Vice Chancellor for Research Panel – 2021 UTK Faculty Senate Retreat (10:30-11:00am)
Panel: Vasileios Maroulas, Mary McAlpin, Bernard Issa

Diversity and Multi-dimensional Scholarship

1. Your presentation did not emphasize diversity (either in terms of individuals carrying out scholarship or the range of scholarly topics being addressed on campus). How do these two aspects of diversity fit not your plans for ORIED?

2. Using metrics such as faculty awards and citation analyses can be inherently biased towards females and persons of color. How will you make sure you honor the work of ALL faculty and not a specific subset?

3. You mention research analytics tools to identify faculty to nominate for external awards, which is certainly one approach. Many awards rely not just on scholarly work but also on community contributions (e.g., agencies, professional societies, etc.) How will these be added to the mix in focusing energy on award nominations?

A. New Initiatives

1. The goals you outlined are expensive. Where are you anticipating these extra funds will come from? It seems that in the new budget model, your gains would be someone else's losses.

2. You identified 5 current and 1 new multidisciplinary initiatives to invest in. How where these chosen from the many at UTK and how might others be added to your list?

3. How was the new initiative on Algorithms, Machines and Society chosen - was there an open call for initiatives to Deans/faculty? How do we equitably allow novel programs to arise?

4. You mentioned that ORIED is being reorganized to foster interdisciplinary initiatives - what is being changed and what can faculty expect from this to assist their interdisciplinary efforts?

5. You mentioned that there are many new federal funding initiatives arising now with large new resources available. Obtaining such funding often involves networking with program officers as well as in professional societies to be "known". How do you suggest we do this at UTK?

B. Augmenting and Facilitating (Existing) Success

1. As we think about moving forward with valuing research and engagement in all of its forms, at what point might we consider a human subjects process that is designed for those who do not do medical research? Social scientists waste much time completing the IRB process.

Each year the changes made to the submission process also involve a learning curve, which also increases the amount of time necessary to conduct our research. Finally, the lack of consistency (identical protocols with different survey scales can receive different responses with one requiring revision and one being approved) also makes the process unwieldy for researchers. Under what conditions, or at what point, will there be a serious consideration of the ways in which social scientists in particular are disadvantaged in the research they conduct because of the inordinate amount of extra time required for achieving IRB approval?

2. You mentioned constellation hiring but there has been very little success in "cluster hiring" here historically. The new BAM makes this even more challenging. How do you propose to enhance this and what processes will be put in place to allow transparent, equitable distribution of these opportunities across campus?

3. UT's reputation as a leading research university might best arise from building world-class units (e.g., departments) here that everyone admits are highly ranked (e.g., Nuclear Engineering). This is not a metric included, yet it seems obvious that to be a leading institution requires a large number of really top units. How do we foster this?

4. You mentioned leveraging Ag extension to enhance translational research. How do you suggest a broader array of faculty than have been involved be enticed to collaborate with Extension to meet this goal?

5. You mentioned building a program to foster postdoc success and there have been a number of unit-based efforts to support postdocs here. How do you plan to foster collaboration between these given the tremendous differences in how postdocs are supported? Is the intention of this to offer more opportunities for postdocs to obtain faculty status here (e.g., research asst professorships)?