

MINUTES

Research Strategic Advisory Council

Thursday, November 16, 2017

3:00pm – 4:00pm

AAB 302

Members Present: Andrea Giuffrida, Kathryn Aultman, Robert Clark, Christopher Green, Byron Hepburn, Erzsebet Kokovay, Alexander Pertsemidid, Jennifer Potter, Shivani Ruparel, Brij Singh and Kyumin Whang

Members Absent: Carrie Jo Braden, Ruben Mesa, Maureen Simmonds and Rajeshwar Tekmal

Guests: Ramiro Ramirez-Solis, Teresa Johnson-Pais and Mark Nijland

Minutes from 5/18/17 were approved.

Welcome of new members

Dr. Giuffrida welcomed and introduced the new RSAC members: Dr. Brij Singh (Associate Dean for Research, School of Dentistry), Dr. Shivani Ruparel (Assistant Professor, Department of Endodontics) and Dr. Ruben Mesa (Director, UT Health Cancer Center). Dr. Mesa was not able to attend as he was out of office.

Bio-banking Update

Dr. Giuffrida informed the RSAC that the Institutional Biobanking Core will develop a comprehensive plan to accommodate and coordinate services for various biorepositories across the institution.

Dr. Ramirez-Solis (Director, Institutional Research Cores) provided some updates including the purchasing of an Aperio Image Analysis System to support the UTHSA bio-banking infrastructure, and a plan to renovate space on the 1st floor of the Research Administration Building (RAB) for the central Biobanking core. Dr. Ramirez-Solis is also identifying the institutional bio-banking needs and is consulting with several stakeholders including the Cancer Center, Strong Star consortium, Department of Medicine, Department of Pathology and the new Biggs Institute.

Dr. Potter asked to share the current bio-banking plan with the HSC faculty via the next VPR newsletter. Dr. Giuffrida agreed and noted that more discussion would be needed to define what specific services the bio-banking core will provide and what resources are available across the institution to implement the plan.

Dr. Teresa Johnson-Pais mentioned that the creation of an institutional bio-banking core is part of a UT System Initiative to encourage collaboration, effectiveness and efficiency across UT institutions in the bio-banking arena. The UT System Bio-bank Initiative currently includes 9 UT sites coordinated by UT Health Houston. All sites have approved a software inventory system (Biological Specimen Inventory system, or BSI) which is the same used by NIH and NCI. UTHSA and UT Southwestern are piloting the Phase 1 of the BSI adoption and migrating data into the software. All other UT sites will migrate their data at a later time (Phase 2). Also, common standard operating procedures for prospective gathering of samples are currently in development. The next step would be the collection of samples using a common protocol at UTHSA, UT Southwestern and UT Houston.

The UTHSA bio-bank will be available to PI's willing to share their specimens with other investigators. It will also be available to PI's for backup storage of retrospectively and prospectively collected specimens located in other labs/facilities and for gathering new collections.

The bio-banking space located in the RAB will include an area for processing samples, a space for tissue culture, as well as a freezer farm for storage. The design of the storage area has received input from electrical engineers to meet safety standards and monitor freezer failures and temperature.

The Bio-Bank will offer full services for prospective collection of different types of biologic specimens, IRB submission, consenting, sample processing following specific SOP, cryopreservation and storage, distribution, specimen characterization (isolation of DNA and RNA, genetic/genomic evaluation, construct tissue microarrays in collaboration with the Dept. of Pathology, digital pathology analysis, etc. Some of the services will be provided in collaboration with the genome sequencing facility; bioanalytics & single-cell analysis core; pathology services and patient-derived xenograft facility.

Dr. Johnson-Pais also noted that as part of the UT System Initiative there will be a website that allows to query on what is available at the 9 UT System sites.

Role and Future of RSAC

RSAC was created when Dr. Giuffrida became the interim VPR and charged by Dr. Henrich to continue the work of the Institutional Sustainability Task Force (ISTF); track and prioritize resources dedicated to research; identify research strengths aligned with future trends and regional health care problems; provide transparency and strategic insight for the research enterprise; facilitate cross-disciplinary collaborative efforts and identify ways to reduce obstacles facing our investigators.

Since 2014, several recommendations from RSAC requiring minimal monetary investments have been implemented. These included: developing a new VPR website, the acquisition of Nature Master Classes, revamping the bio-informatics core, creating a new committee for DLAR space allocation, endorsing DLAR renovations, a workshop series to support grant addressing Military Health and the development of a science accelerator. However, Dr. Giuffrida clarified that RSAC recommendations are not usually discussed at meetings of the Executive Committee or senior leadership and consequently the impact of the Council on the decision-making process to allocate resources for research initiatives and infrastructure has been minimal. Dr. Giuffrida asked the RSAC members to provide feedback on whether the RSAC should continue as is, transition into something different or dissolve. Although RSAC members would like to have more influence on the allocation of resources, they all expressed a strong desire to continue to meet as their charge is purely advisory and goes beyond money allocation.

Dr. Giuffrida informed the Council that he has been asked to participate in the discussion for the allocation of approximately \$2.1M of F&A. Proposed F&A allocations for FY18 (total \$26.7M) include \$18.3M to support O&M, General/Department Administration, Library Pools, etc., \$2.0M to cover building renovations and equipment depreciation pool, and \$4.3M to support research administration (sponsored program, VPR office, etc.), leaving approximately \$2.1M available for research initiatives. In the past, a portion of the F&A was given back to the schools. A meeting of senior leaders to be held at the end of November will decide who is ultimately responsible for the allocation of these resources (President, and/or VPR and/or Deans).

Dr. Hepburn and Dr. Pertsemlidis moved that the committee recommend to Dr. Henrich that the responsibility for F&A fund allocations is given to the VPR in conjunction with RSAC. All members voted unanimously to accept the move (Dr. Potter did not vote as she left the RSAC meeting earlier due to another commitment).

Meeting adjourned at 4:05pm