May 27, 2015

HARRIS LEWIN
Vice Chancellor
Office of Research

RE: Davis Divisional Response: Air Quality and Research Center (AQRC) 5-Year Review

The Organized Research Unit (ORU) Air Quality Research Center (AQRC) 5-year Review report was forwarded to all Davis Division of the Academic Senate standing committees and Faculty Executive Committees from the schools and colleges. Responses were received from the Graduate Council (GC) and the Committees on Research (COR), and Planning and Budget (CPB).

The Academic Senate acknowledges the great work that has been done at the AQRC both for the environment and for individuals directly and indirectly involved. The AQRC has a history for high functionality with strong faculty and well documented success on many fronts. Specific comments included:

- There is concern about declining extramural research funding given the AQRC had only one grant and it is expired.

- In part, ORUs should drive increased faculty participation. This does not appear to be happening. AQRC needs to develop a strategy for increasing faculty participation.

- As a review of the AQRC's success and activities, the report was very thorough, but there is no specific section on the support that AQRC needs from campus, nor what specific positions would be most needed (complimentary expertise). What campus resources are currently provided, and what changes would be helpful? The information is provided in part by addressing the possibilities of combining AQRC and the Crocker Lab given the organizations share a Director. COR is unanimous in its opinion that the center should remain independent of John Muir.

- AQRC needs to raise awareness among UC Davis graduate students about the opportunities for graduate research and training provided by AQRC.   AQRC may wish to consider use of an online forum, targeted e-mails, and an event series aimed at generating student interest in the activities.

- There is a need to create a cohesive community of graduate students that is associated with AQRC, and promote student networking activities. This could include supporting and reviving student run seminars, specific events addressing students and emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches, social events, and creating a supportive alumni network.

- Strengthen interdisciplinary curricula and work towards enhanced diversity of the participating students. Student teaching needs to be maintained at a high level.

- In order to receive a graduate student training grant, it appears more AQRC engagement efforts are needed.

- The review discussed creating Chinese experts trained at UC Davis who could return to China and have a significant impact on air quality policy. Is there any solicitation of funds from China to support specific students (graduate) to this effect?

- It would have been helpful for the review to include: which specific policy changes at the State or national level came about because of the research or other activities of the AQRC? How has (or will) air quality been improved as a result of these activities (from a layperson perspective)? Do we have cleaner air now due to these activities?

- Is AQRC getting credit when the media highlights its activity? Given the critical importance of air quality to the nation and world it seems that the AQRC should strive to enhance its visibility.

Overall, there are differences of opinion concerning whether AQRC should remain an ORU. There was concern that once a center exists over a long period of time, new interactions/collaborations occur less frequently, so centers (as well as departments) should have a perpetual plan for looking across campus for novel interactions and new faculty affiliates. AQRC seems to rely on the networking talents of the current director. While both COR and GC believe that the AQRC should remain an ORU, CPB did not feel that the center's ORU status should continue. However, discontinuance of the ORU status should not displace active faculty participants.

Sincerely,

André Knoesen, Chair
Davis Division of the Academic Senate
Professor: Electrical and Computer Engineering