

I. Organization Title: University of Wisconsin-La Crosse River Studies Center (RSC)

II. Organization and Operation

RSC members are governed by six interdependent sets of regulations:

- Federal and State laws and regulations
- UW System policies and rules
- UWL policies and rules
- Policies and rules of their college
- Shared governance bylaws and policies for faculty and academic staff
- RSC bylaws

A. Preamble

1. Background

The RSC was created in 1972 as a non-curricular unit focusing on research and informational programs pertinent to the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) and its related resources. Since its inception and while still focusing on the UMR, the RSC expanded its research program to other environmental resources across regional, national, and global scales based on members' and collaborators' interests and opportunities (see the RSC webpage for activities over time).

Since 1972, the RSC has sequentially been led by a director, co-directors, and director + assistant director—all of whom were appointed by the UWL College of Science and Health (CSH) dean. In December 2022, the CSH dean appointed the sitting assistant director as the new director. Then, by an *ad hoc* process and by majority vote of the membership in December 2022, the RSC took the following steps:

- Changed the title of the assistant director to associate director
- Selected an associate director by membership election who was then recommended to the CSH dean for appointment in consultation with the provost
- Expanded leadership to a "leadership team" for the purposes of providing guidance to the director/associate director, chairing standing committees, and leading areas of focused responsibility

The bylaws contained herein formally define the first set of operating policies and practices of the RSC.

2. Mission Statement

The RSC recognizes that the UMR and all freshwater ecosystems are vital to the environmental, cultural, and economic health of the nation. Our mission is to conduct and collaboratively support research, creative activities, public outreach, and other endeavors related to the UMR and its connected ecosystems. Our central efforts are to:

- Prepare future scholars and professionals by creating experiential learning opportunities related to river systems

- Engage professional partners and community members in river-related research and other activities
- Contribute to the protection and promotion of freshwater ecosystems

We appreciate the value of bringing professionals together, including RSC members, state and regional partners, and national/international audiences in a spirit of inclusive excellence.

3. Vision Statement

We aim to foster within our members the curiosity, creativity, and expertise necessary to employ multidisciplinary approaches to address state, regional, and national challenges related to river systems. To optimize our ability to support the RSC mission, we will focus on the following strategic priorities:

- Increase the visibility of the RSC as a national and community leader in river research and engagement
- Strengthen existing and develop new partnerships
- Support and strategically expand RSC membership
- Build the philanthropic base that supports the RSC mission
- Develop clear roles for student involvement and a high level of engagement among RSC students

B. Meeting Guidelines

1. RSC meetings will be conducted according to the most recent edition of [Robert's Rules of Order](#) and [WI state open meetings laws](#).
2. The RSC director will set the agenda for each meeting, in consultation with the Leadership Team as needed. Meeting agendas shall be distributed to the membership at least four days in advance.
3. Minutes will be taken by the recorder.
4. Meetings of the full membership will be held at a minimum of twice per semester. Leadership team meetings will be held more frequently, approximately once a month during the academic year.

C. Definitions of Quorum and Motion

1. A quorum for the purpose of conducting regular business shall be a simple majority of voting members, who may attend virtually or in-person (see Section II.D.1).
2. A simple majority of voting members present (virtually or in-person) is required to pass a general (non-bylaws) motion.
3. Motions to change RSC bylaws require two readings at regular meetings and a 2/3 majority of voting members present (virtually or in-person).
4. Votes held outside of meetings may be initiated by the RSC director (e.g., via email or online survey). Quorum for a "virtual" motion is a response collected from a simple majority of voting members. A simple majority of votes collected within the relevant time frame is required to pass a virtual motion.

D. Definitions of Membership and Voting Status

1. RSC membership types are listed below. A member may request a change in their membership type at any time. Such requests may come to the membership for a vote at the discretion of the RSC director.
 - a. **Voting Member:** Current UWL faculty or staff whose professional activities align with the RSC mission.
 - b. **Emeritus Member:** Retired voting members whose interests align with the RSC mission. Non-voting member.
 - c. **Adjunct Member:** Individuals not employed at UWL but have a professional alignment with the RSC mission. This includes faculty or staff who resign from UWL but remain active in RSC-related activities. Non-voting member.
 - d. **Student Member:** Current UWL graduate and undergraduate students engaged in activities with current RSC members. Other students may apply for RSC membership by contacting a member of the leadership team. Non-voting member.
2. Individuals whose professional or academic interests align with the RSC mission may apply for membership following the process determined by the Standing Committee on Membership. Applications will be reviewed and approved by a majority vote of existing voting members.
3. The RSC leadership team (see Section III.E) will review the membership list annually. A motion may be brought forward at a meeting of the full membership to remove any individuals whose professional activities cease to align with the RSC mission statement, who leave UWL, and/or who are no longer actively engaged with the RSC. This requires a majority vote of existing voting members.

III. Positions and Responsibilities

A. Director

The director will:

1. Hold the title of *Rada Fellow in River Studies* (refer to Rada Fellowships in River Studies Addendum 1).
 - a. Fellowships may be awarded for the length of the term assigned to the role as determined by the RSC bylaws and as deemed appropriate by the provost, in consultation with the CSH dean.
 - b. The provost shall be the final award authority and shall authorize expenditures from the Fellowship Fund in consultation with the CSH dean.
2. Convene and work with the leadership team to develop an agenda for full-membership meetings a minimum of two times per semester.
3. Convene and work with the associate director to develop agenda for leadership team meetings approximately every month during the academic year.
4. Appoint voting members to 2-year terms on standing committees (see section IV.D)
5. Maintain budget oversight.
6. Serve as UWL liaison for the Cooperative Education Agreement with the Upper Midwest Environmental Science Center.

7. Engage and foster partnerships and philanthropic relationships.
8. Meet annually, at a minimum, with the External Advisory Group (section III.F).
9. Meet regularly with the CSH dean.
10. Work in conjunction with the associate director to provide an annual report, to be published on the RSC webpage. The report will include accomplishments, information and budget items, and responses to an annual survey of RSC membership conducted by the Standing Committee on Membership.
11. Co-manage access to shared spaces and equipment.
12. The inaugural term begins 1/1/2025, with election during fall 2024.

B. Associate Director

1. Will also hold the title of *Rada Fellow in River Studies* (refer to Rada Fellowships in River Studies Addendum 1).
 - a. Fellowships may be awarded for the length of the term assigned to the role as determined by the RSC bylaws and as deemed appropriate by the provost, in consultation with the CSH dean.
 - b. The provost shall be the final award authority and shall authorize expenditures from the Fellowship Fund in consultation with the CSH dean.
2. Share leadership duties with the director, including assistance with developing meeting agendas; act on the director's behalf if they are not available.
3. Appoint voting members to 2-year terms on standing committees (see section IV.D)
4. Meet annually, at a minimum, with the External Advisory Group (section III.F)
5. Lead a team to organize and implement the RSC annual retreat.
6. Work in conjunction with the director to provide an RSC annual report, to be published on the RSC webpage.
7. Co-manage access to shared spaces and equipment.
8. The inaugural term begins 1/1/2027, with election during fall 2026.

C. Recorder

1. Take minutes for each meeting.
2. Distribute minutes in a timely fashion to RSC members.
3. Ensure that copies of the minutes are archived in a secure location.
4. Selected from the leadership team.

D. Freshwater Collaborative Liaison

The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin (FCW) is a partnership of Wisconsin's 13 public universities, connecting with industry partners, local communities, policymakers, and advocacy groups. Its mission is to train the next generation of water researchers and problem solvers and to establish Wisconsin as a global leader in water-related science, technology, and economic growth. In addition to preparing future scientists and water managers, our work benefits everyone who uses or relies on water, from farmers to homeowners, outdoor enthusiasts to manufacturers. The liaison is appointed and confirmed annually by the provost, in consultation with the RSC director and associate director. The liaison will:

1. Provide input and recommendations regarding academic FCW programming and curriculum.
2. Solidify FCW internship opportunities across the state.
3. Create FCW conferences, meetings, and discussion groups across the state.
4. Strengthen the FCW grants program and processes.
5. Broaden participation in the water sector from an academic perspective.

E. Leadership Team

Comprised of the RSC director, associate director, FCW liaison, and 3-5 additional appointed voting members who coordinate focused responsibilities. Leadership team members will:

1. Work collaboratively to guide the RSC according to its mission and vision statements.
2. Focus efforts on the following areas:
 - a. **Safety:** Develop, update, and oversee an RSC safety plan covering laboratory, boat fleet, and field safety.
 - b. **Policy:** Develop and manage the RSC bylaws and related policies.
 - c. **Website:** Interface with University Marketing and Communications and other Standing Committees to provide updates and design components for the RSC website and its contents.
 - d. **Outreach:** Maintain and promote the visibility of the RSC on campus and the broader public and academic communities. Work with University Marketing and Communications as well as the Community Engagement Coordinator to increase the Center's profile and create partnerships with relevant organizations. Maintain active social media accounts for the RSC.
 - e. **Philanthropy:** Work with the UWL Alumni & Friends Foundation to build upon its philanthropic successes, e.g., by exploring ways to steward its donors, nurture relationships with prospective donors who have shown an interest in supporting the RSC and build case statements for philanthropic support of individual activities or those of the RSC in general. (refer to Exploring Philanthropy for the River Studies Center in Addendum 2).
3. Chair a standing committee (see section IV.D)
4. Form *ad hoc* focused action groups as required.
5. Meet approximately monthly during the academic year.

F. External Advisory Group

1. Comprised of selected emeritus and adjunct RSC members, among others, who share an interest in assessing and guiding RSC activities.
2. Meet annually, at a minimum, with the RSC director, associate director, and the chair of the Standing Committee on External Advisors, and any other interested RSC members to share and discuss the mission, vision, and accomplishments of RSC.
3. Be available for consultation as needed.

IV. Governance

A. Changes to the RSC Bylaws

Proposed changes to the bylaws require a minimum of two readings at RSC general membership meetings prior to consideration of a motion. A quorum and a 2/3 majority of voting members present (virtually or in-person) is required for motion passage (see Section II.C.3). Bylaws updates will be managed by the leadership team.

B. Appointment of the Director and Associate Director

- 1. Summary:** The Chair of the Standing Committee on Membership (“moderator”) will organize the nomination and election process. The name of the individual elected by RSC membership will be forwarded to the CSH dean, who in consultation with the provost, will make final selection of the director/associate director.
- 2. Nomination:** An interest survey will be sent by the moderator to the voting members of the RSC within three months of the end of the director/associate director term, requesting nominations for individuals to serve in one of the leadership positions. Self-nominations are encouraged. The chairs of the nominees’ home departments, respective deans, and the provost will be notified of the nomination prior to the election process.
 - a. Qualifications for Director:** The candidate shall have a current appointment within the CSH, status as faculty or instructional academic staff, have served on the leadership team, and not be employed on terminal contract. Recommended: Rank of Professor or 10 years of prior voting membership in RSC.
 - b. Qualifications for Associate Director:** The candidate shall have served on the leadership team or had significant involvement with RSC committees, and not be employed on terminal contract. Recommended: Rank of Associate Professor or 5 years of prior voting membership in RSC.

Individuals accepting nomination will make a short presentation at a full-membership meeting in which they summarize their goals and qualifications for serving in the position. A video recording of presentations shall be made available to all RSC members.

- 3. Election:** The director and associate director will be elected by the voting members of the RSC. All members of the RSC are free to exchange viewpoints regarding the election and any individual’s candidacy in a manner that is not disruptive to operations of the center.
 - a.** The moderator will send a survey ballot to solicit votes one month prior to the end of the term. Each eligible voter shall vote for one person or select “none of the above” and return the ballot. Ballots shall be collected in a fashion that maintains anonymity of individual voters.
 - b.** A simple majority vote is required to elect a director or associate director. If a simple majority is not obtained, the moderator will organize a runoff election

that includes the two nominees with the greatest initial number of votes. Upon request, the moderator will provide voting results reported as totals.

- c. The name of the election winner will be submitted to the CSH dean, who, in consultation with the provost, will make final appointment of the position. If approval is not given, the moderator shall conduct another election under the provisions of this policy.

4. Term Length: The director and associate director will serve terms of 4 years (starting January 1st following election), subject to resignation or removal for cause. There are no limits on the number of terms that an individual may serve. Term periods for the two positions will be offset by two years; an extension of an individual's term may be supported to ensure that this is the case.

5. Resignation: Resignation of the director and associate director is tendered through a letter submitted to the CSH dean.

6. Removal

- a. Concerns related to the performance of the director or associate director shall be brought to and discussed by the leadership team. A consensus vote of 2/3 of the leadership team is required to request a meeting of the leadership team with the CSH dean regarding the question of removal.
- b. If the outcome of the meeting with the CSH dean is to continue with the removal process, the following steps will be taken. At least one week in advance, the moderator shall announce to all RSC voting members the time, place, and purpose of the meeting at which the moderator will preside, and the rationale for the upcoming vote will be considered in closed session. The director or associate director in question will be given the opportunity to address the membership and will leave prior to the meeting going into closed session.
- c. Within one week of that meeting, the moderator shall send ballots to RSC voting members to determine if the director or associate director in question shall be recommended for removal or retention. Ballots shall be collected in a fashion that maintains anonymity of individual voters. The moderator shall tabulate the votes and communicate the outcome to all RSC members. Removal of the director or associate director must be approved by a 2/3 majority of voting members.
- d. If the vote is for removal, a new director or associate director shall be selected in accordance with the methods detailed in Section IV.B.
- e. The director or associate director in question may resign without prejudice at any point during the removal proceedings.

7. Incomplete Terms and Temporary Leave

- a. The inability of the director or associate director to complete a term due to incapacity, removal, or immediate resignation will result in their replacement by one of the following procedures, as determined by the leadership team: (1) the

moderator and voting members of RSC shall hold an immediate election, or (2) request the CSH dean to appoint a replacement, in consultation with the provost, for the remainder of the term in accordance with the provision of this policy.

- b. A temporary leave taken by the director or associate director may result in an interim appointment being made according to the length of leave, by the following procedures: For one semester or for a summer, the CSH dean, in consultation with the provost and incumbent director or associate director, shall select a temporary replacement for the period of the leave. For leave of the director, it is assumed that the replacement will be the incumbent associate director. For a leave extending for more than one semester, the moderator and voting members of RSC shall hold an election or request that the CSH dean appoint a replacement in accordance with the provisions of this policy. In this event, the time constraints affecting the selection process will not be applicable and the replacement will serve for the remainder of the incumbent director or associate director's leave.

C. Appointment of the Leadership Team

1. **Appointment:** The RSC director and associate director will send an interest survey to RSC members at the end of each leadership team term. They will consult and decide who will serve in these positions for the next term, taking into consideration the balance of disciplines and of demographic factors (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, age). Appointment of the FCW liaison will be made by the provost.
2. **Term Length:** Members of the leadership team will serve terms of 2 years (starting January 1st), with no limits on the number of terms that an individual may serve. The inaugural term begins 1/1/2025.
3. **Resignation or Removal:** Resignation of a leadership team member is tendered through a letter submitted to the RSC director, who will appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term. Concerns related to the performance of individual members of the leadership team shall be brought to and discussed by the RSC director and associate director. Consensus among the directors may lead to removal and replacement. The exception is the position of FCW liaison, which requires additional consultation with the provost.

D. Standing Committees

Standing committees will each consist of a chair selected from the leadership team plus 2-3 additional voting members. Standing committee members will be appointed to 2-year terms by the RSC director and associate director. A survey of interest will be sent to RSC membership in fall 2024 and every two years thereafter. Terms will begin the following calendar year.

1. **Awards:** The Standing Committee on Awards will update award and scholarship guidelines, oversee creation of new recognitions, publicize opportunities and

deadlines, and evaluate applications to make recommendations for awards to the RSC director.

- 2. Membership:** The Standing Committee on Membership will annually review the membership for potential changes or additions and update the membership list as needed. They will maintain processes for application by new members and provide the leadership team with profile information for new members. The committee will develop and carry out surveys of membership as needed (e.g., to identify individuals interested in joining the leadership team) and collect data for the RSC annual report.
- 3. External Advisors:** The Standing Committee on External Advisors will be responsible for the organization of the External Advisory Group, communicating with those individuals as needed, and organizing a meeting with them (annually at a minimum), as described in Section III.F.
- 4. Boat Fleet:** The Standing Committee on the Boat Fleet is responsible for keeping RSC boats in a safe and operable condition for teaching and research applications. They will develop and maintain procedures for boat reservation and ensure that users are certified to operate RSC boats following policies developed in coordination with the Safety Committee. Additional duties of the Boat Fleet Committee include coordinating boat maintenance, renewing boat registrations, reserving boat slips, and managing boat storage. The committee will annually prepare and submit to the RSC director two reports on the use and maintenance of R/V Prairie Springs as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding between the RSC and the Paul Fleckenstein Trust. The Boat Fleet Committee will also coordinate maintenance, storage, and use of R/V Prairie Springs with J.F. Brennan as stipulated in the Memorandum of Understanding between the RSC and J.F. Brennan (Addendum 3).

E. External Advisory Group

V. Appendices

Bylaws approved via unanimous vote of RSC Membership on 9/25/2024