

**James & Esther King Biomedical
Research Advisory Council (BRAC)
Regular Session
Meeting Minutes**

**May 10, 2006
8:30am – 4:30pm
Marriott Tampa Airport
Tampa International Airport
Tampa, FL 33607**

Council Members Present:

Dr. Edward Block
Dr. Richard Bookman, Interim
Chair
Dr. Nikolaus Gravenstein
Dr. Myra Hurt
Mr. Al Latimer
Dr. Sigurd Normann
Dr. Mary Lou Sole
Dr. Herb Weissbach

Council Members Absent:

Dr. Penny Ralston

Program Staff Members Present :

Secretary M. Rony François - DOH
Ms. Stephanie Jackson - DOH
Ms. Eburn Grimes - DOH
Dr. Susan Phillips - DOH
Ms. Peggy Shults – Lytmos Group
Mr. Chuck Wells - DOH

Guests in Attendance:

Ms. Candy Holloway – American Lung
Association
Mr. Paul Hull – American Cancer Society
Mr. Brian Gilpin – American Heart
Association

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Dr. Bookman called the meeting to order and welcomed Council members, staff and guests. The Council was informed that Dr. Ralston was unable to attend due to a family health emergency. Secretary François was invited to address the Council. In his remarks he emphasized the number of deaths caused by cardiovascular disease. Noting the behavioral contribution to tobacco related disease, including diet and exercise, he recommended that the BRAC encourage more research in the area of prevention. In addition, he advocated offering pre-and post-doc awards without U.S. citizenship requirements, and relayed the impact such mechanisms had made in supporting his own career as a Florida-based scientist, his long term Florida residency, and his subsequent public service. His position was reinforced during the brief discussion that followed, when it was noted that the American Heart Association and the American Lung Association both offer post-doc grants to non-US citizens. As further support, Mr. Wells reported that, during its recent national conference, the Health Research Alliance challenged its members to fill the gap caused by the US citizenship requirements imposed by the National Institutes of Health in determining eligibility for its pre- and post-doc grants.

Consent Agenda: Minutes of the last meeting were presented to the Council; it was recommended that the record include the organization of Mr. Jim Francis (the State Bureau of Administration). Dr. Ed Block made a motion that, *with this change, the minutes as submitted be approved*. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Staff Report and Legislative Update: Mr. Wells briefly informed the BRAC of the status and highlights of House bills 1027 (Bankhead Coley Cancer Research Program, changes to BRAC membership and sources of funding for the James & Esther King Biomedical Research Program, and the planned evaluation of Program performance in 2010), 233 (research involving embryonic stem cells), and 1237 (21st Century Technology, Research, and Scholarship Enhancement Act), and deferred more detailed discussion on 1027 until later in the agenda. He also provided an update on CURED, noting that the web site for the Program (www.flcured.org) is live and providing information about the August 1 summit. He introduced Ms. Grimes as a summer intern working with the Department, and announced the addition of Lance Kerwin as an IT support staff member.

Grant Funding Decisions on FY07 Call for Grant Applications: Ms. Shults reported that 51 proposals were received by the application deadline (40 NIR, 6 TSP, and 5 SBTT) and shared

the distribution in the number received by Florida institution. She also informed the Council that a total of 120 scientists, none of whom are associated with the State of Florida, participated in the peer review process. Without disclosing the identities or institutions of the investigators, she presented seven cases to the BRAC for consensus on eligibility according to the requirements stated in the Call, including a set of recommendations. Dr. Weissbach moved *that the set of recommendations be approved as recommended*; Dr. Block seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

The Council recommended that, in the next Call for Applications, the status of Co-PI be defined in the eligibility requirements, and that an addition be made to clarify an expectation that TSP and NIR awards will lead to P-01 and R-01 applications to NIH (or equivalent).

Ms. Shults then presented the Council with the results of the peer review process, including a ranking of proposals by score. All proposals were presented without identification of PI or institution. After discussion regarding several alternative solutions, Dr. Block moved *that the three TSP applications with the highest rating be funded*; Dr. Weissbach seconded the motion. During the voting, one member opposed and all others voted in favor, so the resolution was adopted. Dr. Sole moved *that the two SBTT applications with the highest rating be funded*; Mr. Latimer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. Dr. Block moved *that NIR applications scoring 2.2 or higher be considered fundable, as far as remaining funds allow*; Dr. Sole seconded. After further discussion, Dr. Block amended the motion to add *as long as all proposals with the same score are funded; Staff is given the opportunity to use a reduction of up to 5% for all awards in order to break a tie on the margin*. Dr. Gravenstein seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. Dr. Block further moved *that, should funds left over be less than the amount required for an NIR award, SBTT projects rated up through 2.7 be funded*. Dr. Weissbach seconded the motion, which was then unanimously accepted.

Grant Continuations for Current Grantees: After referring to the statutory requirement that grant continuation contingencies include *satisfactory project performance and compliance with the grant terms and conditions*, Ms. Shults described the processes for assessing these criteria, including grantee financial and progress reports and site visits. Several Council members expressed opinions that, for NIR grants, the mentors should be expected to participate in site visits, and they (along with the institution) should be consulted regarding any concerns regarding performance problems. After interest was expressed by Council members in seeing the outcome of grantee progress reports and peer reviews, Dr. Hurt made a motion: *that the Chair will appoint a subcommittee of the BRAC to recommend action for grant continuation decisions, provided appointees are non-conflicted; in the event the Chair has a conflict, the Vice-Chair will make the appointments*. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously. Ms. Shults indicated that, among the portfolio of current grants eligible for continuation, the Grant Manager has raised concerns about two projects. It was agreed that these two cases would be referred to the Chair for subcommittee review under this newly adopted continuation review process.

Funding Decision Support Considerations: At its January meeting, the BRAC resolved to conduct an experiment during the FY07 review process to ascertain whether reviewers can effectively classify research projects by primary emphasis on prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure, and that the results would not be used in 2006 in prioritizing projects against the Call. Ms. Shults reported the data from the experiment, which demonstrated that in a significant number of cases the panels of scientific experts did not agree on the primary category within which the project belonged.

Legislative Update & Planning – House Bill 1027: Mr. Wells outlined the significant features of this legislation for the Council, placing particular emphasis on the Bankhead-Coley Cancer Program and the need to rapidly deploy a Call for Applications for one or more grant mechanisms for FY07, the inaugural year of the Program. Dr. Phillips reported that the

Department Budget Director strongly recommended making the first awards prior to April 1. The Council discussed various options that would make such a timeline feasible, and members responded favorably to suggestions of offering bridge grants for highly rated but unfunded Florida proposals to the National Cancer Institute, based on federal peer review scores, as well as infrastructure grants involving university matches. A recommendation was made to consult with the Florida Cancer Council for input. BRAC members agreed to forward ideas and information regarding options for these grants to Program Staff for further investigation. Mr. Hull was invited by the Council to offer his perspective on the background leading up to the passage of HB1027. He described the advocacy devoted by the American Cancer Society and other organizations in prior years to secure legislative support for earmarking state funds for cancer research. He further stated his opinion that the eventual placement of this program under the BRAC and the Florida Department of Health was due to the general respect these entities have earned over the last six years with effectively managing the James & Esther King Biomedical Research Program.

Public Comment: As his public comment, Mr. Hull went on to share information about Bill Bankhead and David Coley, and the rationale behind naming the program in their honor. He expressed confidence that Governor Bush would sign the approved bill, and that this new program would do great justice to the memory of these two legislators.

On behalf of the American Lung Association, Ms. Holloway acknowledged the excellent representation of the Association on this Council, and stated that, as a citizen of the State, she was glad this program was placed in such careful hands; further, as a taxpayer, she urged the Council to continue its careful deliberations in making funding decisions to maximize the impact of the investment being made. In response, Dr. Bookman expressed appreciation for the long and active support of the Association.

Mr. Gilpin stated that, as a member of the public, he viewed the new cancer program as progress in focusing biomedical research into disease specific areas, and urged the Council to consider adopting additional disease-specific and population-specific strategies and approaches; in the latter case, especially closing the gaps related to health disparities for ethnic minorities and funding for minority researchers. He restated his comments from the last BRAC meeting that it appears to him that the tobacco-relatedness requirement is imposing administrative challenges, and recommended that the Secretary seek the removal of the tobacco relationship from the Program. Dr. Bookman responded with thanks to the tri-agencies for more than six years of effort leading up to this new opportunity, and affirmed that the Florida research community owes all involved a debt of gratitude.

Election of Presiding Officers: After discussion, Council members indicated a preference to wait until any restructuring of the BRAC associated with HB1027 takes place to elect full-term officers; in the meantime, in order to handle Council business an interim appointment would be made. Dr. Hurt moved *that Dr. Bookman serve as interim Chair until the next regular BRAC meeting (September, 2006), when presiding officers will be elected.* The motion was seconded. During the vote, one member opposed, Dr. Bookman abstained, and the remainder voted in favor, carrying the resolution.

Open Discussion: Dr. Block expressed sincere welcome to the new Council members and thanks to Dr. Bookman for service as interim Chair, and credited Dr. Phillips, Mr. Wells, Ms. Jackson, and to Lytmos with providing “phenomenal support.” Dr. Normann emphasized how critical the partnership with the American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, and the American Lung Association have been, and remain, in getting these programs started and funded, and in constantly promoting the interests of biomedical research to the legislature. As a participant in the March briefing for Governor Bush, Dr. Normann also relayed the points cited by the Governor as key strengths of the Program: the use of peer review from scientists outside the

state of Florida, the broad availability of funding to investigators throughout the state, the comparatively low administrative fees, and the placement of the Program under the Department of Health with the oversight of a qualified and appropriately sized advisory council. Dr. Normann concluded by underscoring the strong teamwork between the Department of Health and the BRAC. He pointed out that, as an advisory body, the BRAC makes no decisions; however, he credited the DOH with placing great value on Council recommendations and regularly adopting them into the operation of the Program. Consequently, he emphasized the importance of the role of the Council members.

Future Meeting Schedule and Closing: It was suggested that a special BRAC meeting be scheduled in June for the specific purpose of planning the inaugural Call for Applications for the Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program; Staff agreed to work with Council members after the meeting to determine an appropriate meeting type, date, and location. Dr. Bookman asked Council members to submit any and all ideas directly to Program Staff in advance of this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Dr. Richard Bookman, Interim Chair

Chuck Wells, Program Manager
May 10, 2006