

Report to the Dean of Faculty, Research Advisory Council June 2019

Research Advisory Committee

The Research Advisory Council (RAC) is a committee of the Faculty Senate charged to provide advice to the Vice Provost for Research on issues relating to the research enterprise of the University. During the 2018-2019 academic year, the major activity of the RAC was to help in the selection of nominations for grant and award programs with limited submissions.

	Total number of programs advertised	Number of programs for which we received applications	Number of programs requiring review by RAC
2018	94	30	15
2019	118	47	20
% increase	26%	57%	33%

The excel chart attached indicates 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 competitions reviewed by limited submissions and RAC, and the outcomes of the review, including detailed data on the programs and applicants for each program. Also attached is an excel document containing all limited submission competitions, including deadlines and links to program websites.

The work required to perform all of these grant proposal reviews is significant. Each RAC member reads and ranks all submissions, independent of area of research. The preliminary ranking (and specific comments) serves as the basis for the discussion. The broad expertise represented on the RAC helps to choose the most competitive (and well-written) proposals that are recommended to submit a full application to the particular funding agency or philanthropy. Independent on the outcome, the chair of the RAC provides constructive feedback to each applicant based on the comments and discussion by the council. The workload is spread out across the academic calendar, with fewer programs during the summer months.

A number programs are coordinated with Weill Cornell Medicine, depending on whether the funders consider both campuses as one entity. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Packard, Pew, Searle, Rita Allen, Keck and Hartwell Foundations. Cornell Ithaca and Weill Cornell Medicine have a cooperative process for the review and ranking of proposals for the joint programs, which differs depending on the program. If WCM (or Ithaca) have few applications, the committee from one or other institution might review and rank them together. If there are more, separate internal competitions are completed, and the winners from WCM and Ithaca are discussed by the two RAC Chairs to determine the strongest candidate(s) for the program. In the 2018-2019 cycle, increased coordination with WCM and their new coordinator Florencia Marcucci, has resulted in better alignment of the two campuses in terms of focus, timing and outcomes. Florencia has also started attending our weekly limited submissions organizational meetings remotely.

The RAC also provides occasional advice to the Vice Provost for Research on other issues related to our research mission. If we have less or equal number of applicants than the number of submissions allowed, the RAC Chair reads all applications to ensure they are of high enough quality to proceed in the application process.

Noteworthy winners from 2018-2019 cycle:

DOE Energy Frontiers Research Centers: Tito Abruna (Chemistry & Chemical Biology) was one of two proposals put forth by Cornell for this program in early 2017. The EFRC was awarded to Tito and began in August 2018 (\$10M).

Hartwell Foundation Individual Biomedical Investigator Awards: OVPR, together with Corporate and Foundation Relations at Cornell, has made a huge effort to produce better applicants for this program. Of the three proposals submitted in 2018, two were funded (\$600k total for both awards), one of which Kim Holloway (and Carla Ingrando) worked on extensively with the PI (Bethany Cummings, Biomedical Sciences). Weill Cornell received the other award (Lisa Roth, Pediatrics). These two awards also come with “free” postdoctoral awards for the campus, of \$300k total.

WT Grant Foundation: Anna Haskins (Sociology) was awarded a WT Grant Foundation Scholar’s Award (\$350k). Kim Holloway provided research development support.

HHMI Gillam Fellows: Irma Fernandez (Bob Weiss, Biomedical Sciences) and Ferra Pinnock (Susan Daniel, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering) were awarded HHMI Gillam fellowships (\$300k total). Cornell submitted 6 applications, HHMI received 218 applications and made 47 awards. Kim Holloway worked extensively with Avery August and the Grad School to select applicants, review and edit materials to be responsive to the guidelines.

NIH Director’s Early Independence Award: Madhur Srivastava (Chemistry & Chemical Biology) scored well in the DP5 program during peer review at NIH. His proposal has been taken to Council Review with a recommendation for funding, but this will not be decided for a couple more weeks/months. This was his second attempt at the program, and he got a better score than last year. He worked with Kim Holloway on both applications.

American Diabetes Association: Angela Poole (Nutritional sciences) reached the finalist stage of the competition, but was not awarded the prize in this very competitive program.

Blavatnik: One WCM applicant reached the finalist stage of the postdoctoral fellows competition, but did not receive an award.

Schmidt Sciences: One Cornell Ithaca applicant reached the finalist stage, but was not successful.

RAC members and process:

Ex officio Non-voting members:

Emmanuel Giannelis

Kim Holloway (oversees non-Federal competitions, and supports winning proposals)

Carmel Lee (oversees Federal competitions, and supports winning proposals)

Administrative Coordinators: Hayley Kresock (non-Federal), Tracy Gavich (Federal)

Members for 2018-2019

Name	Department	College	LS/PS/SS	Dates	Net ID
Itai Cohen	Physics	CAS	PE	2020	ic64
Lara Estroff (interim Chair)	MSE	ENG	PE	2019	lae37
Hadas Kress- Gazit	MAE	ENG	PE	2020	hk478
Mariana Wolfner	MBG	CAS	LS	2020	mfw5
Pat Reed	CEE	ENG	PS	2020	pmr82
Chris Batten	ECE	ENG	PS	2020	cb535
Chris Wildeman	PAM	CHE	SS	2020	cjw279
Olena Vatamaniuk	SIPS (SCS)	CALS	LS	2021	okv2
Chris Hernandez	MAE & BME	ENG	LS	2021	cjh275
Renata Ivanek	Pop Med	VET	LS	2022	ri25
Cedric Feschotte	MBG	CALS	LS	2022	cf458
Kyle Lancaster	Chemistry	CAS	PS	2022	kml236
Sylvia Lee	MBG	CAS	LS	2022	ssl29
Praveen Sethupathy	Biomedical Sciences	CVM	LS	2022	pr46

LS = Life Sciences

PE = Physical Sciences/Engineering

SS = Social Sciences

Review Process:

- The RAC is categorized into two disciplinary groups: **LS** and **PS**. Limited submissions can typically be categorized as: **L**ife science, **P**hysical science/engineering, or **M**ultidisciplinary. All limited submissions competitions are reviewed by all committee members.
- All RAC members block off every Monday 3-4pm on their calendars for possible meetings.
- RAC members will be notified of review by email from either Kim or Carmel. Kim oversees all Non-Federal competitions, Carmel oversees all Federal competitions. The email will include deadline for review, link to a Cornell Box folder that contains all review materials (guidelines for the proposal, internal proposal requirements, applications and a rankings sheet for reviewers to complete). RAC members are usually given 2-3 weeks to review, unless there is an urgent need for review.
- The Limited Submissions team in OSP will compile the rankings into one spreadsheet ahead of the proposed RAC meeting to discuss, and share this with the RAC Chair to decide if a meeting is necessary – this takes place the Monday of the review deadline.

The meeting is scheduled for 3pm on those Mondays. RAC Chair in consultation with Carmel/Kim will decide if there is need for a meeting. RAC notified by 1pm Mondays if a meeting is needed.

- Carmel/Kim will attend the meeting and will take notes on the review. The RAC Chair runs the meeting, with input on particular programs from Kim/Carmel. RAC Chair will solicit comments on proposals from RAC members, and once top applications have been discussed, will call a vote.
- Following the meeting, Kim/Carmel will collate feedback into a summary for each applicant, and have RAC Chair review (if necessary). Kim/Carmel will send emails to each applicant with feedback and next steps (if applicable).
- NOTE: We are exploring the option of purchasing software for announcement, application submission and review of limited submission competitions.

Conflict of Interest:

It is recognized that members of the RAC will often be significant participants in proposals or closely associated with nominees (e.g., departmental faculty mentor) for various programs evaluated by the RAC. In such cases the RAC member should rank all assigned proposals or nominations except the one with which s/he is associated, and must declare a COI. However, the RAC member may write comments on the rankings sheet related to that specific proposal, and may be asked for their expertise during the RAC review meeting, if pertinent to the review/selection. It is recognized that often those conflicted with an applicant/proposal may be in the best position to review the technical aspects of the proposal.

Attached files:

Excel sheet data on applications

Excel sheet including all LS competitions

Cc: Emmanuel Giannelis, Mary-Margaret Klempa, Carmel Lee, Hayley Kresock, Tracy Gavich, Carla Ingrando.