

Introduction

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The ninth annual research policy retreat hosted by the Merrill Center resulted in the papers in this collection; each addresses an aspect of the 2005 topic: *The Interface of Science and Public Policy*. It is the latest effort in the 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. This year's topic is the focus from many lively discussions of the research mission of public universities. The public is greatly interested in scientific issues such as embryonic stem cell research, sexual behavior, evolution, and global warming. Scientists are increasingly aware of their responsibility toward the public sources of much of the funding for research. And administrators are at the intersection of advocacy for scientific research and stewardship of the public's support of scholarship and higher education. The retreat provided a timely opportunity to discuss the interface of science and public policy with an eye toward how to move forward in a way that honors public trust and scientific integrity.

The eight previous retreats in the Merrill series *The Research Mission of Public Universities* were the foundation for the 2005 gathering. Our benefactors, Virginia and Fred Merrill, support these conferences. On behalf of the participants, I express deep gratitude to the Merrills for their enlightened endowments. On behalf of the Merrill Advanced Studies Center, I extend my great appreciation for the time and efforts of the participants and in particular to the contributors of this collection of papers who allocated time in their busy

schedules for the preparation of the materials that follow.

Twenty senior administrators and faculty attended from four institutions in Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska; they were joined by members of the Merrill Center board of directors and Robert Woody, KU Counsel in Washington, D.C. Keynote speaker Alan Leshner, CEO of AAAS and executive publisher of *Science*, set the stage by describing the current context for science, society, and public policy from his well-informed perspective. In addition to the invited presenters whose remarks are here

published, other participants served as discussants. Though the discussants' remarks are not individually documented, their participation was an essential ingredient in the general discussions that ensued and in 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. Finally, last year we looked at how the leadership of a comprehensive public university must accommodate the fluid nature of scientific initiatives to the world of long-term planning for the teaching and service missions of the universities. The policy retreat focused on how to meet the leadership challenges, both by noting the successes that have been achieved and by considering ways to leverage the available resources across the universities in the region.

Once again, the texts of this year's Merrill white paper reveal many fascinating perspectives through a frank examination of one aspect of the complex issues faced by research administrators and scientists every day. It is with pleasure that I encourage you to read the papers from the 2005 Merrill policy retreat on *The Interface of Science and Public Policy*.