University Research Committee Meeting
Summary of AY 2020-21 Work

The URC focused on two areas of emphasis this academic year:

1. Launching strategic efforts to enrich the culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the USC research community.
2. Building cooperative relationships between USC researchers and stakeholders who manage how the university meets its obligations to research funding organizations. Developing a culture in which transparency, especially regarding potential conflicts and intellectual property, is a shared responsibility.

Recommendations are being formulated in each area as follows:

Efforts towards DEI

The URC has identified five strategic thrusts in which significant progress can be made in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in the USC research culture and community. We have focused very particularly on those aspects of university policy and environment that have bearing on the experiences of research community stakeholders. These stakeholders include people who perform research, people in the communities in which research is performed, and people who are the subject of research. In this respect, diversity, equity, and inclusion in research must be reflected both in the USC research community and in the subjects and topics of our research.

We have defined "diversity" broadly, working informally with definitions of members of underrepresented groups as outlined in University policy. Our current recommendations, however, are focused on racial justice. Further, while hiring and retention initiatives are essential to diversity and representation in the USC research community, we have not made any specific hiring recommendations, instead choosing to endorse the recommendations made by the President's and Provost's Task Force on Racial Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The strategic thrusts we have identified are as follows:

1. Leverage fellowship funding resources in a manner that recruits and retains a diverse community of PhD students and postdoctoral fellows.
2. Build a culture of transparency and accountability, including developing uniform best practices for reporting and sharing diversity data, providing resources for comparison to peer institutions, and providing training to understand and respond to data.
3. Scrutinize the role of appointment, promotion, and tenure processes in recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty.
4. Recognize the place of Cultural Studies approaches (particularly Black Studies) in the USC research ecosystem.

5. Build and recognize a culture of mentorship.

We are developing a set of recommendations in each of these thrust areas.

<u>Cooperating to meet research obligations and responsibilities</u>

The URC has reached out to leaders in the ethics and compliance infrastructure at USC to develop a set of recommendations on how to create a culture in which meeting compliance obligations to external stakeholders is integrated into the research community. These will include:

1. Providing researchers with electronic resources that allow them to identify compliance issues within their research, answer questions they have about their obligations and responsibilities, locate training resources, and find the places online where they need to update their compliance information.
2. Providing the support systems necessary for researchers to have regular personal interactions with compliance experts such that they can quickly identify a local domain expert and such that these domain experts can efficiently communicate changes in the compliance landscape to the research community.
3. Providing support for improved compliance education and training among the research administration staff.