End-of-Year Report: 2022-23

**UW Tacoma Faculty Assembly Research Advisory Committee**

Menaka Abraham, Chair, Faculty Assembly Leadership;

Huatong Sun, Vice-Chair, Faculty Assembly Leadership



cc: Andrew Seibert, Program Coordinator, Faculty Assembly Leadership

Voting Members:

* Yonn Dierwechter (Chair), Professor, School of Urban Studies (second year of service)
* Alison Gardell, Assistant Professor, Division of Sciences and Mathematics, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (second year of service)
* Robin Starr Zape-tah-hol-ah Minthorn, Associate Professor, School of Education (second year of service)
* Peter Selkin, Associate Professor, Division of Sciences and Mathematics, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (first year of service; (elected chair for 2023-24)
* Sonia De La Cruz, Associate Professor, Culture, Arts and Communication School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (first year of service)

Ex Officio Non-Voting Members:

* Lisa Isozaki (Director, Office of Research)
* Cheryl Greengrove (Associate Vice Chancellor for Research)

Office of Research Staff Support to RAC

* Kelly Dyer (Program Coordinator, Office of Research)

**Evolution of RAC**

The UW Tacoma Faculty Assembly first created new “ad hoc” committee in 2018-2019, dubbed then and today the “Research Advisory Committee” (RAC).

As one of only four main ad hoc committees, RAC does not participate in faculty governance nor operate in the same manner as the four official standing committees: i.e., Executive Council; Academic Policy and Curriculum; Appointment, Promotion and Tenure; and Faculty Affairs. For example, RAC members are selected by votes of the Executive Council after soliciting nominations (and self-nominations) from eligible full-time faculty members rather than being elected directly by individual schools.

Like other ad hoc committees, the chair of RAC also does not receive compensation nor are they necessarily *required* to attend EC meetings (although they sometime do attend, and often work with the FA Chair informally). As stated by the Faculty Assembly: “RAC will have five members among full-time UW Tacoma faculty appointed by Executive Council. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Research will be an ex-officio member of the committee. The term of service is two years.”

*As in previous years, RAC members continue to discuss the possibility of RAC evolving into a formal “standing” committee, changing its status from ad hoc.*

Generally stated, the FA charge for RAC remains “to ensure faculty have a direct role in shared governance related to issues pertaining to research and scholarship.” In this capacity, RAC members have indeed worked closely with staff in the Office of Research in various ways, especially in the allocation of campus-generated funding for research. That has been a positive development. We continue to try to improve this process, building on the work of previous RAC committees; in particular, this year’s committee benefited from:

* The inaugural work of RAC in the 2019-20 academic year led by Jim Gawel to create, disseminate, and analyze results from a faculty survey on UWT Scholarship Needs. That survey identified several major concerns among the faculty which this year’s members in general concurred remained pressing in light of the impacts of COVID and the challenges of “regrouping” as a faculty and complete university community, including: lack of time and administrative respect/appreciation for research; lack of transparency/support in the Office of Advancement with respect to research funding; need for humanities support in the Office of Research; desire for more collaborations, professional development, and mentorship related to scholarship across campus; greater collaboration among faculty, the Office of Advancement, and the Office of Community Partnerships with respect to scholarship initiatives and funding, and more explicit guidelines and transparency on course buy-outs at the campus level with flexibility for each unit.
* The (second) 2020-21 RAC committee’s work led by Belinda Louie to prioritize the “Top Five” research support concerns among the faculty and to help articulate the kinds of research faculty actually do with “potential donors” and the wider engaged university community; and finally,
* The (third) 2022-23 RAC committee’s substantial work led by John Finke to build on the 2020-21 RAC’s efforts around the CATALYST grant process, which itself was meant to meet concerns raised by the inaugural work of RAC in 2019-20.

*Now in its fourth year of operation, RAC is receiving staff support from the Office of Research. In part because of this support, the Committee made important new contributions to the evolution of research and scholarship on the campus.*

**Allocation of Funding**

Like last year, the Committee’s primary efforts in 2022-23 were to implement a more established and fleshed-out “Catalyst” award process.

In addition to issues like selection criteria, timelines, communication, software, etc., an important legacy for this year’s RAC members was to reiterate the “thematic areas” of research and scholarship on this campus at this time: (1) STEM; (2) Social Sciences; (3) Interdisciplinarity; (4) Humanities; and (5) Social Justice. This is important to emphasize. Members discussed whether (or not) to keep, change, or refine them. The call was open to all full-time faculty.

*We elected to keep these five broad thematic areas going forward. That said, RAC continues to struggle with eliciting support for “humanities” applications, which tend to be far fewer than in other fields, a pattern for several years now.*

Unfortunately, this year’s committee did not have the same level of funding to consider. Whereas $100,000 across the five research themes were allocated to faculty members for research projects in 2021-22, we had $40,000 to allocate this year. The reason is straightforward, but of concern. In 2021, $100K funding was approved: $40K from institutional funds; $60K from community funding were supposed to be secured by the Office of Advancement however they did not come though and EVCAA Ali Modarres had to take this from the reserves. However, this year we did not have the $60K. RAC members met with Advancement to consider how we might help fund raising goals for research going forward. We also met with the new EVCAA to consider various forms of collaboration and research advocacy, about which below.

Because the funds were smaller, and also because the application was deemed “relatively complex and time-consuming,” especially for Humanities scholars, this year’s RAC members worked hard to “streamline” the process. Accordingly, we retained much of the conceptual work accomplished in 2022-23, but we also tried to make it “fit-to-purpose.” In particular, we:

* Retained the “five broad themes” for catalyst applications.
* Pared down the Application for the Catalyst Funding, but retaining the specifics of who can and cannot apply.
* Refined our Scoring Rubric based on the Application Materials.
* Sent out Requests for Funding Announcement (RFA) with the Application Instructions to the Faculty as well as the Deans.
* Received funding applications in the 5 themes, along with external review letters.
* Individually scored and ranked proposals in each theme.
* Make recommendations to the EVCAA’s office.

*The following Catalyst Awards for 2023-24 were allocated to fulltime faculty members, including teaching faculty for the first time:*

* **Humanities Theme: Dr. Sonia De La Cruz, SIAS  
  Storytelling Project at UW Tacoma.**
* **Social Justice Theme: Dr. Ruben Casas, SIAS, and Dr. Anaid Yerena, Urban Studies  
  Decoding the Anti-Racist City**
* **Interdisciplinary Theme: Dr. Gordon Brobbey, Education, and Dr. Zaher Kmail, SIAS  
  Assessing Outcomes for Special Educators in the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) in Washington State**
* **Social Sciences Theme: Dr. Jinlan Ni, Milgard  
  Public Participation and Environment Improvement: Evidence from the River Chief System in China**
* **STEM Theme: Dr. Angela Kitali, SET, and Dr. Matthew Ford, SET  
  Sustainability and Equity in Transportation: The Role of Micromobility in Tacoma**

More details of these projects are here:

* <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/or/catalyst-research-and-scholarship-support-initiative>

**New Initiatives**

At the start of the year, RAC members identified several “new initiatives”, namely:

1. More engagement with the local community
2. Trying to find funding for undergraduate students to participate in research with faculty members. There was a previous stipend program and something similar could be introduced.
3. Improving research visibility on campus as a way to help Advancement acquire more funding. In addition, bolstering research between UW campuses (UWT, UWB and UW Seattle).
4. Ways to engage more faculty in research—faculty social for informal networking
5. Facilitate more ways to get information out about what research is being done on campus
6. Look to acquire full committee status to gain more support fiscally and administratively.

*Although we were not able make sufficient progress on everything, we did manage “to move the needle” a bit by focusing RAC’s attention on two practical developments.*

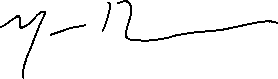
Development 1: Meetings with Seattle Colleagues

Following up especially on bullet points No 2, No. 3 and No. 4 above, RAC met with several faculty from Seattle who came to UWT to engage with RAC members on matters of potential joint interest: Dan Pollack (Math- Divisional Dean, Natural Sciences Division); KC Lee (Chair, Speech & Hearing Sciences); Abel Rodriguez (Statistics- Chair, Natural Sciences Division); and Jerry Cangelosi (Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences- Associate Dean, School of Public Health). The meeting occurred in the early Spring Quarter (3/28/23). The matters discussed included working collaboratively to find more funding for undergraduate students to participate in research; diversity and recruitment initiatives in graduate programs, especially in STEM fields; and joint-funding, cross-campus research applications.

Outcome II: End-of-Year Celebration of Scholarship: May 28th, 2023.

Perhaps the most exciting new development this year was our work with the Office of Research to plan for, and successfully implement, “a celebration of the diverse, innovative and impactful research and scholarship happening on our campus.”

This absorbed a great deal of our time in the late winter and early spring. With welcome support from the EVCAA’s Office, this Celebration of Scholarship Party was held on Friday, May 19 from 4-6 PM in Philip Hall. In addition to book tables, scholarship boards, and poster presentations, this event included short presentations from the 2022 Catalyst Research & Scholarship Support Award recipients; it also allowed for time to network and socialize with colleagues. In addition to the value of the event itself, particularly coming out of the COVID bubble, RAC members noted many ancillary benefits and strong potential going forward. Although difficult to measure, these include several of the six bullet points listed above.



*Prepared by Yonn Dierwechter, Chair*