



To:	Chris Nagel, Speaker of the Faculty
From:	Steven Wood, Chair, Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Policy Committee (RSCAP), 2018-2019
CC:	
Date:	May 6, 2019
RE:	Annual Report of RSCAP, 2018-2019

Members of this year's Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Policy Committee (RSCAPC) were:

Steven Wood (chair)
Melanie Martin (chair-elect)
My Lo Thao (COS)
Abu Mboka (CAHSS)
Jeffrey Bernard (COEKSW)
Gerard Wellman (UEPC rep)
Debra Bukko (GC rep)
Catherine Hannula/John Brandt (Library rep)
R. Mulla (ASI rep)
Chris Nagel (Faculty speaker)
Joyce Bell (Director, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs)

I wish to begin this year-end report by expressing my sincere appreciation to my fellow committee members for their hard work this year. Special thanks go to Ashley Reeves-Huckaby (OSRP) who faithfully, efficiently, and mercifully met our administrative needs. A final thank you goes out to members of the Leaves and Awards Committee (James Youngblom and John Garcia), the Department of Art (Roxanne Robbin and Daniel Edwards), and Provost Kimberly Greer for taking time to meet with the RSCAPC to discuss their RSCA-relevant experiences and expectations.

RSCAPC dedicated the year to an issue that vexed two prior RSCAPCs: what specific recommendations to make for remedying a real or illusory disparity in RSCA awards across the colleges. Our committee initially examined an outstanding item from the previous RSCAPC, a possible recommendation that the composition of the Leaves and Awards Committee be enlarged by adding another College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS) representative. The rationale was that due to the sheer variety of disciplines in the CAHSS, applicants may be at a significant disadvantage when their college representative is from a completely different field. (For example, applicants from the arts could be at significant disadvantage if their college representative is from the social sciences.)

Early on the RSCAPC decided not to pursue further the strategy of modifying LAC's structure. Our committee instead dedicated its efforts to modifying the rubric used by LAC when scoring RSCA proposals. Spirited discussion throughout the year centered around three basic questions. First, all else being equal, should faculty rank (lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor, or full professor) be the determining factor in LAC's decisions to award or not award RSCA grants? RSCA awards can be crucial for junior faculty in terms of getting their research, scholarly, and creative activities off the ground, and these awards are beneficial for purposes of the retention, promotion, and tenure process. However, the committee questioned whether more senior faculty should be denied equally legitimate funding requests to pursue ongoing or new and innovative



research, scholarly, and creative activities. We concluded that senior faculty should not be disadvantaged, that proposals need to be considered based strictly on the merit. Arising from the concern that junior faculty, through mere inexperience writing RSCA proposals, are disadvantaged relative to senior faculty came the possible remedy of a mentoring type program with successful RSCA recipients mentoring first time applicants or applicants unsuccessful in the past. RSCAPC only suggested this mechanism with the understanding that it can be explored further by subsequent RSCAPCs.

Second, all else being equal, should student involvement or lack thereof be a determining factor in LAC's decisions to award or not award RSCA grants? RSCAPC debated this issue repeatedly and ultimately decided that proposals including student involvement are commendable but should not be a deciding factor in terms of who is or is not awarded a RSCA grant. For example, a criminal justice study that includes students in the construction and administration of a survey is worthy of consideration. But an English professor seeking RSCA monies to collect and analyze original source materials with the end goal being a book, who determines that student involvement could very well hinder their scholarly activities, should that professor have lower chances of receiving an RSCA award? Based on our discussions, the answer is a resounding no.

Third, what can RSCAPC do to bring greater objectivity, transparency, and equity to the scoring rubric used by LAC when making funding determinations? We found the present rubric uses three highly subjective, incredibly vague, and contradictory criteria which may contribute to a review process viewed by some faculty as favoring those in particular colleges and academic disciplines to the detriment of everyone else. Preliminary efforts by the 2016-2017 RSCAPC to revise the rubric served as the springboard for the current committee's determined rubric fixing efforts.

In the end, the RSCAPC created a nine criteria rubric with each criterion receiving scores for clarity, significance, and/or feasibility. The *Rating Criteria Sheet for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Grants* contained directions for raters and (we hope) clear definitions for scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 on the respective criteria (see Appendix A). With total proposal scores ranging from 21 to 105, the committee believed the greater variation in scores would reduce, if not eliminate, the risks of the LAC making idiosyncratic funding decisions.

In April 2019 the RSCAPC submitted two documents to the Senate Executive Committee as the prelude to the documents' consideration by the Academic Senate: *Rating Criteria Sheet for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Grants*; and, draft Senate resolution (#/AS/#LAC/RSCA-PC – *Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Policy*) (see Appendices A and B). The Senate Executive Committee refused to allow the documents to go forward to Academic Senate.¹ It is unfortunate that this and past RSCAPCs concerted, determined efforts to bring greater transparency, consistency, objectivity, and simple fairness to how LAC reviews, scores, and recommends RSCA proposals for funding came to naught. Even if next year's Academic Senate approves a version of our policy recommendations, next year's LAC will approach the RSCA review process in a manner--using the same tired scoring rubric that many, including some members of this year's LAC, find vague, confusing, and subjective--that leads to outcomes perceived, accurate or not, as haphazard and downright unfair. And that is unfortunate.

¹ RSCA-PC's policy recommendations were presented to the Academic Senate as an information item at the May 7 senate meeting, after our final year-end report had been submitted to the Academic Senate office and just two days before its presentation at the meeting of the general faculty.

Appendix A

NO: ____

Rating Criteria Sheet for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Grants

Name: _____

Project title: _____

Directions: Each rater will review the *Policy and Procedures for the Award of Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Grants* and will follow approved guidelines for review of proposals and allocation of funding.

Each rater is to independently read and score the submission using the rubric below. Total column score for clarity is a simple sum of criterion scores; total column scores for significance and feasibility have their respective column sums multiplied by 2.0 (rounded to nearest tenth). The total proposal score is a simple sum of the three total column scores. Raters will meet to discuss their scores and resolve scoring discrepancies. Proposals' final scores will be the mathematical average of all raters' total scores (rounded to nearest tenth).

An application's maximum score possible is **105** points. Applications are ranked according to their final scores with awards distributed to the highest ranking applications until available funds are allocated. Partial funding may be awarded.

Evaluation Each criterion is to be scored using the following rubric:

criteria:

	1	2	3	4	5
Clarity	Cannot understand what is being described	In between 1 and 3	Understands what is being described although some questions remain	In between 3 and 5	Understands clearly what is described and has no or only minor questions
Significance	Minimal contribution to the individual's professional development, his or her academic discipline, the university, or the community	In between 1 and 3	Moderate contribution to the individual's professional development, his or her academic discipline, the university, or the community	In between 3 and 5	Maximum contribution to the individual's professional development, his or her academic discipline, the university, or the community

Feasibility	Not doable	In between 1 and 3	May be doable	In between 3 and 5	Clearly doable
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1 = Description lacks clarity, significance, or feasibility. The reviewer cannot understand what is being described (lack of clarity); finds minimal contribution to the individual's professional development, his or her academic discipline, the university, or the community (lack of significance); or, finds what is described not doable (lack of feasibility).

3 = Description has clarity, significance, or feasibility. The reviewer understands what is being described although some questions remain (clarity); finds moderate contribution to the individual's professional development, his or her academic discipline, the university, or the community (has significance); or, finds what is described may be doable (has feasibility).

5 = Description has high clarity, significance, or feasibility. The reviewer understands clearly what is described and has no or only minor questions (high clarity); finds there to be a maximum contribution to the individual's professional development, his or her academic discipline, the university, or the community (high significance); or, finds what is described is clearly doable (high feasibility).

Criteria The proposal's	Clarity (1-5)	Significance (1-5)	Feasibility (1-5)
1. introduction and background assumptions.		n/a	n/a
2. objectives and rationale.			n/a
3. contribution to the applicant's professional development.			n/a
4. contribution(s) to the academic discipline, instructional or curricular enhancements, the university, and/or the community.			n/a
5. process (creative, scholarly) OR methodological (research) considerations.		n/a	
6. anticipated outcome(s) (creative, scholarly) OR data analyses/results (research)		n/a	n/a
7. project timeline.		n/a	
8. budget justification.		n/a	n/a
9. cost estimates.		n/a	
<i>Total Column Summed Score</i>	<u> </u> (Sum)	<u> </u> (Sum)	<u> </u> (Sum)
<i>Total Column Summed Score for Significance and Feasibility multiplied by 2.0 (rounded to nearest tenth)</i>	n/a	<u> </u> (Sum) x 2.0	<u> </u> (Sum) x 2.0

<i>Total Proposal Score (rounded to nearest tenth)</i>	n/a	n/a	<div><div></div><div>(Sum)</div></div>
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Appendix B

#/AS/#LAC/RSCA-PC – Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Policy

RESOLVED THAT: The California State University Stanislaus accepts the attached revision to 14/AS/05 Policy and Procedures for the Award of Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Grants; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT: The attached Policy and Procedures for the Award of Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Grants becomes effective at the start of the 2019-20 Academic Year; and be it further

RESOLVED THAT: The appropriate changes required to reflect this policy be made to the RSCA Call for Proposals and RSCA Award Scoring Criteria, and further that copies of the revised policy, Call for Proposals, and RSCA Award Scoring Criteria [Rating Criteria Sheet for Research, Scholarship, and Creativity Activity Grants] be sent to members of the Leaves and Awards Committee, Deans, and Department Chairs.

RATIONALE: The Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities Policy Committee (RSCA-PC) is charged with periodic review of the RSCA policies, and these recommended changes to policy help to make transparent and to clarify process and expectations for reviewing RSCA proposals and for allocating grant funds.

RSCA-PC has over the past three years worked to address ongoing concerns expressed by certain academic disciplines that the mechanisms by which RSCA awards are granted are opaque, arbitrary or overly subjective, and inequitable. As part of its work, RSCA-PC consulted with LAC, the Art Department, and Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Kimberly Greer, and relied upon committee members' expertise to examine the purposes of RSCA awards, the manner in which awards are made, and the meanings of "scholarly" and "creative" activities in the arts and humanities. The revised Policy and Procedures for the Award of Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Grants seeks to bring greater transparency, objectivity, and fairness to the process by which RSCA awards are made.

The most marked change in the policy is the addition of language to make explicit the purpose of RSCA and the criteria for granting RSCA awards. These additions were made in response to questions and concerns brought forward to the RSCA-PC by faculty and by members of the Leaves and Awards Committee. Specifically, the additions make clear that faculty rank will not be a determining factor in awarding of RSCA grants. This aligns policy and practice with the Unit 3 Collective Bargaining Agreement, specifically section 25.6, which stipulates that "All faculty unit employees are eligible to apply for and receive the Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RSCA) Awards funded by the Chancellor's Office" (p. 102). In addition, the guidelines now stipulate that proposals for creative activities will receive the same consideration as research activities, that assigned time and travel are to receive the same consideration as other requests, and that proposals involving student participation are not to be given more weight than those without student participation.

A second significant change is language to clearly articulate how proposals will be rated based on clarity, significance and feasibility in each of the required proposal sections. The RSCA Award Scoring Criteria document was created to ensure the same criteria is applied when reviewing proposals. In addition, the RSCA Award Scoring Criteria allows for weighted rating of individual proposal components to provide consistency in scoring and reduction of bias as reviewers may not have depth of knowledge in the academic discipline for the proposed RSCA activity.

A third important change is the inclusion of language to stipulate how funding will be allocated for each of the recommended proposals. This addition provides for some degree of funding for all recommended proposals and reduces the burden on LAC members who previously found themselves analyzing line items in proposed budgets and attempting to arrive at fair allocations.

Lastly, a change was made to provide a means of feedback to all applicants without causing undue burden on LAC members. Each applicant, whether funded or not, will receive a copy of the RSCA Award Scoring Criteria with a composite score for each of the components as well as the overall score. This feedback may be beneficial to applicants who choose to pursue future grant opportunities.

Policy and Procedures for the Award of Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity Grants

1. Recommendations for the awards shall be sent to the President or his/her designee by a reviewing committee comprised of the Leaves and Awards Committee, augmented by a graduate student appointed by the ASI President, in consultation with the Graduate Council. A representative appointed by the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs shall serve as the non-voting Executive Secretary of the reviewing committee. The President or his/her designee may approve or not approve the reviewing committee's recommendation. No award shall be made without the reviewing committee's positive recommendation.

2. Purpose and Types of Awards

RSCA grant funding supports faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity which contributes to one or more of the following: the individual's professional development; the academic discipline; the university; the community.

Each year, the reviewing committee, in consultation with the President or his/her designee, shall determine (consistent with system wide guidelines) how the funds shall be allocated. The level of funding for any year shall not preclude the University administration from augmenting the resources provided to the program.

3. Applicant criteria:

Applicant shall:

1. be a Unit 3 employee; and
2. be willing to complete the appropriate reporting documentation; and
3. write a proposal in a style that makes the project comprehensible to a broad university audience.

4. Criteria for the granting of awards:

A. In deciding which proposals to recommend for funding, the Leaves and Awards Committee will apply the following criteria:

- 1) adherence to the preparation guidelines (proposals not following the guidelines will not be recommended); and
 - 2) rank of proposal applicants will *not* be a determining factor in awarding of RSCA grants; and
 - 3) proposals for creative and scholarly activities *will* receive the same consideration as research proposals; and
 - 4) requests for reassigned time or for travel *will* receive the same consideration as other funding requests (e.g., for equipment, supplies) ; and
 - 5) proposals without student participation *will* receive the same consideration as proposals having student participation; and
 - 6) weighted rating of the proposal's clarity, significance and feasibility in each of the following areas and as reflected on the *Rating Criteria Sheet for Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity Grants* document:
 - A. Introduction and background assumptions;
 - B. Objectives and rationale;
 - C. Contribution to the applicant's professional development;
 - D. Contribution(s) to the academic discipline, instructional or curricular enhancements, the university, and/or the community;
 - E. Process (creative, scholarly) OR methodological (research) considerations;
 - F. Anticipated outcome(s) (creative, scholarly) OR data analyses/results (research);
 - G. Project timeline;
 - H. Budget justification; and,
 - I. Cost estimates.
 - 7) A composite RSCA Rating Criteria score reflecting the average of all committee members' individual scores will be generated for each proposal.
- B. The Leaves and Awards Committee will apply the following criteria to allocate available funding to each of the proposals recommended for funding:

1) Using the composite RSCA Rating Criteria score, LAC will recommend that the top 40% of recommended proposals receive 100% of the requested amount. Remaining recommended proposals will be funded according to their composite RSCA Rating Criteria scores and available funds.

5. The awards are conferred on a university-wide basis. Since applications will come from a wide range of disciplines, applicants are encouraged to include letters of support from those who are familiar with the applicant's research, scholarly, or creative activities (e.g. School or College Dean, Department Chair, department or disciplinary colleagues).

6. The reviewing committee, with the administrative assistance of the Executive Secretary, shall provide each applicant with application forms and procedural information. For the purpose of program planning, the applicant shall inform the Department Chair of his/her application.

7. With the administrative assistance of the Executive Secretary, the LAC will provide the composite RSCA Rating Criteria document to each applicant.

Approved by the Academic Senate on ##-##-####

Approved by President Ellen Junn on ##-##-####