

**Florida Biomedical Research Advisory
Council (Council)
Meeting Minutes**

**May 18, 2008
1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Embassy Suites Miami Int'l Airport
3974 NW South River Drive
Miami, FL 33142**

Council Members Present:

Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair
Dr. Randal Henderson
Dr. Myra Hurt
Mr. Albert Latimer
Dr. Daniel Morris
Dr. Sigurd Normann
Dr. Penny Ralston
Dr. Mary Lou Sole
Dr. Herbert Weissbach, Vice-Chair

Council Members Absent:

Dr. Veena Antony
Dr. Nikolaus Gravenstein

Program Staff Members Present:

Ms. Sherrie Hajek – DOH, OPHR
Ms. Stephanie Jackson – DOH, OPHR
Ms. Peggy Shults – Lytmos Group

Guests in Attendance:

None

Welcome and Consent Agenda: Dr. Bookman welcomed Council members, and Ms. Hajek relayed regrets from Dr. Susan Phillips and Mr. Chuck Wells, both of whom were unable to attend the meeting. Minutes of the January 18-19, 2008 BRAC meeting were presented. Dr. Weissbach moved that *the minutes be approved as submitted*. This motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Legislative Budget Update FY 2008-2009: Ms. Hajek reported that the budgets for the James & Esther King Biomedical Research Program and the Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program were unaffected during the most recent legislative session. After reserving administrative expenses, the King Program has \$8.415 million to award in FY2008-09 and the Bankhead-Coley Program has \$8.1 million. Dr. Bookman observed that, after eight years, the annual payout from the Lawton Chiles fund is finally back over \$4 million. Ms. Hajek noted that, while the interest is actually \$4.1 million, the Program only has authority to spend \$3.9 million of this amount; the \$0.2 million difference will be added to the trust fund. To spend this money, and any other sums from the trust fund, it would be necessary to request spending authority.

King Grant Funding Recommendations: Ms. Shults presented statistics about the current competition, reporting that the 65 applications received from 13 Florida institutions represent an 18% increase in volume over last year. Three of these applications were ruled ineligible due to noncompliance with requirements published in the *Call for Applications*. The breakdown of eligible applications across the grant mechanisms offered was eight Bridge, 41 New Investigator Research (NIR), nine Team Science Program (TSP), and four Small Business Technology Transfer (SBTT) applications. A total of 192 peer reviewers from outside Florida evaluated these proposals independently, and according to the new peer-review process, merit scores consist of the average of all reviewer scores for that application. In cases where the standard deviation of the merit scores for any single proposal was 1.0 or greater, two additional reviewers evaluated the application, and the high and low scores were dropped before calculating the average score. This resulted in an improved rating for six proposals, and a lower rating for four.

Dr. Bookman offered to supply data from the University of Miami regarding the number of that institution's new investigators (in the appropriate fields) that have applied to the Program in order to better understand the percentage of eligible investigators being impacted by the Program. Dr. Hurt volunteered to do the same, and stated that she knew of at least two people at the Florida State University medical school for whom Program awards are making the difference in their ability to successfully launch their careers. Dr. Norman pointed out that five years of data would be needed to support the significance of any findings due to factors such as hiring freezes. Dr.

Bookman summarized by suggesting that the Program test the hypothesis that the Program has had a positive impact for the State's new investigators in our fields of research, and if true, build a case illustrating that there are many more researchers in the State who need similar support but are not eligible for this Program because of other research foci. He also requested that we continue to highlight the Program's impact on individual grantees.

Ms. Shults presented a scoring worksheet containing the results of the peer review. This sheet identified applications only by a sequentially-assigned number, with applications ranked in order of merit score within grant mechanism. For Bridge Grants, the federal scientific merit scores were provided. As additional factors for consideration by the Council, each proposal was also characterized by the average reviewer rating of its tobacco-relatedness and the reviewer consensus of its focus on prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and/or cure. After discussion, Dr. Hurt moved that *funding be awarded to the top two TSPs, the top 16 NIRs excluding application number 1012 due to its relatively low tobacco-relatedness score, the top two SBTTs, and Bridge application numbers 1055, 1056, and 1061. If a reduction is needed to remain within the budget, the TSPs may be reduced by the necessary percentage.* This motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Dr. Sole then moved that *if additional money becomes available, the Program would first restore any reduction to the TSPs, then fund NIR applications 1012 and 1025 [in that order].* The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Bankhead-Coley Grant Funding Recommendations: Ms. Shults reported that 47 applications were submitted from eight Florida institutions, up from 43 proposals last year. Two applications were ruled ineligible, leaving 27 Bridge, 25 NIR, two SPORE Planning (SPORE), and one Clinical Research Planning (CRP) applications. The peer review process was identical to that used for the King Program, with 154 participating reviewers from outside Florida. Seven Bankhead-Coley proposals with standard deviations of 1.0 or greater were submitted to two additional reviewers. This resulted in an improved rating for five proposals, and a lower rating for two.

Ms. Shults presented the results of the peer review in a scoring worksheet, identifying each application only by a sequentially-assigned number. Proposals were ranked within grant mechanism in order of merit and further characterized by the average reviewer rating of cancer-relatedness and reviewer classification of focus on prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and/or cure. For Bridge Grants, the federal scientific merit scores were provided. In addition, for all applications in which the applicant claimed the project would reduce the impact of cancer on disparate groups, an average reviewer rating of the strength of the applicant's case was provided. After discussion, Dr. Hurt moved that *awards be extended to both SPOREs, the top 10 ranked NIRs, the five Bridge Department of Defense applications with federal peer review scores better than 2.0, the seven Bridge R01 applications with federal percentiles better than 22.0, the one Bridge R15, and the two Bridge R21 applications with federal scores better than 175. If reductions are needed to meet budgetary limits, the overage should be taken from both SPORES in proportion to their total request.* The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Dr. Sole moved that *if additional funds become available, the full award amounts should first be restored to the SPOREs, and then the next two ranked NIRs, numbers 2015 and 2016, should be funded [in that order].* This motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Discovery – Article Review: Dr. Morris made a brief presentation based on three articles he brought to the attention of the BRAC. The first illustrated the extreme difficulty faced by young cancer researchers in obtaining funding to support their work. The second article offered several explanations of why the huge amount of biomedical research funding spent during the last few decades is not producing real progress in medical treatments and drug development. The third article examined patent activity by faculty at academic medical centers, concluding that dramatic increases in the number of granted patents are concentrated among a small number of

departments and faculty members. He concluded by stating his opinion that it is important to understand diseases better before running more clinical trials that focus on incremental advances using the same pharmaceuticals. During the discussion that followed, Dr. Hurt commented that basic discovery is still exploding, and a systems biology approach will help. Dr. Weissbach cited the difficulty of obtaining funding to pursue new uses for existing drugs where patent protection has expired, because the drug can't be protected again. Dr. Bookman related Dr. Morris's presentation to the upcoming FL CURED Summit, which will address how to foster innovation in the current environment where research and discoveries are kept secret. Dr. Morris asked that the topic of technology transfer and BioFlorida be addressed at a future BRAC meeting.

OPHR Report: In a recap of the recent legislative session, Ms. Hajek presented a document showing an overview of several bills that had been tracked by OPHR. SB 2752, Consolidation of Biomedical Research Funding, failed to pass. Dr. Bookman related that Senator Peadar indicated to him during session that he saw problems with the bill. Dr. Norman expressed his view that the cigarette tax may have better traction next year. Mr. Latimer explained the current funding status at the Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development, projecting that funding will be restored when the economy improves. He indicated that the desired clustering effect is proving to be highly successful.

Ms. Hajek informed the BRAC that OPHR is still seeking qualified candidates for its new research analyst position; this individual will assist with performance measurement and program evaluation.

She reported that the terms and conditions documents for FY2008-09 King and Bankhead-Coley awards have been drafted to include the open access language recommended by the BRAC during the January meeting.

She offered a reminder about the June 27th CURED Summit. Dr. Bookman stressed the importance of the topics to be addressed at the Summit, and echoed Ms. Hajek's encouragement that Council members participate in this event.

Grant Continuation Status Report: Ms. Shults reported that nine of the 50 active King grants will conclude June 30th, 28 have requested continuation of their multi-year grants, and 13 have requested no-cost extensions to continue their work beyond the scheduled end of their award. Of the 26 active Bankhead-Coley grants, nine will complete sometime this year, 14 have requested continuation of multi-year grants, and three are seeking no-cost extensions. (These numbers have been corrected since the May BRAC meeting.) She stated that peer reviews of grantee progress reports due April 15th were still underway, and Lytmos expects to make recommendations on continuation and no-cost extension requests to OPHR by the end of May. Site visits are scheduled for June 2-4 to grantees at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute, University of South Florida, and Bay Pines VA. Council members should contact her for specific details if they would like to participate.

Open Discussion and Closing: Members agreed that the next meeting will be conducted via teleconference on July 9, 2008, in the late afternoon. The following meeting is planned for August 26th, with details regarding location yet to be determined. The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair

 7-17-08

Chuck Wells, Assistant Director
Office of Public Health Research