

Research Incentive Funds

Proposed Processes for Evaluation of Investments and Outcomes

The Research Incentive Funds (RIF) policies were put in place to return a portion of the F&A recovered from grants and contracts awarded to the campus for faculty research, instruction and public services projects. This return represents an investment in the faculty to provide support for their research efforts and to incentivize new research and scholarship opportunities that will enhance MU's national research stature. F&A, like other revenue streams from state allocations, student tuition and other miscellaneous sources, are collected centrally and then distributed as a part of the annual budgeting process. RIF represents a proportion of those F&A revenues returned directly to the academic units that produced them. The MU RIF policies have been in effect for over two decades on the MU campus without a thorough review of the policies and processes for incentivizing faculty productivity and of the return on the investments.

The faculty-driven process for evaluating RIF policies and procedures is currently under development. This document outlines the scope of the evaluation and a hypothetical timeline for getting immersed in these processes – it is likely to take longer for some questions but the important point is that it has to begin now. We will initiate generic processes that first require data gathering, then involve faculty, chairs and deans in a task force format to analyze the data and make recommendations about the paths forward.

1. Data gathering step (almost complete)
 - a. What resources have been invested in the initiative?
 - b. How do individual colleges and departments/divisions distribute these resources?
 - c. What has been the grants and contracts productivity over the past 10-15 years of the program?
 - d. Are there any measurable correlations between the investment plan and return?
 - e. What other factors are relevant to designing and implementing the plan going forward?
2. Assemble a task force of faculty, department chairs, research administrators (10-12 members who can relate to as many corners of the campus as possible) – recommendations from Council of Research Administrators (CRA), Faculty Council, Deans, Provost.
3. Begin discussion in June 2017 with data dump and inventory of relevant questions to address – for example (compiled from faculty, chairs and deans):
 - a. What are current RIF accounts used for? Is there a more productive use of the funds?
 - b. What are most important uses of RIF from faculty perspective? Can we meet these needs by a different plan?
 - c. Should campus institute a consistent distribution process rather than the current localized variation – should colleges be in the pipeline?
 - d. How effective have these RIF distributions been in incentivizing faculty to pursue new research and scholarship opportunities?
 - e. Should campus continue the program?

4. By end of summer, begin discussions with the Chancellor, Provost and Deans Council on the deliberations of this task force – objective would be to define the path forward before the next round of budget planning (FY19).

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