

Research Planning Committee (RPC) Meeting
Wednesday, November 17, 2021
2:30 p.m.
Zoom Video Conference
Minutes

Members Present:

David Ford, Ph.D., chairperson
Noah Hillman, M.D.
Daniel Hoft, M.D., Ph.D.
Ratna Ray, Ph.D.
John Tavis, Ph.D.
John Walker, Ph.D.
Angel Baldan, Ph.D., ex officio (as designated for Enrico Di Cera)
Richard DiPaolo, Ph.D., ex officio
Ravi Nayak, M.D., ex officio
Daniela Salvemini, Ph.D., ex officio
Jeffrey Scherrer, Ph.D. ex officio (as designated for Kim Schiel)
Ajay Jain, M.D., Ph.D., ex officio non-voting
Oleg Kisselev, Ph.D., ex officio non-voting
John Long, D.V.M., ex officio non-voting
Adriana Montaña, Ph.D., ex officio non-voting

Members Not Present:

Gary Albers, M.D., ex officio
Enrico Di Cera, M.D., ex officio
Kim Schiel, M.D., ex officio
Tammy Burton, CPA, ex officio non-voting
Ken Olliff, D. Min., MBA, ex officio non-voting
Willis Samson, Ph.D., ex officio non-voting

Guests:

Sandra Cornell
Stephanie Decker
Daniel Hawiger, Ph.D.
Dagmar Ralphs (as designated for Tammy Burton)

1. The Minutes of the October 27, 2021 meeting were approved.

2. Pyrogen-Free FPLC Instrumentation

Dr. Daniel Hawiger, Associate Professor in the Molecular Microbiology & Immunology Dept, reported on a pyrogen-free fast protein liquid chromatography system.

- Dr. Hawiger would like the RPC to provide financial assistance for an instrument his lab is trying to purchase, which is a pyrogen and other biological contamination-free fast protein liquid chromatography.

- This instrument is necessary for the development of any potential therapeutics for either in vitro or in vivo use that will be free of pyrogens, such as endotoxins, PS, and other biological contaminants.
- The therapeutics or basic research tools are specifically proteins, which are conjugated with small molecules like nucleic acids. They can be used in vivo to modify the function of target cells. This will be useful for specific research programs throughout the SOM and the university.
- There is a philanthropic donor who is covering 50% of the total cost of the instrument which is \$58,500 according to the quote from Bio-Rad. The donor has already transferred funds to SLU to cover \$30,000 of that cost.
- Support from John [Dr. Tavis] and IDBI allowed Dr. Hawiger to prepare an application to IDBI to cover an additional \$10,000. So, that leaves about \$19,000 that is being asked of the RPC to cover from the Research Growth Fund.
- Dr. Hawiger said there is quite an enthusiastic group of people who have coalesced around this opportunity. He has spoken with some of the RPC members and Ken Olliff, who also expressed his support. Dr. Hawiger considered this a great opportunity for SLU that demonstrates how a philanthropic effort can bear fruit and be used for other things for our school and university.
- Dr. Tavis emphasized that IDBI (Drug and Biotherapeutic Innovation) is very supportive of this. Helping to subsidize this machine will give the therapeutics folks a means of moving antibody-mediated therapies and other forms of biotherapeutics forward. Dr. Tavis also spoke about this with [Dean] Chris Jacobs who was supportive too.
- Dr. Montano wanted to know with whom Dr. Hawiger had talked about the use of the instrument and who is going to benefit from it. Dr. Hawiger repeated the benefits and stated that he had talked about this with those within his department.
- Dr. Tavis stated that there are several people on the north campus who are working with cytokine-mediated wound healing. They are also working with people in the Surgery Dept. The range of possible uses is wide and extends at least to some people up on the north campus.
- Dr. Hoft asked about the maintenance of the machine and who would be responsible for maintaining a pyrogen-free atmosphere. Dr. Hawiger stated that his lab has years of experience maintaining instruments that are free of toxins because his research programs depend on it. He plans to develop SOPs for the instrument, his lab will maintain it, and they will either teach or help interested users.
- Dr. DiPaolo commented that it would be nice to have this technology here on campus because we could probably generate endotoxin-free antibodies at 10% of the cost of buying them.
- After Dr. Hawiger dropped off the call, Dr. Ford summarized the financials and recalled that approximately \$19K is being requested from the Research Opportunity Funds. He mentioned Ken Olliff's support of this opportunity. When money was initially given to the Research Institute through Rex Sinquefield, one hope was that it would catalyze further philanthropic support from others.
- Dr. DiPaolo stated that Jane Baum from the Development Office has gotten involved and has used this example as a model. According to Dr. Tavis, she was meeting with the Buschs to see if she could come up with the other \$30K, so we might not have to pay for it. He also recalled that there is a deadline on this offer by the donor that expires at the end of the year.
- Dr. Ford asked Dr. Tavis how long it would take for IDBI to provide the \$10K support. Dr. Tavis stated that it could happen in less than a week including voting.

- Dr. Ford asked for someone to make a proposal on it, asked if there was any further discussion, and then voted. The proposal passed.
- Dr. Ford mentioned some administrative hang-ups with Workday in getting the money distributed, so the exact figure would be needed. Dr. Tavis stated that IDBI could be the backup plan to cover the balance temporarily if the Research Opportunity Fund get held up by unforeseen paperwork.

Action Item: Dr. DiPaolo and/or Dr. Hawiger will send to the Biochemistry Dept administrators the necessary paperwork and exact amount needed from the Research Opportunity Fund to purchase the FPLC instrument.

3. Interim Sr. Associate Dean for Research / OVPR Update

Dr. Adriana Montaña, Interim Sr. Associate Dean for Research, combined the reports for both the SOM and the OVPR office. There were four parts to her PPT presentation:

- **Topic 1: Building Integrated Learning and Coaching Networks for Research (BILCN-Research) Program (BILCN)**
- This is a 6 to 9-month cohort-based research program aimed to assist young faculty members network and gain the skills needed to advance their research agendas and ideas.
- During this period, the PI will write a grant application to compete for external funds. The accountability factor here is mentorship which involves a 2- or 3-hours commitment per week with a specific mentor. Other types of coaching and writing workshops are involved as well. Coaching based on topic or based on specific funding opportunities will be explored.
- Overall, the program has been successful. There were sixteen initial applicants and thirteen are still involved – all from Doisy College School of Nursing, SLUSOM and Engineering. The program will eventually be expanded to all of SLU.
- **Topic 2: Grant Incubator**
- The OVPR is helping Dr. Montano incorporate the suggestions made during last month's meeting. Those updates will be finalized tomorrow.
- In response to the suggestions made by Dr. Jain and others for a monetary incentive rather than \$3000 worth of grant-writing services for reviewers, the Dean [Jacobs] has agreed to give the reviewers \$1500 for every three reviews completed. This \$1500 will go into a research account that can go towards students, support materials, meetings and so on.
- **Topic 3: President's Research Fund - PRF**
- The President's Research Fund 2022 portal is open for applications and the deadline is January 15th. Jasmin Patel may send an announcement about this.
- **Topic 4: Faculty Research Development Workshop**
- This 4-hour workshop will be held December 10th from 1-5 PM. It will be facilitated by the former NSF Program Officer who now works for the OVPR.
- The aim of the workshop is to turn a research plan into a competitive proposal.
- The target audience is faculty members who are early-stage investigators.
- Please inform Dr. Montano if you have any candidates in your department.

- Dr. Ford stated that this workshop seems to be a great tool for anyone who plans to submit a grant to the Grant Incubator. Dr. Nayak agreed.
- Dr. Montano stated that David Borgmeyer is running the BILCN, the OVPR office will send an announcement about the deadline for the PRF, and hopefully they [the OVPR] will send an announcement by tomorrow about the Workshop as well.
- Dr. Jain asked if the Grant Incubator or any other mechanism protected effort for clinicians or does it basically supply money for research lab personnel and supplies.
- Dr. Montano stated that the clinical PI would have to communicate directly with the department Chair, who would then give an approval to the PI for protected time.
- Dr. Nayak stated that it would be very difficult for any clinical Chair to grant protected time without any funding. However, many departments have surplus funding from the last two years.
- Dr. Jain suggested that the Incubator system have money to support a new clinician – perhaps 10% or 15% to encourage research from clinicians.
- Dr. Nayak stated that this can only be done if there is a steady stream of funds.
- Dr. Jain stated that only clinicians in profitable departments will be able to do this.
- Dr. Nayak responded by saying that every department received some money last year whether they were profitable or not. So, the funds should be there.
- Talks concerning support for clinical researchers are going forth – a buy down mechanism. The support will be provided by the OVPR but distributed through Dr. Montano’s office because it is easier for her to understand the clinical duties.
- In response to Dr. Kisselev’s question, Dr. Montano stated that all the current applicants for the Grant Incubator are basic science investigators, so none of them will need protected time.
- Dr. Montano reported that PIs identified by the space committee as those in urgent need for funding were chosen for the Grant Incubator program. There was much discussion on the validity of this method. Dr. Nayak mentioned that clinical researchers tend to be excluded when using this method. It also provides funding to those who already have lab space. Based on his experience, Dr. Hoft questioned the effort of researchers identified by the space committee as “at risk,” stating that some had not applied for a grant in many years. Dr. Scherrer emphasized the importance for mentorship. Dr. Kisselev suggested re-starting a mentorship program that the SOM had some time ago. Dr. Nayak stated that Internal Medicine has a mentorship program that is very active.
- Dr. Ray asked if the Incubator provided \$10,000. Dr. Montano stated that it did not and summarized her presentation again.
- Dr. Salvemini asked if the grant writing service would be available to everyone and stated that she is currently using Dr. Joel Eissenberg. She also asked about the cutoff as to when someone could not join the Incubator, assuming they had had many years of unsuccessful grant funding, meaning how many years of no funding would make them ineligible for the program. Dr. Montano stated that the program is looking for those that have the time to do research and are productive. She also emphasized the benefits of the grant writing services and the need to have it available to anyone who needs it.
- Dr. Ford voiced a concern to Dr. Montano that by looking to the research space committee for “at risk” individuals, the Incubator feels like a remediation plan for them to get back into the game. He suggested giving grant access to senior PIs could help those successful PIs build needed research empires. Additionally, he pointed out that many have indicated that this would be a great development program for younger faculty to help them reach their potential and for the Incubator itself to blossom. He

indicated providing the pipeline for these three diverse categories could help ensure the success of the program. Dr. Montano reaffirmed that part of the Incubator program, such as the grant writing portion, is to make successful PIs even more successful. She's now looking for funding to make every stage of the Incubator beneficial to everyone. Dr. DiPaolo admitted that he has already suggested the writing service to members of his department.

4. Old Business – Dave Ford

- First topic: Equipment List. Dr. Ford has received an equipment list from everyone except for the Pediatrics Dept. Dr. Hillman will take care of this.
- Second topic: The RPC meeting schedule for 2022 was sent to everyone by Sandra. The December 2021 meeting will be held a week early on the third Wednesday – Dec. 15th.
- The February 2022 meeting will be the study session meeting for the PRFs. This will promote better attendance for the PRFs.

Action Item: Dr. DiPaolo stated that he would have something prepared for the bioinformatics technician position and x-ray irradiator equipment by the December meeting.

5. New Business – Group Discussion

- Dr. Tavis requested that a discussion about the research support funds and what the RPC wants to do with them be added as a future agenda topic.
- Dr. DiPaolo about the return on indirect costs and clarification on that topic. He has asked Ken Olliff's office in the past but it's still unclear when the returns will come. He was sure it had been coming in the month of October, but he doesn't recall that the returns were issued this year. He thought it was important to know if they were coming and when they were coming so that PIs can plan. If this topic gets broached by the RPC, it might help the OVPR office recognize the importance of it and not just him bugging them about it every month. Dr. Ford stated he would send him [Ken Olliff] an email about this. Dr. Ray stated that it came in February 2021 for the last fiscal year. Dr. Hoft agreed. Dr. DiPaolo stated that he had been told twice that it was coming in October for this [fiscal] year.
- Dr. Tavis mentioned the non-salary incentive award that runs through the SOM. He stated that we never know if that's going to be funded or not. It's still on the books. They went for years without it being distributed and then, in 2020, it was distributed. There has been no mention of it since. His thought was if they are going to have the policy, they should distribute the money. If they aren't going to distribute the money, they should remove the policy.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Cornell
SOM Research Planning & Operations Manager