

Introduction

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The following papers each address an aspect of the subject of the thirteenth annual research policy retreat hosted by the Merrill Center: *Regional Research Collaborations*. We are pleased to continue this program that brings together university administrators and researcher-scientists for informal discussions that lead to the identification of pressing issues, understanding of different perspectives, and the creation of plans of action to enhance research productivity within our institutions. This year's focus is on regional collaboration in research: examples of successful collaborations, emerging large-scale regional collaborations and the circumstances contributing to successful collaborations. The 2009 Merrill retreat provided an opportune time to consider the implications of the increase in regional research collaborations, and how these collaborations are managed and fostered.

Benefactors Virginia and Fred Merrill make possible this series of retreats: *The Research Mission of Public Universities*. On behalf of the many participants over more than a decade, I express deep gratitude to the Merrills for their enlightened support. On behalf of the Merrill Advanced Studies Center, I extend my appreciation for the contribution of effort and time of the participants and in particular to the authors of this collection of papers who found time in their busy schedules for the preparation of the materials that follow.

Fifteen senior administrators and faculty from four institutions in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska attended the 2009 retreat. Our keynote speaker for the event, Dr. Kevin A. Roth, gave a comprehensive overview of the role of regional collaboration in the success of the University of Alabama's

Neuroscience Blueprint Core Center. In addition to those presenters whose remarks are published here, John Colombo served as moderator and contributed a valuable perspective as Director of the Life Span Institute at the University of Kansas.

Though not all discussants' remarks are individually documented, their participation was an essential ingredient in the general discussions that ensued and the preparation of the final papers. The list of all conference attendees is at the end of the publication.

The inaugural event in this series of conferences, in 1997, focused on pressures that hinder the research mission of higher education. In 1998, we turned our attention to competing for new resources and to ways to enhance individual and collective productivity. In 1999, we examined in more depth cross-university alliances. The focus of

the 2000 retreat was on making research a part of the public agenda and championing the cause of research as a valuable state resource. In 2001, the topic was evaluating research productivity, with a focus on the very important National Research Council (NRC) study from 1995. In the wake of 9/11, the topic for 2002 was “Science at a Time of National Emergency”; participants discussed scientists coming to the aid of the country, such as in joint research on preventing and mitigating bioterrorism, while also recognizing the difficulties our universities face because of increased security measures. In 2003 we focused on graduate education and two keynote speakers addressed key issues about retention of students in the doctoral track, efficiency in time to degree, and making the rules of the game transparent. In 2004 we looked at the leadership challenge of a comprehensive public university to accommodate the fluid nature of scientific initiatives to the world of long-term planning for the teaching and

service missions of the universities. In 2005 we discussed the interface of science and public policy with an eye toward how to move forward in a way that honors both public trust and scientific integrity. Our retreat in 2006 considered the privatization of public universities and the corresponding shift in research funding and infrastructure. The 2007 retreat focused on the changing climate of research funding, the development of University research resources, and how to calibrate those resources with likely sources of funding, while the 2008 retreat dealt with the many benefits and specific issues of international research collaboration.

Once again, the texts of this year’s Merrill white paper reveal various perspectives on only one of the many complex issues faced by research administrators and scientists every day. It is with pleasure that I encourage you to read the papers from the 2009 Merrill policy retreat on *Regional Research Collaborations*.