

December 15, 2015

To: Kate O'Neill
Chair Senate Committee on Planning and Budgeting

Sandy Archibald
Co-chair, ABB Review Committee

Sarah Hall
Co-chair, ABB Review Committee

From: Faculty Council on Research

Report on the Effects of ABB on Funded Collaborative Research at the UW.

Dear Kate, Sandy and Sarah,

In response to your letter dated July 14, 2015 that requested that the Faculty Council on Research (FCR) address the issues surrounding the effects of activity based budgeting (ABB) on research collaboration at the UW the FCR developed and circulated to the UW faculty a Catalyst survey. The survey asked the following questions:

1. Are you familiar with the Activity Based Budgeting funding model?
2. Since the implementation of ABB in 2013, has the ABB funding model had any effect on your ability to conduct funded collaborative research at the UW?
3. Overall, has the effect of ABB on your funded collaborative research been positive, negative or neutral?

We also requested that faculty whose collaborative research had been impacted by ABB provide examples.

We received 785 responses to the survey. Only 55% of those who responded were familiar with the ABB funding model. The vast majority (79%) of the faculty that were familiar with ABB indicated that there was **no effect** of ABB on their collaborative research. A small percentage of respondents (104/785 = 13%) felt there was either a positive (13 = 1.7%) or negative (91= 11.6%) effect of ABB on their funded collaborative research. We received 120 examples/comments from the respondents.

One repeated example was that ABB has put much more emphasis on teaching large classes which has reduced time to establish collaborations and to do research in general. It was also felt by a number of respondents that there was pressure not to do collaborative teaching across units and that very often

collaborative teaching efforts lead to collaborative research. A number commented that departments that were primarily training graduate students have suffered due to reduced income from graduate courses and that faculty were less likely to mentor and collaborate with graduate students from outside of their units. Several respondents said that they had been pressured not to do collaborative research unless they were the PI in order to protect ICR. The following are a few representative comments.

“...We are pressured to increase enrollments, grow new programs, learn new online course management systems, etc. All the efforts which now seem directed toward growing educational programs leaves precious little time for meeting with colleagues in other disciplines, attending lectures or seminars, even having lunch where ideas for generating collaborations sometimes happen. As a tenured professor, I now envy my colleagues with research professorial appointments because teaching is optional and they seem to have more time to devote to research endeavors.”

“Activity-based budgeting has resulted in lower teaching-related income for my Department. Therefore, indirect costs from collaborative research are being used to cover costs they did not cover in the past. The small indirect cost amount that was previously returned to each faculty member from their own funded grants has shrunk to zero, limiting our ability to conduct pilot projects that would help us write stronger research proposals.”

“In the past 20 years, I have often co-taught classes with faculty from other disciplines. These courses served a dual purpose: to expose the students to a modern day problem that was challenging and interesting. The problems required people from two or more disciplines to work together. The course served as a way to build bridges over an extended period between faculty, that at least twice led to funded research programs. Under ABB, it isn't really possible to teach these classes any more because the student/FTE ratio is low and the Chairs of the individual departments are under pressure to increase student hours in their departments. Hence, with ABB there is great incentive not to do collaborative research. A similar problem occurs in co-advising graduate students: we are now discouraged from doing joint research that involves co-advising of graduate students where the co-advisors come from different units -- even within the same college.”

“I had a dean of another unit request changes to the leadership of a grant because of where the grant originated. I've also had to deal with very different interpretations of indirect policies at the local level while administering grants at different units. I have experience with three different units and all are different.”

“ I teach more classes, my classes are larger, & I have less time for research.”

“Am discouraged from teaching in other departments, which in past facilitated collaboration with colleagues in different units, now only hours that count for our department are valued, and this is enforced rather heavy-handedly. Very short-sighted.”

“I have had to teach larger classes for less compensation, taking more of my time and leaving less time for grant applications. I have been supporting fewer grad students to help.”

“My sense is that there is increased pressure on deans to capture indirects and the current formula for doing that doesn't readily permit cross-unit collaboration. I've been at 3 other R1 universities

and haven't seen such obstacles to cross-unit grant work. My sense is that if UW doesn't resolve this soon - it will begin to compromise how competitive or opportunistic faculty can be for funding opportunities.”

“In our dept a lot of collaborative research originates from seminars that attract grad students from many depts. With the low return rate for tuition from those grad level classes with students from outside the dept, they have stopped being offered.”

“So the current ABB policy regarding RCR distribution for interdepartmental research not only makes it more difficult for us to conduct collaborative research, it actually provides multiple incentives for my own department to maintain the status quo and not take steps to address these problems. These incentives include not just the RCR from our grants, but also the publications that result from our lab work, the graduate students that our grants support, and the student credit hours that they generate. However, none of this work could happen without the use of the lab facility in my colleague's department. But there are also several other categories of things we spend our grant funding on that benefit my colleague's department which we don't get any credit for when it comes to decisions on space allocation, such as purchases of new laboratory equipment, tools, and supplies, repairs of existing facilities, infrastructure modifications, support for their technical staff, as well as hourly wages and benefits for the many undergraduate research assistants we have had who are majors in the other department.”

There were also a few positive examples.

“ ABB has, indirectly, given breathing room to my college allowing investment in remodeling space for collaborative research.”

“Increased TA pool allows us to take a student on a new project, or try a collaboration for a few quarters.”

“ABB flows to Arts & Sciences has made it possible to construct a Life Sciences Building specifically designed for collaborative research.”

The results of the survey are supportive of preliminary discussions that the FCR had with Mary Lidstrom and the Office of Research. Because ABB has not had much impact on how ICRs have been distributed to units, it was felt that there was likely to be little effect of ABB on funded collaborative research. However, because there was a very low response rate from the overall faculty, we must use caution in interpreting the results of the survey as representing the views of the majority of the UW faculty. **Nevertheless, it is the conclusion of the FCR that ABB has not had a substantial negative impact on conducting funded collaborative research at the UW.**