

The Future of Institutionally Supported Research and Creative Activities Committee

Statement of Purpose:

The goal of the American university, as envisioned in the Land Grant ideal of educating a broad range of the general public, was to pursue knowledge and truth for the public good free from the pressures of government, industry, commerce, and other groups seeking their own gain. The focus and emphasis on funded research came to the fore in the post-World War II period and specifically during the period after the 1960s when public funding for institutions like ours started to fall on a per capita basis. While funded research, obviously, is important in the contemporary university, its high prioritization is relatively new. It has led to differential valuation in the knowledge produced by various departments, schools, programs, and colleges across campus. The value of work that does not lead, either immediately or in the long-term, to grant funding has become devalued on campus and in the larger ecosystem of American higher education. As a land grant institution that aspires to be “Michigan’s State University,” we need to find new and innovative ways to support research and creative activities that fall outside the ambit of external funding. This proposal is an effort to strengthen our efforts and maintain our status as a well-balanced, comprehensive institution by forming a committee tasked with identifying and elucidating new ways of supporting research and creative activities by our talented world-class faculty across all disciplines.

1) What will this committee look like?

- A) It will be comprised of a diverse group of faculty (defined broadly) from colleges across campus.
- B) It should include representation from as many colleges/Major Academic Units (MAUs) as want to participate in the process and should likely encompass multiple representatives from colleges that largely fall outside the revenue generating research orbit.
- C) The committee could call on administrative and staff members (including Deans, members of the Provost’s Office, etc.) with particularly useful experiences to be a part of the committee as *ex officio* members.

2) What is the envisioned remit of the committee?

- A) The committee will study and ascertain how faculty outside of grant-active fields find funding for their research and creative activities, including but not limited to professional society memberships, conference registration and travel, research-related travel, and other expenses required to produce scholarship and maintain national/international prominence in their respective fields.
- B) The committee will review various funding models at the departmental/school, college, and university levels to see where MSU is doing well and where support could be improved. This should include a review of MSU-wide programs like the

HARP (Humanities and Arts Research Program) that have traditionally served as key vectors for support for faculty in these positions.

- C) The committee will seek areas and means of supporting research and creative practices that fall in line with the MSU 2030 Strategic Plan goal of developing new “Spirals of Excellence,” ranging from particular interdisciplinary foci to specific programs that could, with additional support, develop into national and international field-leading programs.
- D) For all of these, the committee will look at MSU’s internal processes and procedures as well as those of our peer institutions.

3) Why do we need this committee?

- A) As ambitious and important as our MSU Research goal of hitting \$1 billion in annual research expenditure is, focusing only on funded research risks dividing the world class faculty at MSU into those who can regularly access funding for research (and thus contribute to the goal) and those whose research and creative activities cannot regularly do so. An emphasis on grant funding is important, but we must not lose sight of the idea that being a great research institution means being strong in a wide variety of fields.
- B) While the arts and humanities are often emblematic of fields that struggle to access external funding for research, there are issues with research funding that impact all faculty at MSU.
- C) If MSU is going to be “Michigan’s State University,” we need to ensure that faculty in ALL disciplines find support from the research infrastructure of the institution so that we attract, retain, and maintain world-class faculty across the broad scope of disciplinary knowledges.

4) What will be the result?

- A) The committee will submit an evaluation of the current institutional programs that support research at a variety of levels (school/program/department, college, university).
- B) The committee will recommend changes/new ways to support research and creative activities that fall outside of external funding mechanisms.
- C) The committee will issue recommendations for how to better incorporate non-grant funded research and creative activities in the recognition for research outputs that the university has (such as university-wide awards and honorifics).
- D) The committee will put forth recommendations on how to better garner alumni and donor support for research and creative activities that fall outside of external funding mechanisms.
- E) The committee will attempt to identify areas where additional internal institutional support could transform areas of strength at MSU into fields/subfields that could become our next areas of national/international leadership.