

Lee, Lori

From: Taggart, Mark Alan
Sent: Thursday, October 04, 2007 10:40 AM
To: Lee, Lori
Subject: FW: New info about startup funds

fyi. Maybe a topic for discussion with officers.

Mark
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-----Original Message-----

From: Tucker, John
Sent: Tue 10/2/2007 9:27 PM
To: Gares, Paul; Research Grants Committee
Subject: RE: New info about startup funds

Colleagues,

I support the proposal that we announce, again as last year, that those currently receiving startup funds are, in our view, receiving comparable funding and so will not be eligible to apply for RCAG while receiving those startup funds.

This might not be wholly fair, but it is about as fair as any option that we might realistically endorse. Also, it is consistent with what we decided last year. We will appear very confused if we launch a succession of about-faces on a host of issues related to eligibility and the application process.

John Tucker

From: Gares, Paul
Sent: Tue 10/2/2007 3:06 PM
To: Research Grants Committee
Subject: New info about startup funds

Folks

I have spoken with Dr. Mageean this morning about the motion that we passed the other day and I'm afraid that I don't have good news.

The short of it is that she doesn't support our motion. Having said that let me explain her position. She has the very strong belief that faculty at ECU who are doing research should be soliciting funds from external funding sources. There are a number of reasons for this. First, it enhances ECU's reputation as a research university. Second, it can increase ECU's visibility with the public when funded projects provide support for eastern NC issues. Third, the F&A money that comes to ECU enhances both programs and individuals by giving everyone a little kick back. I'm sure there are other benefits that she would identify.

Operating from that premise (that we should be soliciting outside funding), she believes that she should support research activities that will facilitate a researcher's ability to compete for those funds. And so she has tried to create programs that will provide that financial support. The idea is that ECU invests in the researcher and the researcher brings it back to ECU through external funding. So that is the purpose of the Research Development Program and of the Startup fund program.

Having said that she worries that our research program might not support that basic premise. So she is concerned that our eligibility rules would enable people to keep coming back to our well because it's easy to apply to, and relatively easy to obtain funding from (compared to the outside sources). So she thinks that the time between one grant from our committee and a second one should be 2 years (right now there is potentially only 1 year between awards). She also believes that the same situation should apply to persons funded by other university sources, including startup funds.

She does concede that it has been brought to her attention that the availability of startup funds has not been consistently used by all departments on campus and she feels bad about that but she sees this as a problem of bad leadership at the department level because info about the program has been disseminated across campus and because they have had workshops for department chairs to provide the necessary information. She believes that bad leadership shouldn't have to be compensated for by our committee or any other funding committee on campus. She also says that the startup packages vary greatly because people in different disciplines require different resources. The amount of financial support that new faculty receives depends on the justification provided to the review committee. And the committee has not always granted everything that has been requested because the justification was weak. But she stresses that the purpose of the startup packages is explicitly to provide new faculty with the opportunity to develop a research program that will lead to submission of proposals to external funding agencies. As a result, she doesn't see that these faculty should be applying to us for funds, they should be going outside the university. Coming to us defeats the purpose of the program, she believes.

She also concedes that there are disciplines (mainly humanities, but also to a lesser extent social sciences) where funding is very difficult to come by and she thinks there ought to be a mechanism on campus to help those individuals by supporting worthy projects.

Let me end by telling you what I told her about what we were concerned with and what her reaction was. I told her we were concerned that faculty with startup funds might come up with other new projects that were not conceived of when they submitted their startup request. She said that if that is the case, they still ought to be applying for external support not coming to us for money. I said we had discussed the possibility of funding suck folks if they were able to demonstrate that the new project was a complete departure from what they were funded to do originally. She said that that was ok, but wondered how we would determine that the projects were in fact different. She said that good writers will be able to convince us that a difference exists.

I said we had entertained the possibility of funding people who had not received large amounts of startup funds. She said that in principal that was ok, but wondered what funding level would be used as a cutoff. She argued that any cutoff point would be somewhat arbitrary and open to disagreement.

Overall, she argued that if we rush headlong into this issue without full consideration of all the aspects of it might be more harmful in the long run as we change policies every year to accommodate some new issue. She felt that it might end up doing more harm than good.

She is interested in continuing the dialogue with us... And would be willing to come to meet with us. I told her that my concern is that we need to get our guidelines posted yesterday and that waiting to complete this discussion would delay us even further.

So let me propose something.... That we stick with our ruling used last year.... Persons with startup funds are not eligible this year. Ultimately, this will become part of the culture and shouldn't be such a problem. It probably already is moving in that direction. If we decided to proceed with what we adopted last week, and change again next year, would that be a good thing? To be changing the rules every year? Won't people start to criticize our inconsistency?

I await your reactions... Please let me know what your feelings are....I want to be able to post the guidelines next week..Please let me know if you would like to meet with her towards the end of this semester... If we conducted a yearlong dialogue on this issue perhaps we would reach a well-thought out conclusion.

Paul