OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH
UT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER®
SAN ANTONIO

MINUTES
Research Strategic Advisory Council
Thursday, September 17, 2015
3:00pm – 4:00pm
302 AAB

Members Present: Andrea Giuffrida, Robert Clark, Christopher Green, Alexander Pertsemlidis, Charles France, Thomas Oates, Kyumin Whang, Byron Hepburn, Mike Beckstead, Erzsebet Kokovay and Ian Thompson

Members Absent: Reto Asmis, Carrie Jo Braden, Rajeshwar Tekmal, Paula Shireman and Maureen Simmonds

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Minutes from 5/14/15 approved by Council

DLAR Renovations and per diem rates
The VP for Research Office hired the Huron Consulting Group to review the budget and operations of DLAR with a focus on the calculation of the per diem rates for all species. Huron performed a detailed analysis of DLAR employee activities ("Time and Motion Study" or TMS) from October through November 2014. The TMS was used to account for all activities by DLAR staff (husbandry, cage washing, clinical care, etc.), breaking their effort into 15-minute intervals. In April 2015, Huron presented the final report to the VP for Research Office. Huron provided tables of unburdened and burdened per diem rates. The *burdened rates* included the full cost of each species without F&A supplementation, whereas the *unburdened rates* were the actual cost charged with F&A support taken into account. The Huron report also included recommendations on how to optimize operations and a comparison of HSC DLAR activities with those from other universities of similar size.
Two major findings were highlighted by Huron: 1) the institutional subsidies for the HSC DLAR are below the national average; 2) DLAR is significantly understaffed by at least 10 positions based on the animal census. In response to the Huron group recommendations, the institutional subsidy has been increased from 8.5% to 14% to support salaries and benefits. Since the report, DLAR has hired a veterinarian and is in the process of hiring 5 more animal technicians.

$1.2 million has been allocated for equipment purchases and renovations of the DLAR. Priorities include upgrades driven by the upcoming accreditation review by the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care (AAALAC) and Fire and Life Safety system improvements. In addition, two 20-year old vehicles are being replaced, cooling is being added to an existing DLAR truck, and the cage washers and dust control systems supporting the 3 vivariums in the Greehey Campus will undergo repair and maintenance (a combined investment of approximately $250K). A much larger Long Campus project including the replacement of doors, door frames, flooring and wall repairs, will require investments ranging between $650K-$800K.

Bioinformatics Core
Dr. Giuffrida reported that he meet with Dr. Shireman, Dr. Peter Houghton and Dr. Yidong Chen to develop a plan and a budget for a new Bioinformatics Core. Phase 1 of the Bioinformatics Core development will focus on Next Generation Sequencing services. Phase 2 will expand to other "omics". Subsidies from the VP for Research Office will support the salary of the Core Director and provide a salary augmentation for Dr. Chen who will serve as Scientific Advisor. Dr. Chen is expected to lead the recruitment of the Core Director and to hire three master level programmers over several years. Anticipated revenues will be used to offset expenses. The Bioinformatics Core will open for business following the recruitment of the Core Director.

Update on military health grants

Dr. Hepburn presented a summary of military health grants at HSC showing a decline from $11M (FY 2014) to $8.5M (FY 2015). The $2.5M decrease is attributable to Dr. Peterson's original "Strong Star Multidisciplinary PTSD Research Consortium" project, which did not receive funding in fiscal year 2015 (the final funding year was FY 2014 during which the consortium $3.6M).

Dr. Hepburn noted several consortiums are in the works in the following areas: 1) Trauma; 2) Pain Management; 3) Sleep Disorders; and 4) Infectious Diseases.

Possible projects/initiatives to be supported by the VPR Office

Dr. Giuffrida noted he has a small discretionary fund available that can be used for new initiatives. SALSI funds will also support new educational, research and recruitment efforts. Three potential areas of support include: 1) Biostatistics Services, 2) Medical Informatics, and 3) Biorepositories. Dr. Giuffrida noted the TRCC biobanking committee submitted a Pre-Application for a Collaborative Innovative Award X02. The proposal is for a Texas Regional CTSA Biobank, with headquarters at UTHSC Houston under Eric Boerwinkle as PI. The regional biobanking resource should support the UT System Clinical Trials Network.

Dr. Thompson commented on the complexity of biobanking activities as they include: linking samples to clinical outcomes, linking specimens from other biorepositories, monitoring processes, material transfer agreements, tracking publications and grants supported by the biobanks. There are approximately 12 cancer-related biobanks at the HSC. Some of the biobanks are more sophisticated than others. Most have been created due to a lack of shared resources for tissue acquisition and tissue storage, and so far data informatics, central query methods or tracking history of what is stored is not available. At the CTRC, Dr. Thompson would like to create a group to: 1) develop minimally acceptable common data elements (CDE) across all biospecimens; 2) make an inventory of their current investments in biobanks to see if there are opportunities to create a virtual core/central informatics system; 3) develop a prioritized system to take biobanking to the next level. Dr. Thompson noted it would be nice to have consistency at the institutional level by adopting a common tracking system such as REDCap or something similar.

The committee further discussed common problems such as how to convince PI's to join a central system and the proper handling of samples. Dr. Giuffrida proposed to create a HSC working group to develop a plan for an institutional biorespository.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm