

Research Committee

Minutes of 5th April 2002

Present: Michael Gibney (Dean of Research), Doris Alexander, Deirdre Savage, Elizabeth Drew (GSU), Clive Williams, David Dickson, John Dillon, John Fitzpatrick, Jim Sexton, Margaret O'Mahony

In attendance: Maria Treanor

Apologies: Hilary Tovey, Dermot Kelleher, Sheila Greene

1. Apologies

Apologies noted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 1st March 2002

Minutes approved and signed by Chairperson.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Research Centres

The Senior Lecturer will be reporting on research centres.

3.2 Research Strategy

Research strategy could encompass prioritising, priority centres and developing outreach activities. M Gibney circulated a document from J Dillon concerning outreach centres, and this will go on the agenda of the next meeting. It was suggested that the Communications Office might be able to deal with the mechanics of this aspect of the research strategy.

3.3 Good Research Practice

The good research practice document is on the web and comments received are also available on the web for all to view.

3.4 Research Information Database

Work is on-going on the research information database and IS Services are currently developing a common look and feel to all TCD IT systems. It was noted that having access to up-to-the-minute reports would help returns on projects. The "InfoEd" system that many universities have adopted is still under review by TCD.

4. Berkeley Fellowships

At the last meeting, it was suggested that the Dean of Research would organise a dinner and invite the Year One Berkeley Fellows and members of the Research Committee to attend. The Research Office will find out if the Provost or Communications Office is available to host this although it may be preferable to ask the fellows to organise this.

A sub-committee of the Research Committee held a meeting on Wednesday 3rd April 2002 to review the Year Three Berkeley Fellowship applications, and will meet again next week to examine the external evaluators' comments and marks. It was felt that that there would be enough in the budget to fund eight fellowships this year. The sub-committee want to ensure that the reviewers' ranking is reasonable, and will rank according to the external reviewers' marks unless they find compelling reasons to do otherwise. The results of the meeting will be circulated to the rest of the Research Committee.

The Committee agreed that it will be difficult to make a decision this year. It was agreed that the criteria for future Berkeley Fellowship applicants and reviewers may be changed. Internal reviewing by the Research Committee should, for example, start in November as soon as the Year Four applications have been received. If someone is not able to take up the Berkeley Fellowship this year, the money saved will go towards the Maintenance Grant.

5. Maintenance Incentive Research Scheme

The Committee agreed that the Maintenance Grant has done a lot of good in College, although there has only been a 50% usage of the funding allocation to date. M Gibney will write to Heads of Departments and to all academic staff to remind them that they should already have spent the Year One allocation from the Maintenance / Incentive Research Scheme, and that Year One funds may be taken back and re-allocated if not spent by 31st May 2002.

The Committee agreed that it would be necessary to change the conditions for Year Three. It was suggested that if individuals have not spent the grant in one year, they should not be eligible for a grant the following year. If they are in receipt of funding above a certain figure or from certain organisations, perhaps such applicants would be ineligible although this could exclude EU grants which do not provide funding for pieces of hardware. The Committee could consider areas in College where not much funding is available. Staff could apply for a €2k grant or be interviewed for a possible €5k grant. Those who receive start-up funding will not be eligible for a maintenance grant in the same year. Those who receive the Maintenance Grant will be asked to indicate briefly why they want the money and how they have spent the previous allocation.

The Committee suggested that the number of Year Three maintenance grants awarded should be reduced on a voluntary basis to make more money available for those who do receive Maintenance Grants, as well as for Berkeley Fellowships and sabbaticals. M Gibney will receive feedback from Heads of Departments on how they feel the

scheme is operating, and will report back to the Committee. D Savage will check the situation by faculty in conjunction with the Research Office. M Gibney will circulate a note to academic staff about the Year Three Maintenance Grant.

6. Start-up Fund

The three members of Zoology who received start-up funding have requested and received clarification on how the funding decision was made. There may be a need to change the way start-up funding is allocated in Year Four, and M Gibney will meet with the staff of the Research Office to discuss this.

7. Status of Postdoctoral Students

M Gibney has written to the College Secretary to open up the whole area of status of postdoctoral students.

8. Science Foundation Ireland

The Committee accepted one nomination each from Werner Blau (Prof. H.-H. Horhold, University of Jena, Germany) and Jagdish Vij (Prof. Atsuo Fukuda, Shinshu University, Japan) for the Science Foundation Ireland E. T. S. Walton Visitor Awards.

The concept of a centre for SFI Principal Investigators was discussed. The Dean of Research and the Provost are supporting the creation of a centre which could grow up to 20 PIs (some SFI). These would be matched with other non-PIs in College resulting in about three to four hundred people in this area in College. The centre would cost approximately €30m.

In general, there will be no restriction on others who wish to propose their own centre application. Individual centres, which are not linked to space, could obtain funding of €1m to €5m of which 20% must be invested by industry. All discussions with industry would go through the Director of Innovation Services, Eoin O'Neill. Any centre application with space implications would have to go through the Bursar, Head of Department and Director of Buildings. There should be associated entrepreneur and intellectual property courses, and graduate schools in the application. A successful approach is likely to be inter-institutional and interdisciplinary in nature.

M Gibney will send a letter to the research community in College outlining the rules for developing and submitting centre applications. Any proposal should be an outstanding idea with very clear goals of what will be achieved. There should also be a very clear partnership with industry.

The main SFI thrust at present is the Investigator Programme with grants which will average €250k over four years.

9. High Performance Computing

Deferred until the next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

External nominees for the Committee will be discussed at the next meeting. It was suggested that this could be done by two people on a rotating basis e.g. someone from the ESRI and CHIU or CIRCA.

The next meeting will take place in the Board Room, No. 1 College Green at 2 p.m. on Friday 3rd May 2002.

Signed: _____

Date: _____