Research Council Meeting

November 19, 2026 via Zoom

Attendees: Bob Kennedy, Cameron Wake, Golshan Madraki, Jamie Vaughn, Julie Peterson, Karen Houseknecht, Kim Bedard, Lisa Herschbach, Matt Havrda, Michele Polacsek, Russ Ferland, Nick Gere, Scott Wood, Sonya Durney.

Absentees: Aime Levesque, Amy Deveau, Bryan Franks, Derek Molliver, Ian Meng, Markus Frederich, Mohamed ElSalhy, Susan McHugh, Ursula Roese.

Updates **VPR Houseknecht**

Research Staffing Updates and Changes

VPR Houseknecht announced updates on staffing changes in the Office of Research Integrity and Compliance, including the appointment of Kim Bedard as the new IACUC chair starting in January. Bob and Jamie reported two recent hires: Kay Martin as IRB/IBC compliance coordinator started on November 16th , and Ayoola Okoro as IACUC compliance coordinator, starting on November 23rd.

Houseknecht provided an update on the ongoing recruitment processes for the positions of senior director and research compliance training manager, and noted that the first phase of the moving of the ACAS COBRE Wing would begin in December.

Updates on the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Lisa Herschbach provided updates on the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE), highlighting its recent expansion and new priorities. She explained that the CIE, now part of ORI, has broadened its scope to include commercialization and entrepreneurial mindsets, supported by new staff, partnerships, and programs like NSF I-Corps training. Lisa shared insights from faculty and business community conversations, emphasizing the demand for applied knowledge and entrepreneurship skills among students and employers. The CIE is now actively engaging with faculty, students, and external partners to raise visibility and provide resources for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Herschbach presented an overview of the entrepreneurship program's growth, highlighting expansion from 10 to 32 students over two years and increased funding from $70,000 to over $300,000. The program has expanded its presence in classrooms, moving from 4-5 classes to over 25 across all colleges, reaching over 750 students across 27 course engagements. Lisa introduced the current team members and their expertise areas, emphasizing their ability to help faculty operationalize research in classes and noting increased visibility at conferences like BioMaine and the National Adaptation Forum.

Herschbach presented updates on the CME bar project, which has evolved from a gifted initiative to ongoing research on community impact and potential B Corps application. She outlined

collaboration opportunities including mentoring fellows, hosting faculty, and partnering on grant proposals. **Link to presentation**

Updates on the David E. Shaw Institute for Public and Planetary Health
Michele Polacsek provided updates on the David E. Shaw Institute for Public and Planetary Health, including the ongoing director search and the Rural Health Transformation Program, which involves UNE in a $20 million federal initiative to support rural health in Maine through population health, workforce development, technology innovation, access to care, and sustainable rural health ecosystems.

Polacsek reported that the director search committee, chaired by Mike Sheldon, is reviewing candidates with interviews scheduled for the afternoon. The committee aims to select a candidate by February for a June start date, with applicants spanning both public health and planetary health specializations.

Rural Health and Planetary Competencies
Polacsek presented the Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP), a federal initiative aimed at bolstering rural health in Maine, which involves UNE in population health initiatives including community health workers and evidence-based practices. Cameron discussed the development of planetary health competencies for students across UNE, outlining a three-step process to identify, assess, and address gaps in current curriculum offerings. The conversation ended with Julie inquiring about collaboration opportunities and requesting informational materials about the planetary health initiative for faculty members. **Link to presentation**

Cameron Wake discussed the development of public and planetary health competencies to be integrated across UNE's curriculum, explaining the three-phase approach of defining competencies, assessing current coverage, and identifying gaps for future program development.