Report of the Senate Committee on Research
13 April 2016

I. Original Committee Charge

> "The Committee on Research shall be responsible for stimulating, assisting and coordinating the various University groups interested in research. It shall also observe and report on research activities with respect to the maintenance of principles of academic freedom and open disclosure of research findings. It shall recommend policy regarding research leaves. It shall strive to promote a proper balance between research and teaching."
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> **Source:** BYLAWS OF THE SENATE OF SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, Article V. Standing Committees, Section 14, as amended during the 2006-2007 session of the University Senate

II. 2015-16 Charge

In September 2015, our Committee learned that the Senate Agenda Committee had referred the following matter to us for consideration:

> Academic Strategic Plan: to Committees on Academic Affairs, Budget and Fiscal Affairs, Curricula, Instruction, Library, Research, for their individual perspectives of the relevant parts of the report. The Academic Strategic Plan and related information can be found at http://fastforward.syr.edu/strategic-plan/.
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> Please feel free to confer with the Provost and other members of the Agenda Committee as you work on this matter. Please give priority to this issue and present your report to the Agenda Committee when you complete your work on it.

Since our committee work in AY 2014-15 had focused on opportunities and challenges associated with undergraduate research opportunities at SU, we decided to continue with that focus and to attend to issues related to undergraduate research in the implementation of the Academic Strategic Plan (ASP).

III. Committee Work

Our committee meets monthly. Below is a description of our work in AY 2015-16.

- In September and October 2015, we reviewed and discussed the ASP, seeking parts that overlapped with our own charge of addressing issues related to research. We explored a

number of ways that our committee could address initiatives in the ASP and ultimately decided to continue our focus on undergraduate research opportunities.

- In October 2015, Committee Chair Jamie Winders reached out to the chair of the Discovery Implementation Working Group (Radhakrishna Sureshkumar), seeking ways for our Committee to work with theirs. Sureshkumar agreed to contact Winders when the Discovery Implementation group was underway and to add coordinating with other committees, like ours, to their agenda.

- In November 2015, we met with multiple actors working on undergraduate research initiatives at SU. Those actors include…

    - **Kate Hanson (Honors Program)** and **Jolynn Parker (Center for Fellowship and Scholarship Advising)** – Hanson and Parker have been exploring ways to enhance and institutionalize undergraduate research opportunities at SU. Our committee met with them after they attended a national conference on creating centers for undergraduate research.

    - **Jack Gugel** and **Jason Kuperberg** – Gugel and Kuperberg, two SU undergraduates, are creating a research journal devoted to undergraduate work. This journal would complement existing publication outlets like the History Department's *Chronos*, which publishes undergraduate research in history. Gugel and Kuperberg also founded the Syracuse Undergraduate Research Society (SURS), now registered as an official SU student organization.

    - **Judy O'Rourke (Center for Fellowship & Scholarship Advising/Academic Programs) –** O'Rourke has long been involved in undergraduate initiatives and shared her work on the Meeting of the Minds (MOM) ACC Conference, to be held at SU in April 2016.

- In December 2015, we were still waiting to meet with members of the Discovery Implementation Group. Since our charge from the Agenda Committee was to work with/on the ASP, we decided to put our work, and meetings, on hold until we heard from the Implementation Working Groups.

- In December 2015, Winders reached out to the chairs of the Student Experience Implementation Group (Rochelle Ford and Terra Peckskamp), asking to meet with them and coordinate our committee's work with theirs.

- In January 2016, we had still not heard from either Implementation Group (Discovery or Student Experience) concerning a meeting. Thus, we cancelled our January meeting.

- In February 2016, Winders again reached out the chairs of both the Student Experience and Discovery Implementation Groups. The chairs of the Student Experience group (Ford and Peckskamp) asked to attend our February meeting to share their work on university-wide core competencies and learning outcomes. At this meeting, key aspects of both our committee's work in AY 2014-15 and the Student Experience group's work this year were discussed.

III. Concluding Comments

From our first meeting in Fall 2015, we were concerned about the duplication of effort between the ASP Implementation Groups and our own committee work. As we learned, there were multiple Working Groups tasked with implementing parts of the ASP related to undergraduate research opportunities, especially the groups associated with the Student Experience and Discovery. The Implementation Groups did not fully form until late in Fall 2015 and then had a very condensed timeline within which to work.

As a result, we had no opportunity to meet with the Student Experience Implementation Group before they formulated their recommendations. We were never able to meet with anyone from the Discovery Implementation Group, despite multiple requests from Winders to meet with them.

Although our committee had a very strong interest in building on our work in AY 2014-15, we accomplished very little in AY 2015-16 largely because of an inability to align the timelines and missions of the different groups charged with addressing topics related to research on campus. To make matters worse, we had opportunities to work on other projects related to research, such as partnering with Hanson and Parker on a proposal to create a Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Inquiry at SU. We chose not to pursue these options, however, in an effort to meet the charge we were given by the Agenda Committee.

The end result is that our committee, despite due diligence, did very little. We spent most of the semester in a holding pattern because our timeline and that of the Implementation Committees did not align. Based on our experiences, we make the following recommendations, some of which echo the recent report from the Committee on Instruction:

- (1) There needs to be a greater effort at all levels of university leadership to align the timelines of committees working on similar issues. Without this aligning, different committees – whether in Senate, FastForward, or other parts of campus – cannot engage in any kind of synergistic collaborations, which will limit the scope and impact of campus initiatives.
- (2) In a related point, since one of the constituent groups above (Senate Committees) is also populated by people elected by their peers, not involving standing Senate Committees in important cross-campus work limits faculty governance.
- (3) There needs to be less overlap in the missions and charges of university-wide committees like those associated with FastForward and the Senate. Significant parts of the implementation process of the ASP overlap with standing Senate Committees. The end result of this overlap is wasted effort for staff, students, and faculty members.
- (4) We need a greater culture of collaboration on university-wide tasks, such as the ASP. It is not sufficient to leave this push for collaboration in the hands of committee chairs, who themselves face difficult timelines and their own departmental work.

Overall, a commitment to collaboration, to reducing redundancy across committees, and to

aligning workflow needs to be built into the structure of all working bodies on campus, and especially into new initiatives like the ASP. We applaud the Chancellor's recent decision (announced after the drafting of this report) to increase communication and collaboration between the ASP process and standing Senate Committees.

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