

School of Medicine Research Coordinating Council (RCC)

Minutes for Thursday, January 12, 2006

7:30-9:300 a.m., 301 BRB II/III

Present: Gaulton, Strom, Kaestner, Metlay, Rader, Gur, Johnson, Gocke

Absent: Drebin, Simon, Lazar, Sehgal, Schnell, Winston,

Agenda

1. Discussion of ITMAT
2. Conclusion of review of the SOM Research Strategic Plan
3. Update on Biomedical Informatics

Discussion of ITMAT

The Committee discussed the structure and vision of the Institute for Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (ITMAT). (ITMAT update and slides were presented by Dr. Garret FitzGerald at RCC meeting on December 19, 2005.) Dr. Gaulton stated that the CTSA application process, which will require transformational ideas and vision, has helped to coalesce the direction of the ITMAT. The Committee discussed specific issues for ITMAT users:

1. How exactly does a faculty member use the ITMAT? While an impressive website is available, what aggressive mechanisms are in place to encourage and direct faculty to perform translational research? Are faculty using the ITMAT?
2. How can the ITMAT act as a clearinghouse for projects that will bridge the gap between disciplines?

It was noted that the ITMAT might need to provide examples or specific studies where translational research has worked successfully. Faculty may need more explicit ways of finding connections with clinicians outside their research areas. RCC committee members questioned if the new institute served a wide audience or was exclusively utilized by a small core group. It was noted that the ITMAT Steering Committee had encouraged the institute to think broadly about its user base in order to serve a wide group of researchers/clinicians.

RCC members encouraged aggressive outreach by the ITMAT, and suggested providing mechanisms to bridge basic and clinical research across disciplines to ensure institute progress. In addition, the RCC endorsed a more direct tracking and reporting function for all center and institute directors, including follow-up on the progress of specific issues with SOM administration, and a direct reporting relationship to the VDR or the SOM Dean. Finally, active mentorship of new users of the institute was strongly encouraged to increase the number of researchers who could operate in the translational space, and to diminish the hurdles faced by researchers.

Conclusion of review of the SOM Research Strategic Plan

Drs. Strom and Gaulton continued the review of the existing research Strategic Plan for the School of Medicine. Continuing on page 34 of the Strategic Plan, RCC members discussed the research impact factor, noting that publication impact factor was only one gauge in a range of measures that indicate research excellence. It was noted that Penn's responses in a range of measures point toward improvement. It was noted that Penn has had tremendous growth in research funding (currently 2nd in NIH funding); however, the impact factor of faculty publications at Penn was less robust than at peer institutions. Dr. Gaulton noted that the impact factor has improved significantly in 2003, 2004 and 2005, and will distribute these data at a future RCC meeting.

Drs. Gaulton and Strom noted the conclusions (p. 44) of the Strategic Plan: 1) Penn's research excellence is not commensurate with its NIH-funding base, particularly considering faculty size; 2) the impact and quality of Penn's research has not been sufficiently valued nor expected in an environment that focused on growth and breadth as a strategy for building the research enterprise; and 3) changes on multiple fronts are needed to improve the excellence of the research. Recommendations (pps. 45-51) included several goals including the over-arching goal of utilizing the highest standards of excellence for the recruitment, promotion and retention of faculty, and in addition, to increase the standards for faculty research excellence, ensure uniform and clearly defined recruitment and promotion standards throughout the SOM, and to reward outstanding faculty based on merit. It was noted that the newly-formed Recruitment Advisory Committee (RAC) has provided leadership and excellence in recruitment of faculty at the SOM, and has helped to articulate the definition of a successful candidate for recruitment.

Dr. Strom's overview of Biomedical Informatics will be placed on January 26th agenda.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Gocke

The next RCC meeting will be held on Thursday, January 26, 2006 in 301 BRB II/III from 7:30am-9:00 am.