

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON  
MEMORANDUM**

September 3, 2020

To: Heike Schotten, Chair, Faculty Council

From: Rosalyn Negrón, Chair, FC Research Committee

Subject: Report on Research Committee, Academic Year 2019-2020

In AY 2019-2020, the Research Committee was composed of 10 members: Teri Aronowitz (CNHS), Alice Carter (CLA), Dolly Daftary (GISD), Lindsay Fallon (CEHD), David Levy (CM), Jan Mutchler (McComack), Rosalyn Negrón (CLA), Philip Troped (CNHS), Alan Wiig (SFE), and Wei Zhang (CSM). Bala Sundaram, Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies, and Matthew Meyer, Associate Vice Provost and ORSP Director, attended meetings as non-voting members. With regards to membership, we would like to bring to your attention that Professors Lindsay Fallon and Wei Zhang are outgoing members of the committee. We request that the FC Executive Committee calls for nominations to this committee, especially nominees from the College of Sciences and Math. In addition, we encourage nominations from faculty members in the humanities.

The committee met seven times during the academic year to discuss five areas of relevance to faculty research at UMass Boston: 1) faculty research-relevant questions for chancellor's search; 2) reporting of and responses to 2017 faculty research survey; 3) course buyout policy; and 4) establishment of a "community-engaged scholarship" sub-committee. On December 12, 2019 we also convened a special meeting with the UMass system and UMB procurement administrators to discuss shared services transition.

In this report, we wish to offer one recommendation (see below) for consideration by the Faculty Council. In addition to this recommendation, we request that the FC take up a discussion to formalize the Research Committee as a committee of the Faculty Council. As part of that process, the Research Committee's mandate must be approved. The mandate was submitted for review to the FC before my time as chair, but we have no record of a formal request from FC to revise the mandate or of specific concerns with the mandate.

**Recommendation: Establish Campus-Wide Course Buyout Policy**

Background

Our proposal addresses three main problems with the existing course buyout practices at UMB. First, campus-wide course buyout guidelines have not been updated since 2005. In the 2005 faculty buyout guidelines [document](#), the course buyout rate is listed as 17% or 1/6 of a faculty member's academic year salary, per course. This is based on two main assumptions: a) faculty

teach 6 courses a year, and b) 100% of faculty effort is on teaching. Clearly, these assumptions need to be updated in light of the fact that most TT faculty are now teaching four courses per AY. The past assumptions lead to a course buyout rate that is too high, with implications for faculty's ability to actually budget course buyouts into external grants. In addition, an updated policy should reflect the unofficial, but commonly-applied understanding that faculty effort is broken down as 40% teaching, 40% research, and 20% service. The Committee did not take up an in-depth discussion about if and what effort breakdown should be adopted campus-wide, but we agreed that a campus-wide discussion to better formalize an effort breakdown policy is also in order. In our proposal, we assumed 40% teaching effort and four courses a year, each course buyout, then, is 10% of faculty salary. A final problem with the current course buyout practices is that it is invariably applied across departments and colleges / schools. The actual rates applied campus-wide range from at least 13% - 17%.

### Proposal

In order to further the research and sponsored programs mission of UMass Boston, faculty members may use external grant funding to obtain a course load reduction by buying out a portion of their time. This advances the mission of the university by reassigning faculty time to important research projects and by encouraging external funding. However, buying out of instructional duties requires approval of the department chairperson to ensure that teaching responsibilities can be covered. Faculty buyouts will follow these guidelines:

- The maximum cost of a course buyout for research purposes will be 10% of faculty salary. Departments or colleges may create policies that lower the cost of a course buyout or lower the cost on a case-by-case basis.
- At the time a proposal for a sponsored program is developed, the faculty member must negotiate the arrangement for a buyout with the department chairperson.
- Colleges and the University should abide by faculty course buyout plans that have been written into grants and approved at appropriate levels of administration, regardless of how much time has passed since grant was submitted.