

Research Advisory Committee Bylaws October 2023

Article 1. Organizational Name

The name of this organization is the Texas A&M University at Galveston *Research Advisory Committee*, which can be abbreviated as *RAC*.

Article 2. Purpose

The Purpose of the *Research Advisory Committee (RAC)* is to:

- A. Advise the Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (SAVPRGSO) on the Texas A&M University at Galveston (TAMUG) campus on topics such as: (i) long-range planning to enhance TAMUG's research, (ii) technology and expertise required to conduct a nationally and internationally-recognized research program, and (iii) allocation of resources related to research and development.
- B. Allocate funds to support the research effort of faculty, including but not limited to research expenditures and attendance at conferences, where they will increase the visibility of the research programs at TAMUG. Funds will be allocated as long as the applicant is eligible and there are sufficient monies available.
- C. Through a process of groupwise ranking and evaluation, the RAC assists the Research and Graduate Studies Office (RGSO) with the allocation of:
 - a. Scholarships and awards to both (i) incoming and (ii) existing graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and undergraduate students, as per individual scholarship program requirements,
 - b. Assistantships and student travel grants as well as other groups on campus (e.g., Graduate Student Association).
- D. Groupwise evaluation on the merit of *ad hoc* research-related funding requests, with the goal of advising the Senior Associate Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies (SAVPRGSO) on strategic funding allocations.

Article 3. Membership

3.1 Structure

The RAC typically is composed of at least 7 members, with a year of RAC service conforming to the typical annual academic calendar (1 September to 31 August the following calendar year). Members of the RAC include the following categories.

- A. The *Chair* is the SAVPRGSO, who has the right to vote during the decision making process;
- B. The *Secretary* is the Director of Research Operations, who does not have voting rights during the decision making process. The *Secretary* (i) completes administrative needs and requirements for normal RAC operations (i.e., agenda setting, meeting organization and scheduling), (ii) has the right to administratively approve disbursement of RAC resources for RAC funding programs with clear prerequisites and anti-requisites (see: Article 5.2, section A and Article 5.2, section C), (iii) writes formal letters in neutral language to faculty detailing the result of their appealing of a RAC-based decision (see Article 6, section c.). In addition, the secretary reviews requests for compliance and eligibility before they are sent out for review.
- C. The *General Members* are Tenure-Track Faculty, who have the right to vote during the decision making process. The eligibility requirements for General Members include: (i) a research proposal submitted for extramural (non-TAMUG) research funding within the 3 previous years, (ii) a peer-reviewed publication within the 3 previous years, and (iii) a willingness to serve as an

active member of the RAC (i.e., participation in the decision making processes, evaluation of scholarship applications).

- D. The *Temporary Members* are short-term (i.e., meeting specific) members who are from the same department as an absentee *General Member*, who also meet the eligibility requirements for *General Members* listed above. Rights of the *Temporary Members* include: (i) voting during the decision making process, and (ii) temporarily attending regular or special meetings. It is expected that a *General Member* appoints the *Temporary Member*, and communicates this change with the *Secretary* prior to the scheduled meeting so the *Secretary* can send the *Temporary Member* materials to prepare for the upcoming meeting.

3.2 Membership Types

The RAC is composed of 2 permanent members (i.e., *Chair*, the *Secretary*), and a general membership of at least 5 additional individuals. RAC *General Members* are expected to prepare for (i.e., review scholarship applications), and attend meetings, and participate in the decision making process through voting on RAC issues.

- A. *Permanent Members*: The Chair and Secretary are permanent RAC members to facilitate RAC operations.
- B. *Elected Departmental Representatives*: Representatives from each of the academic departments with research active programs: Marine Biology (MARB, 2 members), Marine and Coastal Environmental Science (MCES, 2 members), Liberal Studies (LIST, 1 member), Maritime Business Administration (MARA, 1 member), Marine Engineering Technology (MARE, 1 member) and Ocean Engineering Galveston (1 member) are elected by their respective faculty, as per their individual departmental decision making processes.
- C. *Appointed General Members*: The Chair may Appoint General Members (See Article 3.1, section C) from other TAMUG departments.
- D. *Term Limits and duration*: Terms are for 2 years, with a one-time term renewal for a total of up to 4 years. Term renewal is contingent upon (i) successful re-election of Elected Departmental Representatives at the departmental level, or (ii) re-appointment of Appointed Members by the Chair. Terms span the typical academic timeline, from 1 September to 31 August (the following Gregorian calendar year).

Article 4. RAC Meetings

4.1 Types, Minutes & General Member Absences

- A. *Regular meetings*: These will be held at least three times per year, (i) at the beginning of the fall semester, (ii) at the beginning of the spring semester, and (iii) towards the end of the summer.
- B. *Special meetings*: The SAVPRGSO may call for special meetings of the RAC, as needs arise.
- C. *Minutes*: Will be prepared by the *Secretary*. The minutes from previous RAC meetings are available upon request, and will reflect the direction of the narrative but not the details.
- D. *Foreseen General Member Absence*: RAC members are required to either (i) send their votes/rubrics/notes ahead of the meeting or (ii) nominate an eligible colleague to participate in their stead in advance of the meeting (See Article 3.1, section D).

4.2 RAC Agenda and *ad hoc* Requests

- A. The agenda for meetings is generally set by the *Chair*, with input from the *Secretary*, to complete annual RAC programs needs and address *ad hoc* requests.

- B. *Ad hoc* requests: TAMUG faculty can petition either the *Secretary* or their *Elected Departmental Representative*, through a written request, of *ad hoc* issues that are relevant to the purpose of the RAC (i.e., Article 2, section A) for discussion and evaluation at the next scheduled RAC meeting. In the case of time-sensitive *ad hoc* issues and with a written request from a TAMUG faculty member, the General Membership can petition the *Chair* for rapid RAC evaluation and consideration of *ad hoc* issues.

4.3 Decision making processes

- A. The RAC arrives at decisions through a simple majority of the voting members.
- B. RAC decisions are made in person at meetings, or electronically through email or video conferencing.
- C. *Confidentiality of Scholarship Evaluation and Discussion*: Discussion regarding scholarship applicants, applications, and rankings are to remain confidential.

Article 5. Finances and Programs

5.1 Origin and Destination of Funds

The RAC budget is primarily derived from indirect cost (IDC) returned to the university. Additional funds may include allocations from the State of Texas, or private sources. RAC funds should be used for the advancement of the areas of research stipulated in TAMUG's Strategic Plan and the promotion of research performed by TAMUG faculty. Rules for dismemberment of resources are subject to the rules and regulations of the source funds.

5.2 Travel and Publication Grants

- A. *TAMUG Faculty Travel Grants*: Funding is available to TAMUG faculty presenting their research results at conferences in the USA or internationally. In general, RAC provides up to \$1000.00 for national travel (up to \$1250 for travel to Alaska and Hawaii), and \$1250.00 for international travel. Virtual conferences are eligible to receive up to \$500.00, largely to cover conference registration fees. Evidence and solicitation of matching funds from departmental IDC or individual research accounts is encouraged.
 - a. Grant requirements: (i) Proof of abstract acceptance. (ii) Written solicitation to the *Secretary*. (iii) Evidence of matching funds from departmental or research accounts, if available. (iv) The requesting faculty has not received a Faculty Travel Grant in 2 years.
 - b. Grant Allocation: The *Secretary* will be able to administratively-approve Faculty Travel Grant requests, assuming the requestor meets the above requirements. The RAC will be consulted if any concerns arise.
- B. *Graduate Student Travel Grants*: RAC assists in the allocation of Graduate Student Travel Grants, which is possible through a generous donation from Erma Lee and Luke Mooney.
 - a. Frequency: The call for these awards occurs three times a year. In some cases, RAC may award funds using other funding lines for graduate students.
- C. *Publication Fee Grants*: RAC will provide grants to support the publication fees of manuscripts first-authored (or corresponding author) by TAMUG faculty, postdoc's, research scientists, and students. RAC will typically provide funding to pay up to 1/3 or \$1000, whichever is the smaller cost. However, 1/3 of the total cost of the publication will be considered for top-tier journals (e.g., Nature Communications, Science Advances) when faculty have existing extramural research funding. Remaining funds are expected to be covered by researchers and/or Departments.

- a. Frequency: Ongoing, anytime.
- b. Eligibility: Grants are limited to once every year for Assistant Professors, and once every two years for Associate and Full Professors.
- c. Process for Funding Request: A written request is submitted to the *Chair*, which includes (i) evidence of manuscript acceptance, (ii) evidence of publication fees, (iii) evidence of support from matching fund, (iv) evidence that other university programs are already expended (e.g., Oak Fund from TAMU).
- d. Grant Allocation: The *Secretary* will be able to administratively-approve Publication Fee Grant requests, assuming the requestor meets the above requirements. The RAC will be consulted if any concerns arise.
- e. Exception to encourage publication in top-tiered journals: The TAMUG community is encouraged to contact the RAC to help support publication fees in the event that (i) a TAMUG-researcher does not have research funding, and (ii) is the first-author or Chair of TAMUG-based graduate student that is first author, and (iii) they have an accepted article at a top-tiered journal (e.g., Nature Communications).

5.3 Equipment Maintenance and Vessel Insurance

- A. *Service Contracts Grant*: A service contract is an agreement between a 3rd-party vendor and TAMUG to maintain the functionality of the hardware for a specific piece of equipment or instrumentation owned and operated by a tenure-track faculty member at TAMUG. The service contract typically functions with an annual subscription fee. RAC will typically provide funding to cover 1/3 of the total cost of an individual service contract. Remaining funds are expected to be covered by researchers and departments.
 - a. Annual Frequency: Research and Graduate Studies Office (RGSO) will solicit requests from TAMUG tenure-track faculty to submit requests for assistance, if needed, with the cost of service contracts for critical equipment. Request for RAC support of service contracts is routed through, and compiled, at the departmental level for subsequent submission to the RAC for funding consideration at a regularly scheduled meeting.
 - b. Equipment Prerequisites: Present-day value of equipment exceeds \$20,000.
 - c. Allocation: Department Heads must approve the service contract request for submission to the RAC, and provide RAC members with the information required for their decision. RAC will determine the suitability of supporting service contracts on equipment based on beneficial factors such as (i) their use by multiple users, (ii) equipment age and replacement cost, (iii) contract price of the contract, and (iv) available RAC resources.
- B. *Ad Hoc Equipment Maintenance or Expense Grant*: In some cases, the RAC may support equipment repair costs (e.g., vessels, mass spectrometers), if the item is critical for the research mission of the University. RAC typically provides funding to pay up to 1/3 of the total cost of the item. Remaining funds are expected to be covered by faculty accounts or departments.
 - a. Process for Funding Request: A written request (1 page justification) is submitted to the *Secretary*, who either (i) adds the issue to agenda of the next RAC meeting, or (ii) forwards this to the RAC for electronic discussion and voting, in the event of a time sensitive issue.
 - b. Written Request should include: (i) evidence of available matching funds, (ii) justification of the expense and how funding support would immediately rectify the equipment deficiencies, and if appropriate, (ii) justify how repairing the equipment is a better solution than equipment replacement or loss of capacity.

- C. *Vessel Insurance Grant*: The RAC typically provides support to partially cover the premium cost to insure vessels operated by tenure-track researchers at TAMUG. RAC typically provides funding to pay up to 1/3 of the total cost of the annual insurance premium. Remaining funds are expected to be covered by faculty accounts or departments.
 - a. Process for Funding Request: A written request (1 page justification) is submitted to the *Secretary*, who either (i) adds the issue to agenda of the next RAC meeting, or (ii) forwards this to the RAC for electronic discussion and voting, in the event of a time sensitive issue. Attached to the written request will be (i) evidence of the total cost of insurance premium, and (ii) written confirmation from the associated department head outlining available resources to provide matching support.
 - b. The RAC does not provide support for equipment insurance listed on other policies (.e.g, inshore marine policy)

Article 6. Appeal of Decisions: Individual TAMUG faculty members have the right to appeal a perceived unfavorable RAC decision, as related to RAC operations, procedures and programs.

- A. Process: An official written request for an appeal will be submitted to the Secretary and Chair for circulation to the RAC General Members. It is expected that the written request for an appeal from a faculty would outline the arguments for an appeal, and justify why an original RAC decision may have been made without sufficient information, evidence or consideration.
- B. Discussion of the appeal will either occur electronically or at the next regular meeting. In the case of time sensitive issues (as stated in a written request for an appeal from a faculty member), the Secretary can immediately circulate the appeal to the RAC membership through electronic means for an electronic-based discussion.
- C. Timeline for Situational Resolution: It is expected that a response to an appeal will take no less than 48 hours, depending on the time of the year. It is expected that the Secretary would write a formal response to the appealing faculty member on the final result of the appeal request, on behalf of voting members of the RAC. The outcome of this appeal process will be deemed final.

Article 7. Review and Amendments of Bylaws

- A. These Bylaws will be reviewed every two years and can be amended as required by RAC at any time.
- B. Any General Member can propose a bylaw amendment or edit by submitting a written request to the Chair for its inclusion on the agenda at the next regular meeting.
- C. Members of the TAMUG Faculty community can propose a bylaw amendment or edit by submitting a written request to the Chair for its inclusion on the agenda at the next regular meeting.
- D. Upon approval, an amendment to the bylaws shall go into immediate effect, and updated RAC bylaws will be circulated to the TAMUG community as soon as possible by the Secretary.