

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH POLICY
(Final; Information)

RP.26.06 2025-2026 Annual Report of the Senate Committee on Research Policy

This report summarizes the activities of the Senate Committee on Research Policy (RP) during the 2025-2026 academic year. RP held four meetings during the fall 2025 semester (September 19, October 17, November 7, December 12) and three meetings during the spring 2026 semester (January 23, February 20, March 13). More detailed information is provided in the minutes of those meetings.

RP received relevant updates from *ex officio* members including representatives from the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Dean of the Graduate College, the Provost, and the Illinois Campus Research Board.

I. ITEMS REMOVED FROM THE AGENDA

RP.25.04, Supporting a Culture of Rigorous, Innovative, and Ethical Research

Tara Powell, Associate Dean for Research in the School of Social Work, led a discussion on strengthening research integrity and improving the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process at the 02/24/2026 meeting. The conversation focused on balancing regulatory responsibilities with a more collaborative and educational approach to research oversight. Concerns were raised about delays in IRB review, communication challenges, and inconsistencies in faculty experiences, which have affected research timelines and, in some cases, access to funding. Powell also reported on recent developments, such as the search for a new IRB director and the hiring of additional staff, which are expected to improve operations.

RP.26.01, Strategy of the Office for Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) for the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

RP reviewed a 10/01/2025 email from Martinis to OPRS colleagues and Research and Innovation Network (RIN) members at the 10/17/2025 meeting. Feedback emphasized that ongoing delays in IRB review are significantly affecting research timelines, particularly because approval is required before hiring staff or launching studies. A misalignment between IRB review timelines and academic calendars was noted, which creates operational challenges and makes it difficult to hire research staff or begin projects at the start of a semester.

RP.26.02, Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education

Paul Weinberger, Assistant Vice President of Federal Regulations, led a discussion on the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education at the 10/17/2025 meeting. The compact, issued by the U.S. Department of Education to a limited number of institutions in October 2025, would provide preferential access to federal funding in exchange for adopting specified institutional reforms. Discussion focused on concerns raised nationally about potential impacts on academic freedom and freedom of speech, as well as questions about whether institutions should respond individually or collectively.

RP.26.03, Revised Policy on Integrity and Scholarly Activities (OT-393)

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) referred the Revised Policy on Integrity and Scholarly Activities (OT-393) to RP for feedback on 11/03/2025. Jennifer Hardesty, Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, and Christopher Lehmann, Research Integrity Officer, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, reviewed the revisions with RP at the 01/23/2026 meeting and discussed key changes such as updated definitions of research misconduct, expanded provisions on confidentiality and records, and clarification of procedures. Concerns were raised on unclear terminology (e.g., “major infraction” and “significant departure”), the treatment of detrimental research practices, generative AI-related issues, and the overall clarity of the process. Chair Harley submitted feedback from RP to SEC on 02/25/2026.

RP.26.04, The Public Engagement Research Option (PERO) for Promotion and Tenure at the University of Illinois

Eva Pomerantz, Director, Center for Social & Behavioral Science, presented an overview of PERO at the 12/12/2025 meeting. PERO provides an alternative pathway within the promotion and tenure process for faculty whose research involves collaboration with external communities and emphasizes broader societal impact. Pomerantz outlined how publicly engaged research produces both traditional academic outputs and public-facing products, the rationale for the program, requirements for the PERO memorandum of understanding (MOU), the role of the PERO Advisory Committee, and the timeline for participation. Pomerantz emphasized that PERO does not lower promotion and tenure standards and is not intended as recognition of teaching or service.

RP.26.05, Ninth Senate Review Commission Request for Committee Feedback from the Senate Committee on Research Policy

A request from the Ninth Senate Review Commission (SR9) was received to provide feedback on RP’s charge, composition, and function. RP responded to the request on 03/30/2026.

RESEARCH POLICY
Brendan Harley, Chair
Jennifer Cromley
Zoeya Khan
Maiga Muga

Laura Payne
Sara Pfannkuche
Kirsten Pullen
Sebastian Rothering
Abigail Wooldridge
Zeynep Madak-Erdogan *ex officio*
Susan Martinis, *ex officio*
Romana Nowak, *ex officio*
Amy Santos, *ex officio*