

**RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY FACULTY SENATE 2023-2024**

April 16, 2024

Required Composition:

Seven tenure-line faculty members (at least one of whom is a Faculty Senator) elected by the Faculty Senate. Faculty members should represent a minimum of five different colleges/schools, with at least two faculty members at the level of Professor and at least two faculty members at the level of Associate Professor. These seven elected members will serve staggered 3-year terms. Finally, the committee will include one ex-officio member, who is one of the two faculty representatives to the BOV Research committee.

Committee Members:

Charlotte Gill (CHSS – 2024), Tenured Associate Professor, Faculty senator
Rashmi Sadana (CHSS - 2024), Tenured Associate Professor
Amira Roess (CPH - 2025), Tenured Professor
Burak F. Tanyu (CEC – 2025), Tenured Professor, Committee Chair
Jie Zhang (COS – 2025), Tenured Professor, Faculty senator
John Dale (CHSS - 2026), Tenured Associate Professor, Faculty senator
7th membership – Vacant

Ex-officio members

Alison Landsberg (CHSS - 2024), Tenured Professor, BOV Research Committee Faculty Representative
Tara Chaplin (CHSS - 2024), Tenured Associate Professor, BOV Research Committee Faculty Rep.

The membership of the committee is being tracked by the Organization and Operations (O&O) and Nominations committees. This year, we have operated as one member short and only represented 4 different colleges. The ex-officio members have rotated in attending the committee’s meetings.

Charge of the Committee: To work in concert with the Office of Research and its subsidiary offices (e.g., Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, Office of Sponsored Programs), as well as the Associate Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, in shaping the research initiatives and policies of the university. The committee will serve in an advisory capacity to the Vice President of Research, the Associate Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, and associated offices.

In this role, the committee will meet at least twice per semester with the Vice President (VP) of Research, and as needed with other individuals and offices. The committee will provide a report on its activities to the Faculty Senate at least annually.

Summary of Committee Activities in 2023-24:

The committee reached out to Vice President of Research, Dr. Andre Marshall, and met for the first time in October 2023. Dr. Marshall has agreed to meet with the Research Advisory Committee at least twice per semester. In 2023-2024 academic year, the committee met with Dr. Marshall 6 times. The following items were discussed with Dr. Marshall:

- GMU's strategic plan as it relates to research, challenges associated with GMU being a maturing top tier University, and ideas to brand the work achieved by GMU researchers.
- Dr. Marshall's vision for GMU research activities and the community. Committee members also shared their perspective.
- Importance of GMU's Research 1 (R1) status and capacity challenges within GMU to retain and foster research faculty.
 - Virginia has five R1 institutions, three of which are classified as access-oriented institutions (meaning they accept 90% of their applicants). Thus, to be a destination University, good and inclusive education is not enough. Name recognition requires a wide range of activities and research is one of the pillars contributing to name recognition.
 - Even though GMU is an R1 institute, some faculty feel 'looked down upon' by other R1 colleagues. Recognition of research achievements is required at both the faculty and student levels and both internally and externally.
- The need for open dialogue between faculty and administrators to discuss the need for clear directions for GMU's research activities as they relate to scholarship, partnership, and translation. What it takes to create new knowledge, relevancy, and scalability, and to have impact via discoveries, engagement of community, and commercialization.
- The need for open dialogue between faculty and administrators to discuss the need for clear directions for GMU's research support as they relate to infrastructure, services, and culture.
 - As the administration grows, the workload on faculty does not appear to be easing, and in some cases is increasing. Clear policies spelling out the differences and areas of overlap in administrative and faculty responsibilities may help grow more research and retain talent (both faculty and students).
 - For example, increasing enrollment, attracting faculty and student talent, providing strong assistance in proposal submission, etc. are administrative responsibilities but developing research ideas, leading research efforts, discoveries, etc. are led by faculty. Nurturing the appropriate culture to support research is a joint responsibility between administration and faculty/students.

The committee also reached out to Interim Provost Dr. Ken Walsh and met with him in December 2023. The following items were discussed:

- Importance of being excellent in research as an institution and how this requires faculty, students, and administration to work together.
- The RAMP system does not appear to be making the research faculty's life easier and requires significant effort by the faculty, resulting in faculty spending less time developing innovative ideas and seeking external funds for the institution, and more time on administrative paperwork.
- The Fairfax campus does not have graduate student housing, yet these students play a major role in research. Importance of creating a campus environment in which students want and are able to spend more time.

- Importance of increasing recognition of faculty and students for their contributions and achievements.
- Challenges associated with hardline policy for not hiring replacement faculty at department levels, and navigating the delicate balance between hiring and enrollment.
- Importance of acknowledging the impact of inflation on buying power and inflation-based salary adjustments.
- Developing well-established workload policies to create a merit-based system to acknowledge faculty who have exceptional performance to be compensated beyond the inflation adjustment rate.

Summary of Findings:

GMU has been excelling significantly and consistently in research over the last five years in terms of the external funds that the faculty has been able to secure, level of research expenditures, and the number of PhDs we produce. In parallel to this, GMU has also been significantly increasing the PhD programs offered. Based on these parameters, it appears that if the expected changes for the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education are announced (making the R1 status more accessible to many more Universities), GMU will be well-positioned to retain this status. However, the expected changes to the Carnegie Classifications will also increase the number of institutions that will be included in this ranking. Therefore, being an R1 institution (although still very important) may not be enough to become the destination University for research.

To continue to excel, GMU appears to be well-positioned to focus on building name recognition as it relates to research, attracting new and retaining existing talent, and strengthening the culture of research cultivation. The following actions have been taken related to these goals:

- The Research Advisory Committee invited Dr. Marshall to share his vision with the GMU faculty during the Faculty Senate meeting in January 2024.
- Dr. Marshall has invited a member of the Research Advisory committee to attend his Research Council meetings. This is a significantly positive step to connect the administrators and institution leadership with the faculty representatives who report to the Faculty Senate and VP of Research.

Proposed Committee Action Items for 2024-25

- The committee will recruit 3 new members. If possible, it would be ideal for each of the new recruit to come from CEHD, CVPA, and COB. With the 2024-2025 continuing members being from CEC, COS, CPH, and CHSS, a focus on nominations from these schools would allow the Research Advisory Committee to represent most of Mason's colleges.
- Continue to meet with Dr. Marshall as a Research Advisory Committee.
- Early in the semester, meet with the Office of Sponsored Research Program team lead(s) and staff to discuss RAMP system. Dr. Marshall will help initiate the connection.
- Continue to attend Dr. Marshall's Research Council Meeting with the goal of potentially having some allocated time to cultivate dialogs between the administrators and researchers
- Focus on developing ideas to help increase research visibility internally and externally
- Engage Faculty Senate and faculty members in each college to seek feedback and involvement

Appendix

1. During the past calendar year has the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President (or their respective offices) announced initiatives or goals or acted upon issues that fall under the charge of your Committee? If so, was your Committee consulted by the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President in a timely manner before the announcement or action? If not, do you believe your Committee should have been consulted? Would it have been helpful to have had the input of your Committee from the outset?

Please see above report content

2. Did your Committee seek information or input from the President, Provost, or Senior Vice President or members of their staffs? If so, did they respond adequately and in a timely manner?

Please see above report content

3. Please suggest how you believe the President, Provost, Senior Vice President and/or their staffs might more effectively interact with your Committee in the future, if necessary.

Please see above report content

4. Please relate any additional information you may have regarding interactions between your Committee and the President, Provost, Senior Vice President, or their staff.

N/A