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Recommendations

Faculty Senate

2-14-2022

SR 21-22-27 RC

Marshall University Faculty Senate

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Research Committee RECOMMENDATION

SR 21-22-27 RC

Recommends that additional questions/clarifications be added to the Faculty Senate Research Committee, Summer Research Award application. During the Spring of 2021, the committee revised the guidelines for the Quinlan and Research Committee funding to provide more clarity for applicants (including Marshall's COVID travel ban restrictions). We also revised the guidelines for the summer research award, but I will reference this later in this recommendation.

The issue related to the recommendation for additional questions/clarification on the summer research award application started with the committee receiving an influx of summer research award applications in comparison to years where travel was not affected by COVID-19. The day before our April meeting to review submitted summer research award applicants (the due date is March 30th), I received an email from the FS office stating that our typical amount of \$76,000 for summer research awards was reduced significantly (I believe to \$64,000). Based on our budget and applicant request spreadsheet the number of applicants requesting funding, if found to be eligible, all could be awarded the requested maximum amount of \$2000 (all applicants requested this amount) and we had enough funding to cover the awarding of all eligible applicants. With the reduction occurring the day before our meeting, when we did meet the FSRC committee college representatives had already reviewed applications and made awarding decisions (all applicants were found to be eligible for the full amount of \$2000).

The last-minute reduction in funding created a situation where there was more funding requests than available summer research award monies. This reduction created a divide amongst committee members since we no longer had enough money to fund all applicants and a consensus could not be reached regarding who would not be receiving the full amount or if we should just divide it equally amongst all applicants.

We turned to the existing guidelines to assist us in the determination, however the vague guidelines were not helpful. We had some members who had concerns about the wording of the guidelines and the exact meaning of some of the wording. For example, based on the existing guidelines, awarding could be less than requested if an applicant was teaching during the summer. Some committee members voiced their opposition to this guideline, specifically as to why the applicant would be penalized and not receive the full amount just because they are teaching during the summer. Wording such as "teaching load" was questioned as there is no specific definition of "teaching load." As a result of this divide, the committee held several "non-scheduled" meetings to discuss this and try to come to a consensus.

We carefully reviewed the existing guidelines and made significant changes to it including wording as to eligibility. Afterward, we compared the new adopted guidelines to the summer research award application and it was the consensus of the committee that the existing application needed to have more questions and clarifications that would be needed to ensure fairness and consistency in choosing how and who would receive full awarding, if eligible. The committee developed a general scoring sheet (like one we use for the Quinlan) that would be used to initially determine general eligibility for summer

**Research Committee
RECOMMENDATION**

SR 21-22-27 RC

research award applicants. There was further disagreement in which some members voiced a need for a “ranking sheet” that was specific to their college to be used after the applicant met eligibility on the general scoring sheet. A consensus was reached and it was decided that college specific committee members would be permitted to create an additional informal ranking sheet to further determine which of their applicants should be awarded and what amounts.

The next step taken by the committee was to discuss how to revise the summer research award application to match our proposed and agreed upon changes. The committee further discussed the application questions and finally came to a consensus as to what questions required wording changes or what clarifying questions needed to be added and these were developed and all committee members had an opportunity to review and revise them and once completed they were passed by the committee.

After this daunting task and extra work required by the committee, as the chair I sent an email to express my displeasure with what had happened (the last-minute funding reduction) to the faculty senate office and received a response of apology and reinstatement of the original amount of \$76,000 and all applicants were awarded their requested amounts. Although the return to original funding for the summer research award alleviated our problem at that time, the committee proposed that we move forward with changes to the summer research award application especially with all of the work we had done to meet a consensus. Additionally, it was thought that if a future situation where the number of applications and funding requests exceed our allotted amount (we have the original \$76,000 for this fiscal year) we want to have something in place that promotes fairness and consistency.

RATIONALE: Our recommendation rationale is that our committee (FSRC) would like to award as many eligible faculties as possible the highest amount of funding available to them for their summer research activities. Making changes to the summer research award application would provide the committee with more information about the applicants request for funding and when used in conjunction with a general scoring sheet (and any individually created college specific ranking sheets) the committee feels they would be better equipped to make a fair and consistent decision regarding funding amounts awarded to eligible faculty.

FACULTY SENATE CHAIR:

Christoforo

APPROVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE:

DATE 1/28/2022

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT:

APPROVED: *BDS*

DATE: 2/14/22

**Research Committee
RECOMMENDATION**

SR 21-22-27 RC

DISAPPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

COMMENTS: _____

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