

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

**September 25, 2006
10:00am – 3:00pm
Marriott Tampa Airport
Tampa International Airport
Tampa, FL 33607**

Council Members Present:

Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair
Dr. Myra Hurt
Dr. Sigurd Normann
Dr. Penny Ralston
Dr. Mary Lou Sole
Dr. Herb Weissbach

Council Members Absent:

Dr. Edward Block
Dr. Nikolaus Gravenstein
Mr. Al Latimer
Dr. Daniel Morris

Program Staff Members Present:

Ms. Eburn Grimes - DOH
Ms. Stephanie Jackson - DOH
Ms. Peggy Shults – Lytmos Group
Mr. Chuck Wells - DOH

Guests in Attendance:

Mr. Paul Hull – American Cancer Society
Ms. Linda Nolan – Moffitt Cancer Center

Welcome and Call to Order: Dr. Bookman called the meeting to order and welcomed Council members, staff and guests.

Consent Agenda: Minutes of the last meeting were presented to the Council; Dr. Herb Weissbach moved *that the minutes be approved as submitted*. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Chair Election: Two nominations were received prior to the meeting: one for Chair (Dr. Bookman) and one for Vice-Chair (Dr. Weissbach). The floor was opened for additional nominations, and none were received. Dr. Hurt called for a vote *on Dr. Bookman's election as Chair*, and Dr. Normann seconded. The vote was unanimously in favor. Dr. Bookman moved *that Dr. Weissbach be named Vice-Chair*, and it was seconded and unanimously passed.

Staff Report: Mr. Wells presented a recommendation from Dr. Morris that photos of BRAC members not be included in the Annual Report for the Bankhead-Coley Cancer Research Program. After discussion, it was the consensus of Council members that including these photos in the report enhances the credibility of the Program and supports the spirit of full disclosure; however, it was agreed that members may individually opt out.

Mr. Wells then introduced a set of special topics for Council consideration during the course of the meeting: 1) the statutory requirement to provide support for pre- and post-doctoral students; 2) the requirement of the Council to avoid conflicts of interest; 3) the application of weighting factors to peer reviewer responses to determine proposal scores. The Council first dealt with the matter of conflict of interest by discussing sample scenarios. Real conflicts are disallowed in statute and must be avoided, eliminated or disclosed and managed. Perceived conflicts should be avoided to protect the integrity of the Program. Staff presented draft language for consideration. Members concluded that the conflict of interest policy adopted by the BRAC in January, 2005 should be expanded in order that Council members will conduct business in accordance with the highest ethical standards and, to the maximum extent possible, avoid any perception of conflict of interest. Dr. Normann made a motion *that no Council member shall discuss a specific proposed grant submission, consult, review or sign off on an application, or fill any named role on a grant application for program funds, regardless of remuneration*; the motion was seconded and unanimously passed. Discussion regarding the other two topics raised by Mr. Wells was deferred to later in the meeting.

FY 06-07 Bankhead-Coley Status Update: Ms. Shults reported that, as of September 15th, 35 Bridge Grant applications requesting a total of \$6.6 million were received from investigators from

eight Florida institutions. Nearly 90% were seeking one year awards, and all proposals described cancer-related research that had been highly rated within the past year during one of nine distinct federal competitions. She also informed the Council that the peer review process for these applications was already underway. In addition, as of that same date, ten researchers representing six Florida institutions had registered to apply for Shared Instrument Grants in preparation for the October 13, 2006 application deadline. It is likely the Program will receive more applications than can be funded.

Dr. Bookman recommended that the award amount for Bridge Grants be determined based on the budget amount recommended by the federal study section, rather than the size of the applicant's request, since reviewers sometimes identify cases where the research can be completed for less than the requested amount. As a possible ranking model he also reported that the University of Miami is using a designated percentage above the pay line in selecting recipients of an internal Bridge Grant award. The Council requested Program staff to include an identification of first (A1) or second (A2) submission status of the Qualifying Federal Proposal and provide the percent of federal funding received by applicants, if possible, in the data presented for Bridge Grant funding recommendations in November. Additionally, it was confirmed that Bridge Grant awardees will be required to resubmit a federal proposal as a deliverable called out in the award terms and conditions. The Council also agreed that the award rate for these federal resubmissions will be a useful measure of the success of the mechanism.

It was agreed that a non-conflicted subcommittee of the BRAC would be convened in late October to approve an algorithm to be used for Bridge Grant applications to normalize scientific merit scores across multiple federal competitions for use in making funding decisions.

Public Comment: Arriving guests were invited to address the Council. Mr. Paul Hull congratulated the BRAC and Program staff on the rapid release of the inaugural Bankhead-Coley Call for Applications. He also advised the BRAC to be true to the guidelines provided in Florida statute and to make sure Program strategy is built around the 2010 legislative review. He explained that, due to the inherent process, sometimes Legislative intent is not clear in the statutory language. While the Legislators come and go, Legislative staff retains institutional memory and they will recall what was said in committees when the bill was written. In the case of the Bankhead-Coley program, while the clinical trials piece was inserted late in the process, it is seen as important by the Legislature.

FY 07-08 Bankhead-Coley Call for Grant Applications: Dr. Normann began the Council deliberation regarding the next grant mechanisms to be offered by describing the Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPORE) Grants offered by the National Cancer Institute. He noted that Florida institutions have not been successful in securing these large awards (\$2.5 million per year for up to 5 years), and encouraged his colleagues to consider a mechanism designed to improve the competitiveness of the state's future SPORE applications. After discussion, Dr. Norman moved *that awards of up to \$1 million would be offered for a period of up to three years for collaborative cancer research by teams of basic and applied science investigators that would lead to applications for large federal Center type grants, including SPORE*; this motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

Recalling information shared during a previous BRAC meeting that the clinical participation rate of Florida cancer patients is among the lowest in the nation, the Council then discussed soliciting a comprehensive study to understand the obstacles to clinical trial participation in the state. Dr. Ralston moved *that the Program offer as much as \$500,000 for up to two years, with at least a preliminary report after the first year, for an inter-institutional study that will reach patients and clinicians across the state*; the motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

The Council considered offering an Investigator-Initiated Research Grant, but recognized that the number of applications received would be very large compared to the relatively small number that can be funded from the budget. Consequently, the Council instead recommended a pair of grants targeting experienced and new investigators pursuing cancer related research. Dr. Sole moved *that the Program adopt a New Investigator Research Grant similar to that offered under the James & Esther King Biomedical Research Program for up to \$300,000 over three years; the motion was seconded and unanimously passed.* Following this action, the Council recommended that the Bridge Grant mechanism will be repeated for investigators who have recently produced high-scoring proposals for cancer research in federal competitions, this time limited to one year awards.

The Council further suggested to Program staff that the promotion of the Program be expanded to encourage greater participation of investigators with expertise in behavioral science, epidemiology, and bioinformatics.

FY 07-08 James & Esther King Call for Grant Applications: Ms. Grimes presented data illustrating that during fiscal year 2006-07 a total of 24 pre- and post-doctoral students were supported on 16 Program grants. The Council agreed that this level of participation clearly demonstrates that the existing mechanisms are not only providing meaningful fellowships, but also drawing students into specific projects dedicated to tobacco-related research, often in teams, and always under the mentorship of a more experienced investigator. The Council suggested that Program staff track the degree program of participating grad students.

Dr. Bookman expressed a desire to implement a Bridge Grant mechanism for investigators pursuing tobacco-related research other than projects with a cancer focus; however, a number of Council members preferred that the King program continue to offer the same mechanisms until sufficient time passes during which their effectiveness can be adequately gauged, with one exception: Dr. Normann moved *that the Small Business Technology Transfer Grant be offered on a rolling basis, with funding decisions made quarterly;* the motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

Dr. Bookman also recommended that the Bridge Grant mechanism be included in the next James & Esther King call for applications, but this recommendation lacked support from the other Council members due to concerns regarding the limitation of the existing budget.

Scientific Peer Review Discussion: Due to the shortage of time, the discussion on scientific peer review was deferred to a future meeting, and Ms. Shults agreed to provide information to Council members in advance in order to facilitate an efficient discussion.

Future Meeting Schedule and Closing: The next meeting is scheduled to take place via teleconference on November 17th, and will be dedicated to the recommendation of awards for the 2006-07 Bankhead-Coley Program awards.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair

Chuck Wells, Program Manager
September 25, 2006