Report to the Dean of Faculty on the Research Advisory Committee, 2020-2021

Research Advisory Committee:

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is the Faculty Senate committee that provides advice to the Vice President for Research and Innovation on issues relating to the University research enterprise. During Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021), the RAC contributed to Cornell's research excellence by reviewing and advising on the top nominees for limited submission grant and award programs (see **Table 1**).

During FY 2020, to improve management of limited submission competitions, the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Development (OSP) implemented the InfoReady Review (IRR) system, which allows RAC reviewers to log into one system, access all applications requiring their review, and submit their reviews easily online. IRR has greatly streamlined the review process and communications for the RAC, faculty applicants, and OSP staff. IRR has also been used very successfully to manage internal seed funding and other faculty development programs requiring application and review. Also during FY 2020, the Research Development team removed several competitions that no longer aligned with the interests of Cornell's faculty, and a few others have been discontinued by funders. The RD Team continues to look for ways to make the RAC's efforts more productive and less complicated.

Table 1: Summary of RAC productivity for FYs 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Fiscal Year	Total number of programs advertised	Number of programs receiving internal applications	Number of programs requiring review by RAC
2019	118	47	20
2020	102	45	16
2021	115	54	24

The **attached Excel file** documents limited submission competitions from 2016 to present. It includes detailed information about competitions, including applicant data, review outcomes, and sponsor outcomes.

The RAC's workload is spread throughout the year, with fewer meetings occurring in the summer months. Terms for RAC members begin on July 1. We strive to streamline our processes and make the service of the RAC as uncomplicated as possible. RAC members are asked to declare any conflict of interest (COI) with the applicants, and those members with COI do not formally review those applications. Independent of their research area, RAC members are assigned to rank and review all non-COI applications via IRR. The preliminary ranking and written comments are consolidated by the RD team and serve as the basis for the larger RAC meeting discussions. In an effort to ensure fairness of voting and ranking given COI-excluded reviewers, the RD team used Condorcet voting, via the CIVS system: https://civs.cs.cornell.edu/civs_create.html, for much of FY 2021. However, the RD Team began experiencing trouble uploading data into the CIVS system at the beginning of 2021, necessitating the use of a hybrid approach to ranking, which both averages the rankings and looks at the number of times an application was ranked in the top grouping across all reviewers. This has led to an equitable process that has yielded strong applications.

The broad expertise represented on the RAC helps make certain that the most competitive (and well-written) proposals are nominated to move forward in a particular funding competition. Independent of the outcome and as appropriate, constructive feedback is provided to each applicant based on the comments and discussion by

the committee. Selected applicants are given the option of working with RD staff on their full submissions to the funder.

When a funder considers Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) and Cornell Ithaca to be one institution, the RD Team coordinates the application reviews. These programs include, but are not limited to, the Packard, Pew, Searle, Rita Allen, Keck and Hartwell Foundations. Cornell Ithaca and WCM have a cooperative process for reviewing and ranking proposals for joint programs, which differs depending on the program. Occasionally, if one institution has a very small applicant pool, the committee from the other institution might review and rank all the applications together. Otherwise, separate internal competitions are completed, and the winners from each are discussed by the WCM and Ithaca RAC Chairs to determine the strongest candidate(s) for the program. Coordination between Ithaca's RD Team and WCM's coordinator Florencia Marcucci has continued to be successful. The two teams have weekly meetings that focus on competition deadlines and outcomes, striving to align due dates and RAC meetings to streamline processes and maximize time for applicants to prepare their full applications.

Noteworthy winners from FY 2021 limited submissions competitions:

Pew Biomedical Scholars. The Pew Biomedical Scholars Program supports young investigators of outstanding promise in basic and clinical sciences relevant to human health. The program makes grants to selected academic institutions to support the independent research of outstanding individuals who are in their first few years of their appointment at the assistant professor level. Elizabeth Kellogg (Molecular Biology & Genetics) is a member of the 2021 class of Scholars.

Rita Allen Scholars. This program funds innovative, basic biomedical research in the fields of cancer, immunology and neuroscience. Although she ultimately had to decline this award so that she could accept the Pew award (the funders would not allow her to accept both), Elizabeth Kellogg (Molecular Biology & Genetics) was also offered a 2021 Rita Allen Scholars award.

Camille Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar Award. This program supports the research and teaching careers of talented young faculty in the chemical sciences, and seeks to fund scholars who demonstrate leadership in research and education. Song Lin (Chemistry and Chemical Biology) was awarded and is a member of the 2021 class of Teacher-Scholars.

Sloan Research Fellowship. Awarded annually since 1955, this program is one of the oldest of its kind. On average, 126 researchers are awarded two-year fellowships. This competition is managed at the college department level and four faculty members are part of the 2021 class: Rachit Agarwal (Computer Science), Sasha Rush (Computer Science), Katherine Tschida (Psychology), and Madeleine Udell (ORIE).

RAC members and process:

RAC Members for FY 2021

Name	Department	College	LS/PS/SS*	Term End Date	Net ID
Chris Hernandez (Chair)	MAE & BME	ENG	LS	2021	cjh275
Olena Vatamaniuk	SIPS (SCS)	CALS	LS	2021	okv2
Renata Ivanek	Pop Med	VET	LS	2022	ri25
Cedric Feschotte	MBG	CALS	LS	2022	cf458
Kyle Lancaster	Chemistry	CAS	PS	2022	kml236

Name	Department	College	LS/PS/SS*	Term End Date	Net ID
Sylvia Lee	MBG	CAS	LS	2022	ssl29
Praveen Sethupathy	Biomedical Sciences	CVM	LS	2022	pr46
Maureen Hanson	MBG	CALS	LS	2023	mrh5
Alexander Vladimirsky	Math	CAS	PS	2023	abv8
Maria Fitzpatrick	Policy Admin & Mgmt	CHE	SS	2023	mdf98
Perrine Pepiot	MAE	ENG	LS	2023	pp427
Jane Wang	Physics	CAS	PS	2023	zw24

* LS = Life Sciences   PS = Physical Sciences/Engineering   SS = Social Sciences

Ex officio non-voting members: Emmanuel Giannelis, Carmel Lee

Administrative Management: Liz Diaz

Review Process:

- The RAC is categorized into three disciplinary groups: **LS, SS** and **PS**. Limited submissions can typically be categorized as: **L**ife science, **P**hysical science/engineering, **S**ocial Science or **M**ultidisciplinary.
- All RAC members reserve every Monday from 3-4pm on their calendars for possible RAC meetings.
- RAC members are asked ahead of a scheduled review to note any COI with pending applications. If a COI is present, the RAC member may provide comments during a RAC meeting but does not rank or formally review the application. All limited submissions competitions are reviewed by all committee members, unless COI prevents their participation.
- The RD team assigns applications for review via IRR. RAC members are usually given approximately 2 weeks to review, unless there is an urgent need for review due to tight sponsor deadlines. In the latter case, an expedited review process is in place which requires a 72-hour to one week internal submission deadline, followed by 72-hours to one week of review time. For this expedited process, RAC reviews are then compiled electronically and discussed via email if decisions are not unanimous.
- RD compiles the rankings and written comments into one spreadsheet ahead of the proposed RAC meeting, and prepares a synopsis outlining the basic competition requirements, previous nominees, and reviewer feedback. The synopsis is shared with the RAC Chair prior to a meeting.
- The RAC Chair runs the meeting, with input on specific programs from the Director of Research Development, Carmel Lee. The RAC Chair solicits comments about the applications from RAC members, and after discussion, a vote is called.
- Following the meeting, the RD team collates feedback into a summary for each applicant, and if necessary, consults with the RAC Chair. RAC decisions are communicated to each applicant via IRR, and include a summary of reviewer feedback and, for those selected as Cornell nominees, next steps in the submission process.

Attached files:

Excel file with data on limited submission competitions from 2016-present.

Cc: Carrie "C.A." Shugarts, Emmanuel Giannelis, Mary-Margaret Klempa, Carmel Lee, Gayle Fagan, Liz Diaz, Tiffany Fleming, and Rosalind George.