduate team research doing document analysis
* Collaborative governance and use of science in policy making
* Design/studio community engaged teaching)
* Open Access publishing
* Institutional repository sharing
* How to build and develop sustainable partnerships in the community
* How to develop equitable community engaged courses
* Interdisciplinary & hands-on teaching pedagogy
* Civic Engineering & architecture background, focused on sustainable materials & construction

Collaborations I would like to have…

* Thought pieces in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Inside Higher Education*
* Searchable research database of what people are currently doing
* Publish more student success!
* Community of practice for UWT undergraduate research mentors
* Research mini presentations