

MINUTES

Research Strategic Advisory Council

Thursday, December 11, 2014

3:00pm – 4:00pm

124 AAB

Members Present: Andrea Giuffrida, Reto Asmis, Michael Beckstead, Carrie Jo Braden, Robert Clark, Paul Fitzpatrick, Christopher Green, Erzsebet Kokovay, Thomas Oates, Alexander Pertsemelidis, Paula Shireman, Maureen Simmonds, Rajeshwar Tekmal, and Kyumin Whang

Members Absent: Ian Thompson

Minutes from 10/9/14 approved by Council.

Summary of Research Strengths at UTHSCSA

Dr. Giuffrida summarized the NIH funding area of research strengths for the HSC as well as the common HSC strengths that include Neuroscience, Cancer, Aging, Diabetes/Metabolic disorders, Health Disparities and Military Health (slide 3 & 4). Other emerging areas of strength include Medical Informatics/Bioinformatics, Allergies/Infectious Diseases, Patient Centered Outcome Research (PCORI), STEM Cells/Regenerative Medicine and Women's Health. Previous meeting discussion also included the importance of looking at research infrastructure that would possibly include patient cohorts, bio-repositories and common research methods.

Recommendations for Institutional Research Cores

The HSC has 9 Institutional Cores, which are labs that have equipment available to all investigators for a service fee. The Cores are supervised by Dr. Mike Wilson and provide services into 3 areas:

1) Biophysical & Structural (Biomolecular NMR and X-Ray Crystallography); 2) Molecular [Center for Macromolecular Interactions, Mass Spectrometry Laboratory, Center for Advanced Translational Technologies (CATT), and Genomics Core]; 3) Cellular & Systems (Flow Cytometry, Micro CT, and Optical Imaging). The Cores are regularly reviewed by an oversight committee - the University Core Research Committee (UCRF) - chaired by Dr. Randy Glickman. The UCRF reviews the operation of the research cores to determine the strategic direction, function and budget allocation of the core. It also provides recommendations to the Office of the VP for Research on operation and fund allocations for all Cores. Dr. Giuffrida mentioned he had discussed with Dr. Nijland (Asst VP for Research) and Dr. Wilson to appoint an External Advisory Panel to provide an unbiased review to assist with the strategic planning of the Cores (i.e., where we should invest, identify new emerging technologies that have not been considered, etc.). Members of the External Advisory Panel included Dr. Charles Johnson (Director, Genomics & Bioinformatics Services, Texas A&M), Dr. Robert Hohman (Chief, Research Technology Branch, Division of Intramural Research, NIAID, NIH) and Dr. Robert Olivier (Interim Chair for Genetics and Scientist, Texas Biomedical Research Institute).

Prior to sharing the recommendations of the External Advisory Panel, Dr. Giuffrida gave a summary of the UCRF recommendation and priorities. Recommendations included:

1. **Core Funding:** Continue supplemental financial support for the existing institutional Research Core Laboratories at levels needed to maintain a balanced budget with adequate reserves to cover anticipated maintenance and repair costs. A 20% increase is recommended.
2. **Service contracts:** Funding level needs to cover the cost of vital equipment service contracts and a fund should be maintained for repairs of equipment not covered under contract. Dr. Giuffrida reported that the research core's emergency account was depleted to take care of

repairs. Consequently this is an issue as money would not be available for repairs for equipment that does not have a maintenance contract.

3. **Core Management:** Improve the user's interface to provide a structured view of the genomic, nucleic acid, sequencing and sample preparation services provided by multiple facilities on campus.
4. **Computation and Bioinformatics:** A new initiative or core is needed to provide services in bioinformatics and computational biology.

Recommendations from the External Advisory Panel included:

1. **Computation and Bioinformatics Service:** This is a critical unmet need at UTHSCSA. Adding service-oriented experts with specific expertise is a useful approach. Dr. Giuffrida reported that the recommendation included hiring one or two Bioinformaticians that could also provide training for faculty on how to analyze work on their own. **Follow-up:** At the next meeting we will invite Dr. Pertsemidis to provide an overview on possible bioinformatics service models for review.
2. **Core Management:**
 - a. Categorize cores into Tier 1 (broad user base and scientifically essential) and Tier 2 (limited users, but critical for grants).
 - b. Next Generation Sequencing is an essential technology: invest in bioinformatic support and sample preparation.
 - c. Enhance research innovation and the university's reputation by investing in leading technologies and expert core staff.
3. **Core Funding:** Current levels of supplemental financial support are not sustainable. If FY15 funding remains constant, the subsidies should be adjusted to ensure viability of the Tier 1 cores, prioritized on scientific demand and impact.

Dr. Giuffrida discussed that the Office of Sponsored Programs COP had been revised to include a box for PI's to mark if a Research Core had been used as an essential component for grant development. This will allow for better tracking of core usage. Dr. Asmis requested that tracking which core is used to obtain preliminary data for actual grants submitted should be captured as well. Chris Green (Director, OSP) mentioned the new COP had not been released as of yet and could be revised to include a question asking if any of the Cores were used to provide preliminary data. OSP with the newly revised COP will be able to track projects used for each Core.

Performance Evaluation Form for Researchers

One task transferred from the Institutional Strategic Task Force (ISTF) to RSAC was to develop a recommendation to evaluate research faculty. ISTF reported that there was no consistency throughout the HSC for a periodic evaluation of research faculty. The policy related to the evaluation of faculty is a responsibility of Dr. Mok (VP for Academic Affairs). Dr. Mok requested if RSAC could give her some ideas on this process. **Follow-up at next meeting:** Review Board Regent Rules to develop a recommendation for Dr. Mok. Dr. Giuffrida requested for the Council to forward examples they have from their respective Departments to Rebecca Smith. Ms. Smith will place on the RSAC data repository for access for review by the Council.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10pm.