

**Meeting Minutes**

**Council Members Present:**

Dr. Veena Antony  
Dr. Danny Armstrong  
Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair  
Dr. Myra Hurt  
Dr. Penny Ralston  
Dr. Mary Lou Sole  
Dr. Claes Wahlestedt  
Dr. Herbert Weissbach, Vice-Chair

**Council Members Absent:**

Dr. Randal Henderson  
Mr. Albert Latimer  
Dr. Edith Perez

**Program Staff Members Present:**

Ms. Hope Davis – Lytmos Group  
Ms. Sherrie Hajek – DOH, OPHR  
Dr. Susan Phillips – DOH, OPHR  
Ms. Peggy Shults – Lytmos Group  
Mr. Chuck Wells – DOH, OPHR  
Dr. Gorana Zec – DOH, OPHR

**Guests in Attendance:**

Mr. John Fraser – Florida State University  
Ms. Elizabeth Fenjves – University of Miami

**I. Call to Order & Welcome:**

Dr. Richard Bookman called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

**II. First Order of Business:**

**a) Approval of July Minutes:**

Dr. Bookman presented a draft copy of the minutes from the Council meeting held July 13, 2010. Dr. Herb Weissbach moved that *the minutes be approved*. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**III. FY 2010-2011 Technology Transfer:**

**a) Update on Submission Statistics:**

Ms. Sherrie Hajek reported that none of the three Technology Transfer Commercialization Partnership (TTCP) applications received (all seeking King awards) since June 15<sup>th</sup> had scored well enough to be funded. Similarly, of six Technology Transfer Feasibility applications received (two King and four Bankhead-Coley), none had met the minimum merit score threshold for funding. Not included in these numbers are two applications received since September 28<sup>th</sup>.

**b) TTF/TTCP Preliminary Data Requirement:**

Mr. Chuck Wells presented the issue analysis, "TTF/TTCP Preliminary Data Requirement," and asked for Council advice on whether or not to amend the existing Call for Applications for TTCP and TTF Grants to require preliminary data in TTF (and TTCP) applications. While the Call does not require preliminary data, peer reviewers are finding it difficult if not impossible to objectively evaluate the merits of TTF proposals without preliminary data. Feedback from peer reviewers has been that they understand the instructions but have an ethical dilemma assigning a scientific merit score without preliminary data. Dr. Bookman recalled that the mechanism was conceived after consulting Florida's Technology Transfer Managers, who saw the need to help promising projects not yet ready for a commercial partnership. He asked Council members how

much preliminary data should be expected. A few said they too would have trouble evaluating a project without preliminary scientific data. There is a difference between scientific feasibility and commercial feasibility, with the former being supported by preliminary data.

Dr. Bookman invited Mr. John Fraser and Dr. Elizabeth Fenjves to comment. Mr. Fraser said the topic of preliminary data was not previously discussed. His opinion is that there should be at least some evidence of scientific feasibility, even while there is still a need to establish commercial feasibility, and he agrees that the existing Call language should be changed. Dr. Elizabeth Fenjves said there must be strength in the science, and what this grant should do is bridge that science to a commercializable stage.

Council consensus was that the Call will be amended to eliminate the statement “Although preliminary data are not required” and draft clarified language that will be run past the Technology Transfer Managers. Ms. Shults suggested that the peer reviewer instructions and questions should also be included. All agreed that, as quickly as possible, Dr. Bookman and Ms. Shults will develop the first draft of the Call revision and Mr. Wells will forward it to the Technology Transfer Managers for their review before the amendment is finalized.

**c) Discussion of Payline:**

Since none of the TTCP or TTF applications has yet reached the pre-determined minimum merit score threshold, Ms. Hajek suggested that the payline be loosened. The current payline for TTCP and TTF applications was intentionally set to be stringent to avoid exhausting available funds early in the year. Less applications have been received than projected. She reported that the earlier decision to change the requirement for preliminary data may affect merit scores. Dr. Weissbach moved that *for the current funding year, the payline would be modified to 3.0*. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

**IV. Overlap Policy for FY 2011-12 Call:**

Ms. Hajek reviewed the Program’s current policies on financial and scientific overlap, and asked the Council if there would be any situations in which scientific overlap would be acceptable. For example, should applicants holding career development (K-Type) grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) be able to propose overlapping aims with a Program New Investigator Award as long as there is no financial overlap? After discussion, Council members agreed that for the proposed example the aims must be different. They could not identify any other cases in which scientific overlap should be permitted, and they are comfortable leaving the current policies as they are. Dr. Bookman asked staff to keep the Council informed if other scenarios arise that would call for revisiting this matter.

**V. Peer Review:**

**a) Two Tier Peer Review Analysis:**

Dr. Susan Phillips presented the issue analysis, “Two Tier Peer Review Analysis,” noting that no action was required by Council. In summary, a two-tier peer review process would be either financially imprudent or result in delays in the peer review process, depending on how it was implemented. Program staff has already submitted a legislative proposal that would exempt the Program’s peer review from Government in the Sunshine Laws, which all agree would be the ultimate solution to the perceived short comings of our current practices. When asked about the timing, Dr. Phillips said that because this is an election year it will go to the Legislature in

January. Council members expressed strong support for this proposal. Dr. Bookman recommended that he, Dr. Danny Armstrong, and Dr. Veena Antony ensure that the voluntary health organizations they represent on the Council are mobilized to support this proposal, and suggested that each Council member work through the legislative affairs office at their home institution. Mr. Wells added that all should emphasize that there is nothing nefarious behind this change, only to realign the statute with best practice in peer review. Dr. Phillips agreed to circulate a copy of the proposed change in legislation to foster a consistent message. Several Council members commended staff for their work on this issue. They also thanked Dr. Gorana Zec for her statistical analysis.

**b) Collexis Reviewer Finder:**

Ms. Shults informed the Council that Lytmus will be adding a new tool, Collexis Reviewer Finder, to its capabilities for recruiting and matching reviewers to proposals. This utility uses a “fingerprinting” technology based on the National Library of Medicine’s Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) Thesaurus to characterize proposal abstracts and suggest qualified potential reviewers based on their record of publications in NIH’s PubMed. The cost for this service is included in the new Lytmus contract. Dr. Bookman said that, based on the University of Miami’s experience using a related Collexis product, he believes this will be a very positive enhancement.

**VI. BRAC Survey Results:**

Mr. Wells thanked Dr. Zec for her work in preparing and administering the survey and the Council members that responded. In general, the feedback was very favorable, with opportunities for improvement in the areas of guidance in securing travel reimbursement and distributing meeting materials further in advance, with more context and background. It appears the frequency of meetings and effort demanded of Council members is about right. Council members favor formalizing a periodic process for the election of a Chair, even if it is to affirm the status quo. Among general comments, one noted the unresolved dilemma of permissible roles of Council members on funded projects and another expressed concern regarding the quality of peer review. Mr. Wells noted that staff has already initiated improvements in response to some of the feedback. A policy has already been adopted to allow Council members greater liberty as mentors on grants. Council meeting preparation will aim to make meeting materials available online seven days before the meeting. Council members noted with favor the use of the online agenda for this meeting with hyperlinks to the handouts. Regarding peer review, the changes noted earlier should ameliorate the concerns expressed through the survey. Speaking on behalf of Council, Dr. Bookman said he and his fellow volunteers are fortunate to have such capable staff support.

Council took a five minute break at which time Drs. Antony, Hurt, and Wahlestedt announced they could not attend the second half of the meeting.

**VII. DOH/OPHR Updates:**

**a) Re-review Requests:**

Mr. Wells reported that one TTF applicant recently requested a review reconsideration. Two of three Council members asked to consider the case agreed that the original review was fair, so the request was denied. For their service on this or the earlier reconsideration requests, he thanked Drs. Hurt, Armstrong, Perez, Weissbach, and Antony.

**b) Status of Calls for Applications:**

Ms. Hajek said the Calls are complete, have been reviewed by the Department's legal counsel, and are in the administrative rulemaking queue. She expressed appreciation to all for their input during draft preparation.

**c) Changes to Terms and Conditions:**

Ms. Hajek informed the Council of several changes recently made to the grant Terms and Conditions, including key personnel and budget change procedures intended to lessen the administrative burden on both staff and grantees.

**d) Grant Administration Manual:**

Ms. Hajek presented a revised copy of the Grant Administration Manual. The purpose of this document is to clearly state Program policy and provide instructions for how to comply. Grantees operate under their Terms and Conditions and use this manual as a guide for procedures.

**e) Administrative Rule Making:**

Dr. Phillips said the process has been on hold pending the development of the Calls for Applications, the finalization of the Terms and Conditions, and the revised Grant Administration Manual. The Notice of Change is being published in the Florida Administrative Weekly on October 8<sup>th</sup>, then the materials go to the Joint Administrative Procedures Committee (JAPC). That should take 30-45 days. The Program will have to make rule changes two to four times a year as new Calls are released (Technology Transfer) or if any Call is amended.

It will be helpful for the voluntary health organizations to work toward getting the rulemaking requirement removed from the statute. With a change in administration and likely department-wide reorganization, it is unlikely that this issue, while paramount to the smooth operation of the Program, will gain much attention as a legislative priority for the Department's legislative team. For the same reason, the voluntary health organizations may want to engage on the exemption of the peer review panels from public meeting requirements. Dr. Phillips stated that JAPC agrees that the rulemaking process is not appropriate for competitive grant programs, and she hopes this will be resolved during the 2011 Legislative Session.

**f) Project Classification System:**

Ms. Hajek said Dr. Zec has classified the 2001 and 2003 awards using the new classification scheme and she expects all grants to be classified and an updated provided by May. Dr. Bookman inquired whether the new Collexis tool could be helpful in this effort, and Ms. Shults said Lytmos will look into this.

**g) Current Grant Portfolio:**

Mr. Wells presented an Active Grants Report as of September 30<sup>th</sup>. Nine grants have not yet started, all due to delays in obtaining IRB or IACUC approvals. Staff will continue to monitor these projects and if the problems appear irreconcilable, will withdraw the grants.

Staff is working on an accounting of grant personnel, full-time equivalents (FTEs), and dollar value of labor, noting that there is not currently an easy way to calculate FTEs. Dr. Bookman recommended staff contact the folks running ExpertNet, a program run at Florida State

University for the Board of Governors, to piggyback onto their data regarding FTEs and positions. Mr. Wells has reached out to them in the past, with no response. Dr. Bookman agreed to participate in a second attempt.

**h) Publishing cut scores (payline):**

Ms. Hajek said the Program is interested in publishing paylines for transparency purposes and because applicants want to know, noting that it is now required by law to publish agenda items with related handouts. She shared two example documents for use in publishing information related to the determination of paylines, one to accompany an agenda and the other to be associated with minutes. This would not affect the dynamic spreadsheet the Program has traditionally used during funding discussions. Several Council members recommended not including full details. What is proposed far exceeds what NIH publishes and may be defeating to those researchers receiving the worst scores. Dr. Sole recommended a narrative summary indicating how many of each type grant were funded along with the minimum score. Dr. Phillips will consult Department counsel as to whether a summary would satisfy the spirit of the law.

**i) Set 2011 Meeting Dates:**

Mr. Wells sought Council consensus on the schedule and nature of meetings for the coming year. The Program has had a history of holding a mix of face-to-face and teleconference meetings, with additional meetings inserted as needed to address major changes in circumstances. He proposed a scenario with two face-to-face meetings and two teleconferences. The first in-person meeting would be in mid- to late January for strategic planning and Program operations, and the other in mid-May for funding recommendations and decisions regarding the next fiscal year's Calls for Applications. Both of these meetings would span two days, from mid-morning on the first day to midday on the second. The teleconferences would take place in July to finalize Call details and plan the annual reports, and in October for program evaluation. Council members were in general agreement; several expressed concern about the difficulty and overall added expense of traveling to Tallahassee; however, Dr. Phillips said current Department travel restrictions make it hard for more than one staff member to attend meetings elsewhere. Dr. Bookman underscored the value of meeting in Tallahassee, making it possible to include other Department resources. Mr. Wells agreed to identify dates and circulate them for Council approval.

Ms. Hajek left the meeting.

**VIII. FL CURED:**

**a) Budget Update:**

Mr. Wells presented a copy of the recently issued FL CURED Strategic Plan for FY 2010-2011 through FY 2012-2013. Based on the merits of this plan, the Department has issued a contract amendment to release an additional \$250,000 to FL CURED, as permitted by statute.

**b) Jim King Leadership Award:**

Mr. Wells invited Council members to nominate candidates for FL CURED's Jim King Leadership Award. This will be the second such award made, with Dr. Clyde McCoy selected as the first recipient. BioFlorida also has a Jim King Legislator Award. Mr. Wells noted the imminent deadline (October 15<sup>th</sup>) and said FL CURED staff is willing to assist with completion of applications.

**c) BioFlorida Conference and Health Disparities Research Invitational Summit:**

Dr. Penny Ralston informed the Council of the event's inclusion of health disparities through a poster session, breakout session, and keynote speaker focused on this topic, all planned for October 26. Referring to the BioFlorida Conference program, Mr. Wells pointed out the significant participation of Council members and Program staff in the many breakout sessions planned. Dr. Ralston is expecting more than 50 people, predominantly researchers from at least eight universities, to participate in the Invitational Summit that will also occur later that day as a post-conference activity. She is following up with Florida International University, Florida Memorial University, and Edward Waters College to encourage their representation. She acknowledged Drs. Bookman and Armstrong, along with Mr. Wells and FL CURED staff, for their considerable contributions to the preparation for the Summit. Dr. Bookman commended Dr. Ralston for her leadership in pulling this event together.

**IX. Annual Reports:**

Ms. Shults said Council members would soon receive draft copies of the 2010 Bankhead-Coley Annual Report for review, and work is now underway in developing the 2010 King Annual Report. By statute, the former is from the Department while the latter is from the Council. In addition to the standard contents prescribed by statute, she asked for input regarding messaging or areas of special emphasis. Council members responded that it will be important to set a national context for the effort, perhaps with a preamble on the increasing importance of state funding as the federal budget becomes more challenging. Additionally, the Legislature gave the Program almost \$50 million two years ago, and this year some of the money was redirected for non-peer reviewed research. The report should caution against this by building the case for competitive, peer-reviewed awards. The Council desires to reach out to Florida's research leadership regarding the importance of maintaining peer reviewed investment. Dr. Bookman also suggested that the rule making requirement be mentioned but not featured per se.

Ms. Shults asked Council members to focus on the high-value sections of the annual report drafts. Dr. Bookman asked that she point these out in the emails dispatching the documents.

**X. Open Discussion:**

**a) Public Comment:**

Dr. Bookman offered an opportunity for public comment and there were none.

**b) Future Meeting Dates:**

The next meeting will be in person on January 19-20, 2011 in Tallahassee.

**c) Next site visit: University of Florida, November 8-9, 2010**

Ms. Shults mentioned that a site visit team is coming to the University of Florida, Gainesville on November 8th and 9th and invited interested Council members to attend any or all of the meetings associated with the visit.

**XI. Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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

C. Wells 2-8-11

**Chuck Wells, Assistant Director  
Office of Public Health Research**