

School of Medicine Research Coordinating Council (RCC)

Minutes for Thursday, September 7, 2006

8:00-9:00 a.m., 301 BRB II/III

Present: Gaulton, Drebin, Gur, Kaestner, Lazar, Metlay, Rader, Sehgal, Strom, Passante, Pomager

Absent: Johnson, Schnall, Winston

Agenda

- **The Research Coordinating Council 2006-2007 Agenda**

Drs. Strom and Gaulton reviewed the 2005-2006 agenda and requested feedback from the Committee. The RCC spent last year primarily reviewing proposals for new centers and institutes and was therefore unable to address broader, programmatic issues. In this regard, the members felt that it would be important to focus on strategic matters in 2006-2007. Outstanding and incomplete items from the 2005-2006 agenda include Immunology, Infectious Diseases, Systems Biology, Network Sciences, New Facility-Programmatic Planning, Conflict of Interest, and Animals. RCC had also not yet begun to address the review of processes in last year's agenda, including: RAC/recruiting process; promotion process; how to measure impact for promotion; and administrative management of grants and methods to track grants across programs. Dr. Gaulton noted that the RCC website had not generated any feedback from the research community at large.

As follow up to the last meeting, several RCC members questioned the rationale for incorporating nanobiology into the Pennsylvania Muscle Institute (PMI). It was suggested that perhaps a better approach might have been to consider nanotechnology in the context of the overall research strategic plan, rather than recommending expansion into nanobiology to Dr. Goldman as a way to revitalize PMI. (The 2004 Center and Institute Review Committee (CIRC) had concluded that the PMI had not fully capitalized on increased opportunities in multi-disciplinary research and clinical medicine and, as constituted, met only a limited number of fundamental center criteria.) Dr. Gaulton noted that PMI is well-positioned to support and promote research in all areas of small-scale, single-molecule science and that nanobiology is a natural extension of the current PMI mission. Dr. Strom also noted that no single center or institute "owns" a particular field of research and that there are many examples of this across campus. At the July meeting, the RCC advised Dr. Goldman that future institutional resources would likely be directed to nanobiology, not to traditional muscle research, and presented him with an administrative choice of expanding into this area, as well as increasing interaction with the clinical research community. Dr. Goldman will be given an opportunity to present a revised plan at a future RCC meeting.

A general discussion followed regarding the role of academic leadership and the RCC in managing the School's research enterprise. The RCC serves as an advisory committee to the Dean and, as such, is responsible for informing the School research vision and making recommendations regarding policies, recruitment, space, etc. A top-down approach has not always been successful—the preferred method is to identify local scientific leaders who are already enthusiastic about expanding into new areas. In this

regard, Penn does not have an adequate system for promoting initiatives at the investigator level. At a future meeting, the RCC will discuss possible reasons that scientific leaders are not pursuing new directions and will determine a strategy for encouraging faculty to stay at the forefront of emerging science.

Dr. Gaulton noted that an important challenge faced by academic leadership is to balance being inclusive with moving projects forward in a timely manner. The RCC generally agreed that the School should target prominence in a few specific areas, not strive to excel in all. To this end, it is essential to adequately resource select centers and institutes to ensure excellence in key areas and empower SOM scientific leaders to succeed. The quantity and assignment of mouse housing space continues to be a concern which the RCC will discuss in detail at a future meeting. Dr. Gaulton noted that the Basic Science Chairs were not uniformly enthusiastic to his suggestion that mouse space be directly assigned to the departments.

Drs. Strom and Gaulton noted that it is difficult to both recruit new chairs and retain faculty due to current space constraints, which will be relieved with the construction of the New SOM Research Building (NRB). They commented on the excitement of the SOM academic leadership and research community regarding the NRB, which is scheduled to open in 2011. With planning underway, decisions need to be made about which disciplines need to be grouped together in order to enhance research at Penn. Historically, the preferred method has been to cluster laboratories along departmental lines; however, Dr. Gur noted that due to the interdisciplinary nature of science, individual investigators tend to prefer to be co-located with collaborators, regardless of departmental affiliation. With regard to these considerations, planning for the NRB will require a comprehensive plan for the SOM campus, involving numerous faculty input sessions and with broad representation. To plan for the NRB, four committees have been created: the Steering Committee, Vivarium Committee, Education Committee, and the Research Committee. Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, LLP, have been retained to develop a feasibility study which the Dean will present to the University Trustees in February 2007. In addition, Dr. Gaulton will schedule a series of planning sessions to solicit input from SOM faculty representing all major research areas and initiatives. He will then compile the results and arrange a retreat to discuss and develop final plans. These recommendations will be forwarded to the Dean and NRB Committee for consideration.

In conclusion, a poll was conducted and Thursday morning remains the best time to meet. Drs. Gaulton and Strom will contact RCC members whose schedules preclude their attendance to address their concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Pomager

The next RCC meeting will be held on Thursday, September 21, 2006 in 301 BRB II/III from 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Past Action Items:

Drs. Irwin Levitan and Francisco Gonzalez-Scarano to return to review their proposal for a Comprehensive Neuroscience Center.

Dr. Goldman to return to discuss his proposal regarding nanobiology.

Revisit animal space constraints.

The Committee will also request that Dr. Trojanowski present the status of the IOA at a future meeting.

Drs. Gaulton, Strom, Rubenstein, Rustgi and Johnson will meet to discuss this joint structure and proposed funding for the Type II Center/Institute for Digestive, Liver and Pancreatic Medicine.