8.4 Planning, Administration, and Development

8.4.1 Collaboration with Staff, Administration, and Faculty

The SLC should work closely with center administrators, and in particular, the education director(s) in planning, administration, and development of center activities that involve the SLC and/or ERC students generally. The administration will appreciate student leaders who are willing to help organize activities and make preparations for lab reviews, among other tasks. All the ERC students will benefit from the improved work environment and better center policies that result when student perspectives are effectively communicated to the administration.

One successful method for good communication between the SLC and center administrators is to schedule regular meetings. For example, if the SLC meets once a week or once a month, the education director(s) could be invited to attend a portion of each meeting, or every other meeting. Alternatively, correspondents from the SLC (e.g. president and/or vice president) may wish to attend faculty meetings on a periodic basis to facilitate communication and report student issues as they arise. In keeping with this idea, members of the SLC may also wish to allocate part of their regular meeting time to hear from attending students wishing to voice questions and concerns. This will help to make SLC/faculty interactions as efficient as possible.

The center director should also be well-informed regarding student activities and opinions, either through direct communication with the SLC or via reports from the education director(s). Finally, establishing email distribution lists can greatly facilitate communication among SLC members and between SLC members and administrators. In this manner, when issues arise where administrators require student input, they do not need to wait until the next scheduled meeting. This is especially important when students do not work regular hours or are geographically distributed around the lead university campus and partner university campuses.

Research-related work such as presentations and demonstrations are generally coordinated by individual faculty members or research scientists, who direct the activities of their own graduate and undergraduate researchers. At times, however, faculty members may require assistance from the SLC in order to communicate expectations, requests, and deadlines to the general ERC student body.

8.4.2 Leadership and Professional Development

Being part of an NSF-sponsored research center should provide students with additional opportunities for leadership and development beyond their degree program requirements. The SLC can assist administrators in encouraging students to further develop their skills by helping to plan workshops or seminars and by recognizing students who have made specific achievements.

In 2002, the SLCs then in operation were surveyed as to whether they or their centers presented awards or recognition to graduates. While half of the SLCs reported they do nothing formal, the following recognitions were noted among those who did:

Awards

- Best Poster
- Best Presentation
- Best Undergraduate Research Paper
- Outstanding Students/Teams/ Leadership
- Certificate of Recognition for Service
- Certificate for Course Completion

Graduate Recognition

- Graduation Parties/Receptions
- Banquet
- Certification (associated with program)
- Guest speaker after graduation

A similar range of awards and recognitions are still employed today.

It is very important to publicly recognize students who assist with center-related work that is beyond the scope of their research – for example, those who volunteer to help with site visit preparations, plan social events, and help with outreach activities. Widely attended social events such as end-of-year banquets and receptions, or welcome picnics and orientations, provide good opportunities for such recognition. Another option would be to recognize such achievements in periodic student newsletters, which could be authored by the SLC with additional help from the center administrators and/or education director(s).

While most centers conduct workshops and seminars for the students, in most cases SLCs are not involved with their planning or execution. One exception is that some SLCs sponsor graduate student research seminars. While the great majority of the seminars are research oriented, other seminars/workshops hosted by centers include:

- Resume Writing
- Preparing a Curriculum Vitae
- Managing Thesis as Project
- Team Building
- Presentation and Communication Skills
- Assessment & Evaluation
- Mentoring
- Educational Techniques
- "What is [this center]?"
- MD Seminar (on reallife work experiences)
- LIFE Seminar (Learn about Industry From the Experts)
- Ethics
- Job Negotiation Strategies
- Career Preparation
    - Transitioning from Grad School to Industry: IAB-hosted Q&A forum
    - Mock/Practice Interview Sessions: Hosted by IAB members or faculty
- Patent Research/Writing and Intellectual Property
- Starting Your Own Business.

8.4.3 Onboarding of New Students

New graduate and undergraduate students join universities, and thus ERCs, each academic semester. It can prove challenging for a new student to receive all pertinent information regarding the ERC, which typically spans several institutions. The SLC can be an excellent medium for the onboarding of these new students. Onboarding refers to the mechanism or methods through which new ERC students and/or SLC members acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to become effective organizational members. Several strategies include:

- Beginning of the semester orientations -- Current SLC officers/members can host a meeting or series of meetings which provide a semester outline of the SLC's functions, e.g., typical events hosted, upcoming goals of each SLC committee or officer, available involvement positions, etc.
- Website or documentation which provides:
    - An overview of the ERC's main Thrusts and/or testbed projects
    - Video interviews or write-ups from the Thrust or Testbed leads (faculty) can be incorporated into these overviews (uploaded to Youtube if the ERC website is unavailable for this purpose)
    - A directory providing all faculty, staff, and student contact information
        - May also include a short bio of each person containing their ERC Thrust or Testbed project involvement and their institution affiliation
- A list of all industrial partners working with the ERC
    - Due to intellectual property rights or non-disclosure agreements, details of each company's involvement in an ERC's Thrust(s), Testbed(s), or projects may vary
- A comprehensive list of equipment available to the ERC researchers, including name and contact information of each tool or software program owner
    - ??Google Drive provides ease of accessibility and security (e.g., "Only those with link") and allows multiple users to continuously update and edit this list
    - Troubleshooting advice, tips, or questions can be a subset of this list such that owners of the same or similar tools can readily discuss best practices in a documentable manner
- Formal/informal gatherings at conferences highly attended by large percentages of faculty, staff, students, and industry partners of the ERC
    - Schedules of talks, presentations, and poster sessions specifically of ERC members can be distributed to allow greater interaction and exposure for new students to projects spanning the ERC
    - ERC-sponsored luncheons at these conferences

Note: *If a website is utilized to provide the above information--especially bullets #3 and #4--it is highly recommended that a login process is required so that this information is not publicly available*.

Source URL: https://erc-assoc.org/best_practices/84-planning-administration-and-development