

School of Medicine Research Coordinating Council (RCC)

Minutes for Thursday, April 20, 2006

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

Present: Gaulton Kaestner, Lazar, Metlay, Rader, Schnall, Sehgal, Winston, Gocke

Absent: Drebin, Gur, Johnson, Strom

Agenda

- Presentation of proposed Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology (CEET) Dr. Trevor Penning

Prior to Dr. Trevor Penning's presentation, Dr. Gaulton reviewed the Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology (CEET) including NIH funding support, and noted that it was tentatively conceived of as a Type I Center in the Department of Pharmacology, with modest space and financial resources. Dr. Gaulton also noted that while this area was not identified in the SOM strategic plan, this did not preclude the Type 2 Center discussion.

Presentation—Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology (CEET)

Dr. Trevor Penning distributed notes and presented the overview and mission of the Center for Excellence in Environmental Toxicology, noting that it was the first Environmental Health Sciences Center in the Commonwealth. Dr. Penning noted that he had received notification of funding of the Center by NIEHS on April 13, 2006. Dr. Penning anticipates that CEET will become a magnet for all EHS funding at the state level and from Region III of the EPA, and noted various opportunities for interdisciplinary and translational research within the Center.

Dr. Penning noted that of the approximately 50 members of CEET, a majority are full-time bench researchers. Dr. Penning anticipates that CEET will stimulate faculty interest in environmental toxicology. The RCC discussed with Dr. Penning whether CEET should be part of the Institute for Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (ITMAT), or perhaps a free-standing Type 1 or Type 2 Institute, as it is interdisciplinary in scope. Members noted that the designation should match the goals and themes of the Center. Dr. Penning agreed, and commented that he is looking for the proper institutional recognition, as the designation of a stronger Type II Center will make CEET better-positioned in terms of external funding agencies. In terms of space, Dr. Penning noted that CEET space is quite appropriate at this time. Dr. Penning stated that current institutional commitment for CEET is very strong, and this was well-communicated at the site visit.

Following the presentation, RCC members congratulated Dr. Penning on the excellent progress of CEET thus far; they noted that he has presented a compelling case for CEET and has created a focus for this entity. The RCC also observed that the core group of CEET faculty and research was still relatively modest. Accordingly, while the concept of a center for environmental toxicology was strongly supported, RCC members felt that the demonstrated excellence and breadth of the science should be of paramount importance and expanded before a Type 2 designation was assigned. The discussion will continue at the next RCC meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Gocke

The next RCC meeting will be held on Thursday, May 4, 2006 in 301 BRB II/III from 8:00-9:00 am.