January 27, 2015

LINDA KATEHI, CHANCELLOR
HARRIS LEWIN, VICE CHANCELLOR--RESEARCH

Re: UC Davis Core Research Facilities and Resources Report

Consultation process: In August 2014 Vice-Chancellor Lewin presented the Academic Senate with the UC Davis Core Research Facilities and Resources report prepared by the UC Davis Core Committee February 24, 2014; and informed us of subsequent decisions on the governance structure made by his office. In order to speed the consultation within the Academic Senate, after an initial review of the UC Davis Core Research Facilities and Resources Report by the Committee on Research (COR) as well as subsequent administrative implementation details, their report became available to Vice-Chancellor Lewin as ad-hoc member, and COR's report along with associated material were distributed on October 31, 2014 to the Academic Senate standing committees and the Faculty Executive Committee in each college and school for their inputs to the UC Davis Core Research Facilities and Resources Report.

Responses were received from Graduate Council, Committee on Planning and Budget and the Faculty Executive Committees from the College of Biological Sciences and Letters and Science.   COR's report to the Division follows.   Detailed comments received from the committees are summarized following COR's report.   All feedback received informed the Davis Division position articulated at the end of this document.

COR Report: COR reviewed and discussed in detail the Core Research Facilities and Resources Report. The committee was asked to comment on the report and recommendations, including the revised governance structure as well as a list of questions provided in the September 30, 2014 letter from Vice Chancellor Lewin. In addition, COR was asked to review and comment on the position descriptions for the proposed Faculty Director of Campus Core Facilities and Associate Director of Campus Core Facilities. Comments are included below for each item.

Core Research Facilities and Resources Report

1. **Does the proposed (revised) organizational structure have appropriate authority, accountability and responsibility to execute the recommendations of the report? Are there merits to the proposed alternative governance structures that should be considered?**

COR believes the proposed governance structure is sound. The committee sees the benefit of a 3-year director stint in part because then a candidate can step back to their own research and lab once completing a rotation as director. However, the committee wonders how successful we will be in attracting candidates to serve for this short a time, and whether the learning curve will be so steep and take too large a fraction of time initially that it will undermine the director's success. This plan will be most successful if the Director, Associate Director, and advisory committee work very closely together, i.e. COR strongly recommends that the advisory committee be active as opposed to basically only consulted once a year or so (at least at first).

2. **What should the level of faculty representation on RCAC be to ensure a balance between campus disciplinary expertise and communication with COR and the faculty it represents?**

The majority of the Research Core Advisory Council (RCAC) should be faculty, >75%. COR members would like to know how large the Office of Research is envisioning this council to be. The RCAC as well as the search committees for the Director and Associate Director should have a COR representative from the Academic Senate and the Academic Federation. Some COR members are concerned that the RCAC will be appointed and "hand-picked" by the Vice Chancellor for Research. Therefore, there should be clear guidelines and criteria for how people are appointed to the RCAC.

3. **Will the proposed business practices and policies result in transparent finances and accounting, professional service, customer satisfaction, reduced duplication, and long-term sustainability of a campus-wide cores program?**

Will the recharge rate be similar for both service vs. research based core facilities? Will the latter only be possible with a large grant and collaboration with core faculty or could new researchers with core vouchers have enough access to do independent research?

4. **Will the proposed mechanisms for promoting the core facilities program result in wide-spread acceptance of the program among the faculty, staff and students, as well as potential external customers?**

If all goes as proposed, COR believes the campus could expect increased acceptance and use of the facilities over time.

5. **In the event that faculty are not supportive of decisions made, what mechanisms and authority allow them to express such concerns to RCAC and what avenues should exist for the RCAC to advise on appropriate responses to such faculty concerns?**

Options could include formal places to express anonymous or self-identified concerns on a webpage, options to attend open public meetings of the RCAC, an annual report from COR (after inviting faculty comments), and all of the above.

6. **What other limiting factors might negatively affect the implementation of the plan? What additional resources are necessary to expand support for the core facilities program and accelerate its implementation?**

COR sees a source of objection being wariness that such a plan is needed, given the expense. However the report admirably highlights the redundancy and inefficiency already in place: if nothing else we will benefit from compiling all core facilities' capacity, contact info etc. into one web page. Originally, some COR members thought faculty might be concerned that some under-subscribed core facilities may be eliminated or forced into an unwelcome business model that doesn't really suit research or service purposes but the committee realizes now that actually such facilities can stay in business and the core facilities "core" will actually only comprise 8-10 facilities. So then one asks, does this program have enough impact if it still leaves dozens of facilities outside the fold? Faculty may be concerned that the cores can administer themselves without added bureaucracy and may want quantitative persuasion that this will SAVE money and work, vs. adding costs and paperwork. COR agrees that the core facilities group should strongly consider expanding and becoming more inclusive over time.

The proposed core structures are reasonable although a couple of very important cores are missing that could seriously affect how research is done on campus. One is the TEM microscopy imaging core. Right now multiple departments own several TEMs and these expensive instruments are inaccessible to many researchers. From the perspectives of training students, providing courses, and streamlining machine time, a central core would make sense, even if the core owns the instruments across campus, i.e. this would be an example of a core with nodes or satellite core facilities. The second is the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) core. A central core would make more sense but a few satellite nodes or cores would be necessary. Both of these satellite cores should be listed under Analytical Core.

We do have a lot of instruments and equipment available on campus and if we can integrate them into a network like the core facility, then we could multiply our productivity by many fold as most of the instruments are idling (COR assumes, because we can use in off peak hours, for example, to increase usage rate). However, COR would like to see a first round of a limited number of core facilities transition to the new program so that the campus can collect data to see how we improve and expand.

Finally, COR is concerned that some animal facilities (i.e., Animal Science, Mouse Biology) are included in the list of core facilities while TRACs is not included. Although there was discussion of this issue at the COR meeting, some participants were left with the impression that the overall core facilities list was a first draft that needed some revision, specifically that some units represent themselves as a core facility or as HAVING a core facility, and that the list will be refined. COR members raised the concern that animal facilities should be considered core facilities. Given the ongoing discussions and concerns regarding suitable animal facilities, COR strongly recommends that this be discussed before the program is implemented.

7. **Are all the human resources issues appropriately identified so that the cores will provide state-of-the art services and be run in a highly professional manner?**

With the added positions (1.5 FTE), COR would like to see a more accurate tally of how much the new system will save over the old one. For example, how many staff members will be let go if the core is created. Or will the savings come from expanded services and future grants this new core facility may get that otherwise cannot be obtained without such a core facility? *The report did not include a financial analysis, although it was mentioned in the report that this was already done.*

8. **Does the plan include appropriate metrics for success of the individual facilities and the program overall? If not, what additional measures are suggested?**

The report does not specifically touch on how the RCAC will evaluate good practice. It is important that high quality products come from the cores, as they aim to function both in service and research capacities. Clarifying metrics to assess the balance between research, service, and student training, as well as quality control, will be important tasks for the core facilities leadership and RCAC.

Position Description – Faculty Director of Campus Core Facilities

COR assumes that the Academic Senate is one of the "stakeholders", but the committee requests that to be explicitly spelled out in the position description. In the sentence, "In consultation with the VCR and other stakeholders... develop process for selecting core facilities", COR requests changing to: "In consultation with VCR, Academic Senate, and other stakeholders…" This seems like a huge job, given that the candidate only does this for a few years, has to be an excellent grant writer, have administrative experience, be a highly productive scientist, and have extensive knowledge of instrumentation. COR is

not sure what caliber of candidate the campus may be able to attract and how many such people we can find, and whether it will be realistic to rotate such individuals off every 3 years.

Position Description – Associate Director of Campus Core Facilities

COR has no particular comments on this position description as it is already well in motion and a possible candidate has already been identified. However, with the proposed core facilities model, such a position does seem necessary.

Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB): CPB endorsed the response provided by COR. CPB emphasized COR's point that some facilities were not included in the provided list. Some of those facilities are managed by Budget and Institutional Analysis rather than the Office of Research. There should be some mechanism by which issues that transcend administrative boundaries can be discussed collaboratively. CPB also noted that some core facilities are struggling and the campus should develop guidelines or best practices on how to survive and provide adequate service for the faculty.

College of Letters and Science: College of Letters and Science endorsed COR's response, in addition, the College of Letters and Science pointed out it is not clear how facilities were determined to be a "core facility. While there are certainly some advantages to having a facility considered "core," there are also possible disadvantages -- for instance, loss of control over prioritization. (A facility that recharges, for instance, cannot turn anyone away.) If a facility is established, paid for, and run by a department or a group of PIs, can the department or PIs opt out of being considered "core"? Or is this going to be decided centrally (how?) with no choice by the individuals involved in establishing and running the facility?

Graduate Council: Graduate Council expressed concern that the reports lacks good justification that a central core would enhance student training and courses, and arguments could be made that a more segmented facilities management plan might provide better student training and course development/administration. Graduate student training should also be included in the return on investment section. In addition, Graduate Council recommends adding representatives from the Graduate Student Association, Academic Federation and Post-Doctoral Scholars Association to the RCAC.

Mathematical and Physical Science (MPS) Steering Committee: The MPS Steering Committee questioned whether hiring more high-level administrative staff might be duplicative of what existing staff and faculty directors already do or could provide. Without a careful strategy the proposed scenario could create parallel administration and be overly cumbersome. They also propose that it would be wise to carry out a financial analysis prior to implementing report recommendations.

Davis Division position: Based on the above, it appears there are still issues to be resolved before moving forward, and we request that attention be given to the issues raised. In addition, the Academic requests a response to the issues listed below:

To Chancellor Katehi: The campus needs a comprehensive approach to providing research support services. While we recognize reviewing all core facilities is a major undertaking and difficult to manage given the current complex organizational and fiscal structures, one underlying problem is the associated lack of coordinated effort to eliminate redundancy and increase efficiencies. Here is an example were one administrative structure is being created to solve a subset of the larger problem. While the initiative to do so is commendable, the campus must stop addressing these issues haphazardly, and initiate a coordinated approach to identify all research support structures that require a coordinated effort, and then decide what the best coordinated management structure will be and how it will be executed. The omission of animal facilities from the review, report and plan underscores our

concern. The campus needs an overall/coordinated review and management strategy independent of which administrative unit holds responsibility for oversight.   The Academic Senate's COR has repeatedly stated the need for a coordinated review and improvement strategy. The issue is moving toward being acute if the campus is successful in hiring new faculty.   The reliance on research support services addressed in the report as well as those omitted will be key to our new colleague's success. If the campus does not resolve the issues, we run the risk of negatively impacting our ability to retain excellent scholars and our national/international ranking.

To Vice-Chancellor of Research, Harris Lewin: The Academic Senate wants to know how a central core would enhance graduate student training and courses.

Sincerely,

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