Research Space Policy for the Program in Biology

(November, 2013)

Laboratory space to support externally funded research studies in the Program in Biology is provided by the University as a valuable and limited resource requiring active management and continuous stewardship. This is especially true in times when prospects are minimal for incremental growth in research space. The principles and practices outlined in this policy document provide important guidance on the allocation of laboratory-based research space and its continuous oversight to assure effective and optimal use in addressing the research mission of Brown University.

Guiding Principles

- The Provost is ultimately responsible for the allocation of research space to the Division of Biology and Medicine and to other schools and units. The Dean of the Division of Biology and Medicine has immediate authority over the allocation of research space (including core facility space) for the Program in Biology and its six constitutive departments. Research space will be allocated based on programmatic needs and priorities as determined by the Dean. The department chairs and a new Divisional Space Committee will advise the Dean on research space utilization. The Divisional Space Committee will consist of faculty representatives from each department who will be chosen by the Dean and who will serve on a rotating basis. The committee will include Peter Holden, the Director of the Department of Facilities Planning & Operations in the Division.
- A database of assigned research space in the Program in Biology is maintained by the Department of Facilities Planning & Operations in the Division. As research space or “shared department research space” (see below) is re-assigned within the department, the Department of Facilities Planning & Operations is to be notified of all such changes. In addition, any space assigned to faculty who are outside the Program in Biology must be reported in a timely fashion to the Department of Facilities Planning & Operations so that appropriate oversight is maintained of all building occupants.
- If additional research space is needed to conduct a new externally funded research program, the research space needs should be entered on the relevant PSAF in consultation with the department chair and department manager. (Note that the Brown University Proposal Summary and Approval Form (PSAF) is an internal routing document created by the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) that collects and tracks information regarding proposals being submitted by faculty, students and staff. This document serves as the official institutional record for the University. The information is used to create reporting for Federal agencies, senior officers and
internal departments. It is critical that the information provided on this form is complete and accurate to the best of the Principal Investigator’s (PI) knowledge.)

- At the time that research space is assigned to individual faculty, the amount of space assigned is based on actual and anticipated near-term need of the research program. For external recruitments, research space assignments typically incorporate an element of market competitiveness. The chair of the relevant department, in consultation with the department’s local space committee and senior faculty, is expected to fully justify the recommendation for initial space assignment.
- Research space changes within a department should be reported by the chair or department manager to the Department of Facilities Planning & Operation.
- The Program in Biology may choose to subsidize research or research support activities (e.g., Core Research Facilities) that do not generate sufficient indirect cost recovery to fully support the infrastructure and operating costs associated with space usage, based on research priorities and operating budgets.
- Within the Division of Biology and Medicine, the office for Finance & Planning has developed the Academic Impact Report (AIR) to assist in the evaluation of research space utilization. The information in these reports is updated approximately annually in the months following the close of the academic and fiscal year. The reports for each department are available online to department chairs, and individual faculty can request their individual reports from the chair.
- Each year, the office for Finance & Planning together with the Department of Facilities Planning & Operations intend to generate a departmental space map including individual labs and research support space on a floor by floor basis that reflects data on levels of external research support. In line with national standards, indirect cost recovery dollars assigned to the Division of Biology and Medicine by the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) will be the primary basis for comparison of research space utilization in these reports. Optimal use of research space includes shared use of resources, facilities, and wherever possible, instrumentation. General common departmental space and research space used by more than one PI will require departmental documentation to be filed by the chair with the Department of Facilities Planning & Operations. Research support space that has been categorized, in some cases in the past, as “departmental” space will now be listed as such only if the space is truly communal and/or supports a departmentally supervised shared access facility or instrumentation (e.g., a specialized microscope room available and accessible to all researchers in the department). Research support space shared among a small group of faculty will be reviewed annually for usage, and the corresponding proportion of shared support space used will be added to the assigned research space of individual faculty for purposes of calculating research productivity.
- It is recommended that each department form an active departmental space committee that meets regularly to assist the chair in periodically evaluating the use of the available assigned and shared research space and to review any requests for
changes within the department. A department’s request to the Divisional Space Committee for research space outside the department must include a thorough and detailed assessment of the use of the research and shared support space in the department, and a rationale for the need of additional space. Any faculty whose appropriately detailed requests for reassignment of research space are denied at the departmental level can appeal to the Dean who will then assess the situation, and if appropriate form an advisory committee to make an independent recommendation. The final authority rests with the Dean.

- Any proposals for space renovations must follow, as appropriate, either division (Department of Facilities Planning & Operations) or University (Space Committee) review and approval processes to ensure that strategic needs and priorities are met. Within the space managed by the Division, renovation requests should utilize BioMed’s Capital Request Form (see http://biomed.brown.edu/facilities/requesting_project). Within the Division, there will be a default preference for a flexible open lab design in any new renovations.

- Research space, materials, must adhere to all health and safety regulations and procedures as defined by the office for Environmental Health & Safety at Brown University.

- Research conducted in University facilities must only support University interests and relationships, except in the case of Facility Use Agreements that have been appropriately reviewed and approved by the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR). See http://research.brown.edu/policies/facilities.php for more details. All research conducted in University facilities must adhere to University conflict of interest policies.

- Research space assignments must adhere to all University policies and procedures that prohibit discrimination.

- In a manner similar to the management of research laboratory space, Division supervised, Controller Office approved Core Facilities (e.g., Leduc BioImaging Core; for complete list, see http://biomed.brown.edu/research/facilities) will be assigned research support space based on programmatic needs that are regularly reviewed by the Dean’s Office. Any requests for reassignment of space should be accompanied with appropriate justification from the Facility’s user committee and/or advisory committees. All such requests should be forwarded to Dr. Pamela Swiatek, Director of Research Operations & Major Proposal Coordinator in the Program of Biology.

**Commitments to Faculty for Research Space**

Faculty are expected to formulate and conduct a robust program of academic research as part of their professional activities. Therefore, the Division will strive to provide a member of the faculty with sufficient research space to support these activities with a minimum amount
of space (approximately four work stations) allocated in the absence of external funding. However, the Dean must balance the needs of individual faculty with the needs of the other faculty and the overall programmatic needs and priorities of their units.

New Faculty

When new faculty join the University, the Division will communicate, in writing, any commitment for space to the new faculty. A commitment for research space should be as detailed as possible, including the following:

- The general characteristics of the space to be provided (e.g. square footage, presence of chemical hoods, and presence of specialized utilities).
- The location of the space, if identified, will be provided on a floor plan.
- The plan for identifying space in the future, if it has not been identified at the time of hire.
- Any plans to renovate the space, including a realistic timeline, budget where appropriate, and source of funds.
- Any time limits for the occupancy of the space.
- The terms under which the assigned space may be re-allocated in the future.

Typically, there would be no adverse research space reassignment within the initial academic appointment of four years. The departmental and Dean’s reviews for subsequent re-appointment would provide an opportunity for reassessment of the initial space allocation relative to overall progress and performance. Typically, a strong recommendation to re-appoint would be accompanied by a continued commitment to the initial research space allocation for the balance of the tenure probationary period.

In general, allocation of approximately 750 sq. ft. of laboratory space along with ~250 sq. ft. of supporting research space should be sufficient to support a wide range of research activities within the context of the Program in Biology.

Current Faculty

The research space usage of current faculty members will be periodically reviewed by the Divisional Space Committee to determine if the faculty member has a shortage or excess of research space, or if the space is in need of reconfiguration or renovation. Re-evaluations and re-assessments may be called for in situations where new hires or other planned renovations require a broader assessment of whether existing departmental assignments of individual labs are of the “right” size or not. In addition, using a three year (fiscal year) moving window of indirect cost recovery for analysis, departments will be notified by the
Dean when it has been determined that any regular faculty with assigned research space has brought in external research support at a level that is below a value to be determined each year by the Dean of Medicine and Biological Sciences. Additional faculty productivity metrics to be used in the departmental review and by the Divisional Space Committee review are described below. The department would then notify that faculty member that a review is taking place and that a reassignment to smaller space may be necessary. In such cases, the Division will make every effort to minimize disruption to ongoing funded research activities and to provide the affected faculty with a minimum amount of research space to continue to pursue research efforts aimed at obtaining external funding.

**Sponsored Research**

It is the responsibility of the Dean to provide adequate space (as identified on the Proposal Summary & Approval Form) for the duration of any sponsored project conducted by the faculty. When the Division indicates on the PSAF that space is available and specifies the building and rooms, the sponsor is assured that space necessary to conduct the research will be made available. The lead-time involved in submitting proposals may dictate that units "hedge their bets" in terms of the assignment of space. Therefore, in some cases, the space identification may include the phrase "or equivalent space, as available." Careful review of the research space identification portion of the PSAF by all units involved in the proposal is essential (including involved units that are not the one submitting the proposal).

It is incumbent on principal investigators to identify and seek approval for all significant new space requirements at the time of proposal submission.

**Reallocation of Research Space**

In some cases, the reallocation of research space may result in the displacement of equipment or other infrastructure. The unit should work with the current faculty occupant to properly relocate or dispose of these items. The Division or department is not obligated to compensate the faculty member for investments the faculty may have made in the space during the time of occupancy.

**Emeritus Faculty**

Emeritus faculty may be provided with research space at the discretion of the unit, if space is available and if the emeritus faculty remains actively engaged in research that aligns with the programmatic needs and priorities of their unit. Priority for research space should not be given to emeritus faculty, however.
Research Space Productivity Measures and Annual Review

A common need across many academic units and within the Offices of the Provost, Vice President for Research, and Dean of Biology and Medicine is to better understand how research space is used. Having quantitative and qualitative metrics and measures in place helps units to assign, allocate, and optimize use of this space for current and anticipated research needs.

Productivity measures for dedicated research space may vary, depending on factors that are deemed most important or valued by each unit or discipline, and may or may not be directly linked to the level of financial activity. Therefore, financial measures should only be one part of the overall assessment of research space productivity allocation and assignment.

Primary Financial Measure of Space Productivity

The primary basic metric for measuring research space usage, regardless of discipline, will be based on indirect costs recovery. Calculations are based on financial and space data from the Dean’s office that are specifically coded as research.

Indirect costs ($) / sq. ft.

Other types of quantitative or qualitative information may assist in assessments of research space productivity and assignments or to establish internal target goals to support their needs and priorities. Examples of additional information that the Division may consider include the following (not in any particular order):

Total externally-sponsored research expenditures (direct & indirect costs) ($) / sq. ft.

Total research expenditures (direct & indirect costs) ($) / sq. ft., regardless of funding source.

Quality and impact of the research being conducted (e.g., data from individual Academic Impact Reports that are updated annually and available through department chairs).

Alignment of the research activity with the strategic priorities of the Division.

Number of people (e.g., postdocs, grad students, undergraduate researchers) participating in the research.

Proportion of effort dedicated to research (versus instruction or service).
Proportion of the research activity supported by external awards.

Type of research conducted in the space (e.g., theoretical, computational, heavy equipment).

Active pursuit of extramural funding.

Previous funding history.

Additional Considerations for the Allocation or Reassignment of Research Space

When allocating or reassigning research space, it is important to consider the following questions to optimize existing research space and avoid unnecessary renovation or construction costs:

Will the new allocation bring the space into alignment with the long-term programmatic needs and priorities of the unit?

Is the new allocation part of a long-term plan for research space management?

Will the new allocation offer opportunities for the renovation or upgrade of existing space?

Does the new allocation offer the opportunity to “right size” departmental or individual space allocations?

What is the length of the space commitment? Is this commitment explicit or implicit?

What one-time and recurring costs are associated with the new allocation? Will the research activity ultimately support the costs that directly result from its execution or will subsidies be needed?

Are there opportunities to co-locate similar types of research to share core or common space and equipment?

Are there opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration as a result of the space allocation?

How will space assignments, equipment placement and/or infrastructure plans affect health, fire, environmental, and life safety and compliance?

Questions about these guidelines should be directed to Edward_Hawrot@Brown.edu