18 March 2006

MEMORANDUM
TO: University Relations Committee
FROM: Jack Fellows, Rick Anthes, and Susan Friberg
SUBJECT: URC Role Discussion Topic

Purpose of this Memo. The purpose of this memo is to provide some suggestions for discussing future roles for the URC.

Background. The URC has had a formal charge for many years (see URC Charge), but its current focus has largely been:

1. Non-core proposal review.
2. Planning the October Members Meeting.
3. Faculty Fellowship Selection.
4. Strategic advice (e.g., UCAR Strategic Plan, etc).

During the NCAR management proposal process, there have been a range of discussions about whether the URC role could be enhanced as part of the UCAR proposal. While the non-core proposal review is an essential community service role for the URC and greatly valued by UCAR and NSF, at times this particular role makes the URC seem more like the “proposal police” and less focused on community relations and strategic guidance to the UCAR President.

URC Charge

The University Relations Committee (URC) helps maintain good communication and relationships between the Corporation and members. The URC acts as an advisory committee to the President, proposing agenda items for members' meetings and proposing activities and programs for UCAR to undertake. The URC also reviews NCAR's non-NSF funding and considers any charges of unfair competition by NCAR from the university community, and reviews UOP funding for activities that lie outside the scope of the sponsor agreements that form the core of each UOP program.

URC Role Suggestions. The key question is whether it is possible to focus more on the “maintain good communications and relationships between the Corporation and members.” Some ideas for changes in the URC include:

1. Community Relations. Could the URC engage the community more and bring important and strategic issues to the attention of the UCAR President and Board (i.e., what is the community struggling with and how could UCAR make a difference on those issues; what are the key issues between UCAR, the community, and NSF; etc).

2. Initiative Building. In the past, the URC has been helpful in advising UCAR management as new programs are being formed (e.g., COMET, PAGE, DLESE, etc). The UCAR President would appreciate URC input on new programs such as these. How could we more effectively engage the URC in the development of new programs to make sure they
are well positioned to help the community? How can the URC contribute to a broader range of activities? Should the URC chair attend the UCAR Trustee meetings?

3. **Visibility.** Besides the annual URC report at the UCAR Members meeting, could the URC be more active and visible to the community (e.g., “URC Corner” in the UCAR Quarterly, articles in BAMS, more leadership at meetings, a URC newsletter, etc).

4. **Membership.** The URC is an important forum to become more familiar with UCAR and many URC members have moved on to be members of the UCAR Board. To date, URC membership has been outstanding, but in an increasingly complex interdisciplinary research environment are there additional considerations we should include in the URC nominating process to ensure the best mix of skills and perspectives given the issues facing UCAR? Do we now need a broader community representation on the URC, including social scientists, computational science, and engineering. And could the URC pool be even larger (a URC Assembly) and call upon a subset or on individuals for specific issues/tasks. The URC members might also serve then for a longer term (perhaps 5 years).

5. **Meetings.** People are normally quite tired at the October URC meeting, which occurs after a long two days. Yet, it is typically a good time to discuss the Members meeting outcomes and engage with UCAR staff. The April meeting at a university is a great opportunity to engage with Member institutions, but really limits interactions with UCAR staff. What is the right approach to meetings? Should we continue holding them at a university? Or should the spring meeting be held at UCAR? Or at UCAR every other year?

6. **Name.** Given all of the above, is there a better name for the URC. This could be both a symbolic and a legitimate fresh start. A name that promotes collaboration and interactions.