

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

March 25, 2024

TO: Dr. Bernardo Pohl, President, UHD Faculty Senate
UHD Faculty Senate

FROM: Dr. Deborah E. Bordelon 
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs

RE: Response to Faculty Senate Resolution - SR 24-01 Date: 03/05/2024

I am in receipt of the Faculty Senate Resolution 24-01, which was approved by the Faculty Senate on March 5, 2024. In the resolution, there is a concern expressed about the operations of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs during January 2023-January 2024. It is important to note that I am very aware of the issues that have occurred and have been addressing them since I was made aware of the concerns.

I provided information to Faculty Senate at Senate meetings in January, February, and March to answer questions and provide updates on actions being taken to address the issues.

In addition, the following actions have taken place to address these issues:

Personnel changes in the office have occurred. The former Director of Post Award Services is no longer with the university. Ms. Heather Davis, who previously worked in the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, has rejoined UHD as the Temporary Director for Compliance and Post Award Services. Ms. Davis will be with us full-time starting March 25, but worked part-time during the prior two weeks as she transitioned from her Post-Award Services position at Simmons College. We are meeting on a regular basis to review what is needed in grant reporting, effort reporting and Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) reporting. We will post the permanent position soon. Ms. Davis will be eligible to apply for the permanent position.

We are also working with the Registry to bring in a temporary Executive Director or AVP for Research and Graduate Studies to provide oversight. The Registry is an organization that offers pre-screened, veteran executives who are immediately available to be matched to the needs and requirements of an institution. The individuals who are in the Registry have served successfully in these roles but have retired and are able to provide leadership while the institution is seeking a permanent replacement. The Registry Associates are not eligible for the permanent position but can provide the needed leadership in the transition period. We will work on posting the permanent position and starting the search for the permanent position in the beginning of the fall 2024 semester.

Dr. Quander will be working with the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) to ensure that we are in compliance with IRB standards. This will involve changing the committee's name to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and ensuring that the IRB

membership includes a member not affiliated with the University of Houston-Downtown, such as a community member. The policy on Human Subjects will also need to be updated.

In addition, Ms. Thali Guerrero has reviewed all grants and related cost centers. We have grants with cost centers that need to be closed out that date back to 2004. Ms. Guerrero is working with the Budget Office to close out these cost centers. We are also working with the Budget Office to ensure the smooth and timely creation of new cost centers as new grants are awarded.

We have a working document outlining all current grants and a monthly spreadsheet with all reports due for each respective month. Moving forward, this will assist in being proactive in submitting reports on a timely basis. We are exploring technology solutions to streamline this process. We have also been working with the individual PIs as questions have evolved. If there are any issues, we encourage the PIs to reach out to me so that we can address the respective concern as quickly as possible.

There were some questions raised in the resolution about the process used for hiring the consultants. All UHD and UHS protocols were followed in the process. Each of the consultants have held leadership roles in ORSP offices with each consultant having over 20 years of ORSP experience. We should receive a draft of the report from the on-campus ORSP review by April 1st with the final report by April 15. The consultants' insights and recommendations will assist in strengthening UHD's ORSP operations, processes, and policies.

The work of the Faculty Senate and the faculty and staff of the University of Houston-Downtown is valued and greatly appreciated. When we work together, we are able to move forward with policies and procedures that support and enhance the work of our faculty, staff, and students. I look forward to our continued collaborative work in bringing UHD to even greater success with faculty research, scholarship, and creative activities.