April 28, 2023

TO: Sang-Hee Lee, Chair  
   Riverside Division of the Academic Senate

FROM: John Kim, Chair  
       CHASS Executive Committee

RE: [Campus Review] Proposal: Proposed Draft Guideline/Policy on Research Labs

The CHASS Executive Committee appreciates the effort made in proposing a policy aimed at improving the utilization of campus resources for research lab spaces. As CHASS FEC, we welcome the opportunity to review the proposed policy and share our concerns and suggestions.

First, while we agree with the proposal's emphasis on aligning the needs of researchers with the design capabilities of campus research space, we suggest that this should not be the sole criterion for assigning research lab space. It is also essential to consider the quality of research that can be conducted in the space, as well as the potential for collaboration and interdisciplinary research. Furthermore, point 4 of the proposal appears to prioritize cost-effectiveness over other factors such as faculty cohesiveness and the benefits of clustering related research groups together. This approach may disperse faculty from a single unit throughout the campus, reducing opportunities for collaboration and building a sense of community within the unit. It is essential to balance cost-effectiveness with the needs and desires of the faculty and the potential benefits of clustering related research groups together.

Second, the proposal suggests that assigning a PI to a research lab that is contrary to that lab's design capability should require extraordinary approval at the Provost level. While oversight is necessary, the decision-making process should involve the input of relevant stakeholders, including the researcher, the School/College, and the Provost.

Third, the proposed policy appears to centralize decision-making power with the Provost, which may not necessarily consider the needs of the faculty members who will be using the lab spaces. The current practice of delegating decision-making power to lower units, such as individual schools and colleges, allows for more localized decision-making and better consideration of faculty members' needs. Additionally, the proposed policy does not address how the Provost will consider the needs of the faculty when allocating research lab spaces. It is important to consider
faculty members' needs and research requirements to ensure they have the necessary resources and facilities to conduct their research effectively. Diminishing decision-making power and not considering the needs of lower units could potentially overlook lower unit needs, leading to dissatisfaction and potentially negatively impacting research productivity.

Lastly, the proposed policy lacks specific details regarding the collection of space information and how decision-making will be implemented. Without this information, it is difficult to evaluate the potential effectiveness of the proposed policy. A more detailed proposal should specify what space information will be collected and how it will be used to inform decision-making. It should also outline the specific steps involved in the review process, including who will conduct the reviews, and what factors will be considered in the review process. This level of detail will provide more transparency and clarity, making it easier for faculty and staff to understand how the policy will be implemented and how decisions about research lab allocations will be made.

Overall, we appreciate the effort made in proposing a policy to improve the utilization of campus resources for research lab spaces. We believe that with some adjustments, this policy has the potential to better serve the needs of faculty members and improve research productivity. We encourage the Space Committee to consider the concerns and suggestions raised by the CHASS FEC, and to work towards developing a more detailed and transparent policy that balances cost-effectiveness with the needs and desires of faculty members, as well as the potential benefits of clustering related research groups together. We look forward to continued collaboration in creating a policy that benefits the entire research community at UCR.