

Report to the Dean of Faculty on the Research Advisory Committee, 2022-2023

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is the Faculty Senate committee that provides advice to the Vice President for Research and Innovation (OVPRI) on issues relating to the University research enterprise. During Fiscal Year 2023 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023), 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**).

Table 1: Summary of RAC productivity for FYs 2021, 2022 and 2023

Fiscal Year	<i>Number of limited submissions advertised</i>	<i>Number of limited submissions receiving applications</i>	<i>Number of limited submissions requiring review by RAC</i>
2021	115	54	24
2022	106	38	16
2023	110*	48**	20
* Does not include limited submission programs that are coordinated by other units (e.g., individual departments, Bowers CIS). ** This actual number is likely somewhat higher as this does not include competitions that have not yet closed but were advertised in FY23.			

The attached Excel file documents limited submission competitions from 2016 to present, including applicant data, internal competition outcomes, and sponsor outcomes. The number of limited submission programs advertised fluctuates from year-to-year as new programs are added and some no longer exist or do not recur annually.

The work required for the RAC to perform the internal proposal reviews is significant. The RAC’s workload is spread throughout the year, with November through May being very busy for committee members (there are fewer reviews during the summer and fall months). The heavy workload has made it difficult to recruit and retain committee members. The OSP provides a list of potential new RAC members to the VPRI each year, and the VPRI invites faculty to join the RAC via email. The list is compiled through recommendations from departing committee members and, starting with FY2024r, from Research Deans from the Colleges. **Suggestions and additional support for the successful recruitment of RAC members would be welcomed.**

Each RAC member is expected to read and provide feedback on all submissions (unless there is a conflict of interest that precludes it), independent of area of research. The broad expertise represented on the RAC helps make certain that the most competitive proposals are selected to advance in a competition. Committee members may often be associated with internal applicants evaluated by the RAC. It is recognized that often those conflicted with an applicant/proposal may be in the best position to review the technical aspects. If a member declares a conflict of interest (COI), that member does not formally review the application. They may provide comments and be asked for their expertise during the RAC discussion, but do not vote on outcomes.

Last year, a new system for completing reviews was implemented, based on committee members’ recommendations. Previously, the RAC assigned numbered rankings to applications and provided general

comments about each application. Starting with last year, reviewers are instead asked to: 1) rate the competitiveness of an application (highly competitive, competitive, or less competitive; 2) indicate their own proximity of expertise to an applicant's research area; and 3) provide more specific written comments about the competitiveness of each application. The RAC has continued to utilize this system this year.

This year, the RAC changed its review process for large internal competitions (those with more than 10 internal applications). Previously, RAC members were asked to review all the applications and rank only their top candidates. Starting in FY23, the RAC Chair instead assigned a limited number of specific applications to individual members for review (who completed their reviews according to the process described in the previous paragraph). For example, for the Packard Fellowships competition (which yielded 20 internal applications), each member was assigned 6-7 applications to review in-depth and speak about at the larger RAC meeting. Members were welcome to read all the applications, but asked to submit reviews for only those assigned to them. Committee members have responded very positively to this new process, which has resulted in more manageable reviews as well as more robust and constructive feedback to individual applicants in large competitions.

There are a number of Foundation limited submission programs in which the sponsor requires Cornell Ithaca and Weill Cornell Medicine (WCM) to submit as one institution (e.g., Packard, Pew, Searle, Rita Allen, Keck and Hartwell Foundations). Ithaca and WCM have a cooperative process for reviewing internal proposals for these shared programs. Separate internal competitions are completed in which each RAC selects its top candidate(s). The top candidates from each campus are then reviewed by the two RAC Chairs to determine the strongest candidate(s). Coordination between Ithaca's Limited Submissions Manager and WCM's coordinator (Florencia Marcucci, Director of Research Programs at WCM), who meet weekly to discuss upcoming competitions, has resulted in streamlined processes and aligned focus, timing, and outcomes.

Noteworthy winners from limited submission programs:

Note: As of the publication of this report, outcomes for several key competitions (e.g., Packard Fellowships, Keck Research Program Grants) are still pending.

Eirene Markenscoff-Papadimitriou (Assistant Professor, Molecular Biology and Genetics) received a **Brain Research Foundation 2023 Seed Grant**, which provides start-up monies for new and innovative research projects in the field of neuroscience that will likely lead to extramural funding from the NIH or other external funding sources.

Joeva Barrow (Assistant Professor, Nutritional Science) is the recipient of a **Hartwell Foundation 2023 Individual Biomedical Research Award (IBRA)**. This award funds early-stage research that is strategic or translational in nature and addresses an unmet need to improve health outcomes for children in the U.S.

Rong Yang (Assistant Professor, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering) is a recipient of **Intel's 2022 Rising Star Faculty Award**. This award recognizes tenured and tenure track faculty who are doing exceptional work in the field (both as investigators and educators) and facilitates long-term collaborative relationships with senior technical leaders at Intel.

Five faculty are members of the 2023 class of **Sloan Research Fellows: Eshan Chattopadhyay (Computer Science), Debanjan Chowdhury (Physics/LASSP), Andrew Musser (Chemistry and Chemical Biology), Angeline Pendergrass (Earth and Atmospheric Sciences), and Andrej Singer (Materials Science and Engineering)**. Awarded annually since 1955, this program is one of the oldest of its kind and supports early career researchers in recognition of distinguished performance and a unique potential to make substantial contributions to their field. The competition is managed at the college department level.

Table 2: RAC Members for FY2023

Name	Department	College	LS/PS/SS*	Term End Date	Net ID
Nozomi Ando	C&CB	CAS	LS	2025	na49
Larry Bonassar	BME/MAE	COE	PS	2023	lb244
Maureen Hanson (Chair)	MBG	CALS	LS	2023	mrh5
Maria Fitzpatrick	Public Policy	Brooks	SS	2023	mdf98
Haym Hirsh	Computer Science	CIS	PS	2024	hbh46
Kade Keranen	EAS	COE	PS	2024	kmk299
Frank Pugh	MBG	CAS	LS	2025	fp265
Chris Fromme	MBG	CALS	LS	2025	jcf14
Paula Cohen	Biomedical Sciences	CVM	LS	2023	pc242
Bruce van Dover	MSE	COE	PS	2025	rbv2
Alexander Vladimirovsky	Mathematics	CAS	PS	2023	abv8
Jane Wang	Physics	CAS	PS	2023	zw24
* LS = Life Sciences PS = Physical Sciences/Engineering SS = Social Sciences					
Terms for RAC members begin on July 1.					
Ex officio non-voting members: Krystyn Van Vliet, Mary-Margaret Klempa					
Limited Submissions Manager: Liz Diaz					

Review Process:

- The RAC is categorized into three disciplinary groups: **LS**, **SS** and **PS**. Limited submissions can typically be categorized as: Life science, Physical science/engineering, Social Science, or Multidisciplinary. The majority of limited submission programs are in LS and PS. For programs in the Arts & Humanities, an ad hoc committee of reviewers with the appropriate expertise is convened.
- All RAC members reserve every Monday from 3-4PM on their calendars for possible RAC review meetings, which are canceled as needed. The RAC Chair determines if a meeting is necessary.
- RAC members are typically given at least two weeks to complete a review unless there is an urgent need due to a tight sponsor deadline. In the latter case, an expedited review process is in place which requires a 72-hour to one-week internal submission timeline, followed by 72-hours to one-week of review time. For some competitions, a sponsor’s timeline is so short that it precludes an internal competition or RAC review altogether – in such cases the opportunity is announced as “first come, first served” with prospective applicants required to submit internal Letters of Interest to the OVPRI and approved to submit on a rolling basis until all slots are filled.
- For each competition, reviews are compiled into one spreadsheet and serve as the basis for larger RAC discussions. The RAC Chair runs the meetings, with input on specific programs from the Limited Submissions Manager. For sponsors where Cornell’s liaison is the Office of University Foundation Relations & Corporate Philanthropy (UFRCP), staff from UFRCP provide input as well.

The Chair solicits comments about the applications from RAC members and, after a discussion, a vote is called.

- RAC decisions are communicated to all internal applicants in a timely manner and include a summary of committee feedback. Applicants who are selected as Cornell's candidates are also provided with detailed next steps for full submission to the funder.
- The Limited Submissions Manager coordinates all administrative aspects of the RAC and internal reviews, including maintaining the review schedule and communicating requests for reviews, compiling the reviews ahead of a RAC meeting, collating the feedback into a summary for applicants (in consultation with the RAC Chair), and notifying applicants of competition outcomes. Additionally, prior to a review for a Foundation program the Limited Submissions Manager prepares a program synopsis for reviewers that outlines the sponsor's program, funding preferences, key selection criteria, and previous awardees.

Attached files:

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

CC: Carrie "CA" Shugarts, Krystyn Van Vliet, Mary-Margaret Klempa, Maureen Hanson, Liz Diaz, Gayle Fagan, BJ Hoerner, and Robert Miegler.