Charge
A committee consisting of Dr. Wendy Reed (Committee Chair), Dr. Eakalak Khan, Dr. Sanku Mallik, and Mr. Steve Sobiech conducted a comprehensive review of Dr. Kelly Rusch in her capacity as Vice President for Research and Creative Activity (VPRCA) according to University Policy 327.3. The committee was charged to summarize findings in a report that addresses the following key question/points.

1. Does Dr. Rusch work effectively and collaboratively to fulfill her responsibilities as Vice President for Research and Creative Activity?
2. List Dr. Rusch's particular areas of strength.
3. Describe potential areas of improvement for Dr. Rusch.

Process
Information about Dr. Rusch's performance was collected from multiple sources.

1. The Provost's office administrated an online survey to collect data from all of Dr. Rusch's direct reports (all employees in the Research and Creative Activity (RCA) office), all Deans and Department Chairs/Heads, and 200 randomly selected faculty members. This was a Qualtrics survey, which collected anonymous comments and Likert-type scale data on three broad areas of performance: communication, leadership and personal skills. Twenty-three direct reports responded, in addition to 35 faculty members, 14 administrators and 23 department chairs/heads. Forty-one people reported no knowledge or no direct interaction with Dr. Rusch and subsequently did not fill out the survey.

2. We conducted two sessions open to the campus (October 25 and 26, 2017) to collect data specific to eight responsibilities detailed in Dr. Rusch's position description (see attached). Data were collected about the frequency with which the behaviors/responsibilities were observed and the level of agreement with effective performance in each behavior/responsibility using "clicker"-type personal response devices. Opportunity for anonymous written feedback was also provided. Sixty-one people participated in the clicker questions, including 15 people identifying as faculty, 32 staff, four administrators, nine students, and one person identified as "other". Twenty-three people responded with written comments.

3. In addition to anonymous written feedback from the open forums and the online survey, opportunities for written feedback on Dr. Rush's performance in the eight responsibilities were sent to all staff and faculty identified in the organization chart for the RCA office to address responsibilities #7 and #8, researchers participating in large research initiatives on campus (EPSCoR, COBREs and Grand Challenges), and to 15 people outside NDSU identified as important stakeholders from other universities, agencies and industry connections (responsibilities #4 and #5). Seven people from the RCA office returned written comments, two researchers from institutional grants, and feedback was received from five stakeholders from outside NDSU.

4. Individual meetings with staff, faculty, and outside stakeholders as requested (n=9).
5. Written feedback in other formats (emails or other comments, n=5).
The committee fully recognizes that people could give feedback multiple times. However, allowing for candid and anonymous feedback was a critical consideration in designing opportunities for feedback. All written feedback was evaluated for common themes, which are summarized below.

**Summary of Key Question/Points**

**Does Dr. Rusch work effectively and collaboratively to fulfill her responsibilities as Vice President for Research and Creative Activity?**

Based on review of the comments and survey results the committee feels that Dr. Rusch is able to work effectively and collaboratively in her capacity as VPRCA with some constituents of the campus community (particularly with her direct reports), but she has not developed these same positive relationships with a majority of the campus community. In both surveys, the average scores for all of her responsibilities and characteristics were at or below neutral (or 50% observance), with the exception of her direct reports indicating they agreed that the mission of their unit was clear. Overall, the feedback suggests there is a mutual lack of trust between Dr. Rusch and the faculty research community. Building trust is challenging, but essential to the job, and we suggest areas below that will be critical in her ability to be an effective VPRCA at NDSU.

**List Dr. Rusch’s particular areas of strength.**

- She is self-motivated, has high expectations of herself and others, and is a hard worker.
- She has reduced NDSU’s risk for being out of compliance with state, federal and sponsor-based regulations.
- She provides opportunities for campus to learn about grants writing, grant administration and new funding opportunities.
- She takes initiative to solve problems.

**Describe potential areas of improvement for Dr. Rusch.**

- Communication – A number of people indicate that Dr. Rusch's communication style is direct, although this was not mentioned as a concern to most respondents. The concerns expressed about communication include lack of transparency about decisions, a top-down approach to management and problem solving, lack of a clearly articulated vision and strategic plan for the research enterprise at NDSU, and inconsistent ability to actively listen to concerns, needs and ideas from a variety of research stakeholders. These themes from written and oral comments are supported by the online survey, where the average frequency with which people observed positive communication characteristics are all observed less than half of the time (averages range between 1.42 and 1.83 out of 4, which are between some and about half of the time) with the exception of her "ability to share opinions, even when unpopular" (average 2.51 out of 4, which is observed between half and most of the time). Communication skills are the most common suggested area of improvement for Dr. Rusch.
- Personal skills – The committee found inconsistencies in Dr. Rusch's interactions with different groups of people inside and outside NDSU. She seems to work well with, and has significant support from, people who report directly to her. This theme is corroborated by the online survey. The highest average scores for Dr. Rusch are from her direct reports (n=23), in which they respond to questions of her ability to motivate, support, and provide feedback (averages
range between 2.3 and 2.9 out of 4, which are between neutral and agree). However, when asked about cooperative and collaborative relationships with faculty, staff and other administrators in the open campus sessions these scores are among her lowest (averages range between 0.62 and 1.06 out of 4, which is between strongly disagree and disagree). A number of people report a hostile work environment in the RCA office, which is not consistent with NDSU values and mission and the committee recommends a follow-up to address these reported concerns. A critical part of the VPRCA position is the ability to work productively with campus and outside stakeholders to support and grow the university's research and creative activity opportunity, which requires strong and positive relationships between the VPRCA and all stakeholders.

- Professional behavior – A number of people report hearing conversations with Dr. Rusch in which she discussed information or opinions that were inappropriate or derogatory. We bring this up here because the VPRCA should understand she has positional power to influence others and is a spokesperson and representative of the NDSU community.

- Consistent and timely availability to faculty, staff and outside stakeholders – A number of people report on the difficulty in meeting with Dr. Rusch or frequent meeting cancelations. While we recognize that Dr. Rusch is very busy, there is a need to access to the VPRCA and some of the commitments of time may result from improper prioritization. There were reports of Dr. Rusch being overly involved in details of research administration and grant management. Perhaps she can rely on her competent staff for this management, while prioritizing meetings with faculty and outside stakeholders.

- Achieve a better balance between enforcement/compliance of research, and enabling/nurturing research. One important role of the VPRCA is to assure that research at the university is compliant with state, federal and sponsor-based regulations. However, there are consistent comments that Dr. Rusch's focus on this one aspect of her responsibility has come at the cost of leadership in encouraging and enabling research on campus. This sentiment is reflected in the survey results from the open forum in which the highest level of agreement was for the statement that "Dr. Rusch provides effective oversight to ensure integrity and compliance in research with federal, state and sponsor-based regulations" (average 1.39 out of 4, which is between neutral and disagree) and one of her lowest scores for the statement "Dr. Rusch effectively enhances and encourages NDSU's research enterprise" (average 0.62 out of 4, which is between disagree and strongly disagree).

- Work to build better relationships with other research institutions - The committee received few comments from stakeholders outside NDSU. However, the comments we did receive suggest that the opportunities to interact with other institutions, state and federal agencies, and with private entities in North Dakota is an important part of the VPRCA position, and currently, these relationships are not as productive as they can be.

Summary
Dr. Rusch is clearly capable of establishing and maintaining productive, collaborative and positive relationships with people on the NDSU campus. However, the data we collected for this review also show inconsistencies in her ability to foster these same strong cooperative relationships with all campus constituents. As a student-focused, land grant, research university the VPRCA is responsible for a central part of the university's mission and improved relations with the entire campus will be critical for continued success as a research institution.
Summary of Online Survey Results

Participants: total = 136; faculty = 35; direct report = 23; administrator = 14; department chair/head = 23; no knowledge/have not interacted = 41

Think about how you interact with Dr. Rusch in your job. (for direct reports only)

Scale (0-4): Strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, neutral = 2, disagree = 1, strongly disagree = 0

This person motivates me to do my best in my job. Average = 2.79, SD = 1.47
This person provides adequate support for me to perform my job. Average = 2.78, SD = 1.51
I receive regular feedback from this person. Average = 2.30, SD = 1.49
The mission of my unit is clear. Average = 3.48, SD = 0.85

14 Written Comments: 6 generally positive, 3 generally negative, 5 neutral

*Note: Number of participants = 24-23

Indicate how often Dr. Rusch displays the following behaviors.

Scale (0-4): Always = 4, most of the time = 3, about half of the time = 2, some of the time = 1, never = 0

Leadership ability

Takes initiative to solve problems. Average = 2.17, SD = 1.04
Motivates others to reach their goals. Average = 1.28, SD = 1.35
Handles conflict in a constructive manner. Average = 1.26, SD = 1.37
Takes risks and encourages others to take risks. Average = 1.29, SD = 1.31

46 written comments (this was the only section in the survey broken down by personnel category)

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Communication skills

Is open to feedback and seeks out the opinions of others. Average = 1.53, SD = 1.41
Communicates openly and effectively. Average = 1.83, SD = 1.32
Is an effective listener. Average = 1.42, SD = 1.40
Shares opinions even when unpopular. Average = 2.51, SD = 1.30

44 written comments on communication: 12 generally positive, 27 generally negative, 2 neutral, 2 mixed positive and negative.
**Personal skills**

Avoids politicking and hidden agendas. Average = 1.34, SD = 1.37
Treats others with respect and civility. Average = 2.03, SD = 1.44
Is unbiased in treatment of others. Average = 1.44, SD = 1.43
Pursues new knowledge and skills. Average = 1.79, SD = 1.33

38 written comments on personal skills: 13 generally positive, 22 generally negative, 1 neutral, 1 mixed positive and negative.

**Note: Number of participants answering this portion of the survey = 89-93 (between 5 and 32 people indicated that they have not observed the listed behaviors).**

**Summary of Open Forum Results**

Participants: total = 61; faculty = 15; staff = 32; administration = 4; student = 9; other = 1

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements.
Scale (0-4): Strongly agree = 4, agree = 3, neutral = 2, disagree = 1, strongly disagree = 0

- Dr. Rusch articulates a shared vision for NDSU’s research, creative and interdisciplinary activity. Average = 1.07, SD = 1.39.
- Dr. Rusch effectively manages NDSU’s Office of Research and Creative Activity. Average = 0.93, SD = 1.31.
- Dr. Rusch effectively enhances NDSU’s research enterprise. Average = 0.62, SD = 1.15.
- Dr. Rusch effectively expands and encourages NDSU’s research enterprise. Average = 0.82, SD = 1.31.
- Dr. Rusch effectively creates collaborative platforms with other universities, agencies, and industry. Average = 0.63, SD = 1.10.
- Dr. Rusch effectively works with the private sector on economic development that encourage and enhance technology transfer activities. Average = 0.59, SD = 1.07.
- Dr. Rusch builds and maintains strong cooperative relationships with other administrators. Average = 1.06, SD = 1.42.
- Dr. Rusch builds and maintains strong cooperative relationships with faculty. Average = 0.62, SD = 1.11.
- Dr. Rusch builds and maintains strong cooperative relationships with staff. Average = 0.88, SD = 1.32.
- Dr. Rusch provides effective oversight to ensure integrity and compliance in research with federal, state and sponsor-based regulations. Average = 1.39, SD = 1.46.

23 written comments were submitted from the open forums: 20 generally negative and 3 generally positive.

7 written comments were submitted from the RCA office: 5 generally positive and 2 generally negative.
**VPRCA Responsibilities**

Dr. Rusch’s position description includes the following responsibilities:

1. Manage and advance NDSU’s research, creative and interdisciplinary activities.
2. Enhance the status of NDSU as a land grant, student focused, research institution.
3. Expand and encourage research scholarship and enhance external funding for research and creative activities.
4. Expand NDSU’s capacity for innovative, multidisciplinary, and large scale programs by creating collaborative platforms with other universities, agencies, and industry.
5. Work closely with the private sector on economic development strategies that encourage and enhance technology transfer activities.
6. Build and maintain strong cooperative relationships with other vice presidents, deans, directors, department heads/chairs, faculty and staff.
7. Manage sponsored research programs and creative activity.
8. Provide oversight to ensure integrity and compliance in research with federal, state, and sponsor-based regulations.