

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

**November 17, 2006  
1:00 – 4:00pm EST  
Web and Teleconference**

**Council Members Present:**

Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair  
Dr. Myra Hurt  
Dr. Nikolaus Gravenstein  
Dr. Daniel Morris  
Dr. Penny Ralston  
Dr. Mary Lou Sole  
Dr. Herb Weissbach, Vice Chair

**Council Members Absent:**

Dr. Edward Block  
Mr. Al Latimer  
Dr. Sigurd Normann

**Program Staff Members Present :**

Ms. Mary Bernard – Lytmos Group  
Ms. Eburn Grimes – DOH  
Ms. Sherrie Hajek - DOH  
Ms. Stephanie Jackson – DOH  
Dr. Sandy Love – Lytmos Group  
Dr. Susan Phillips - DOH  
Ms. Kerri Poirier – Lytmos Group  
Ms. Michelle Richardson - DOH  
Ms. Judy Taylor-Fischer - DOH  
Mr. Chuck Wells - DOH

**Guests in Attendance:**

Mr. Jimmy Jones - Nemours Children's  
Clinic  
Ms. Brenda Olsen - American Lung  
Association of FL  
Mr. Tom Taylor - FL Conflict Resolution  
Consortium

**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*. This motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

**Staff Report:**

Mr. Wells first introduced two new staff members Ms. Michelle Richardson and Ms. Sherrie Hajek. As a result of program growth, Mr. Wells has been promoted to Assistant Director within the Office of Public Health Research and Ms. Richardson will be working in the administrative support under Stephanie Jackson while Ms. Hajek will be the Program Manager for the King and Bankhead-Coley Programs. With the addition of Bankhead-Coley and the multi-year funding through both programs, the portfolio of active grants is already over 50 and is likely to at least double over the next year. Ms. Hajek holds a Masters in Urban Geography. Her experience includes working at the Department of Health for the last five years in the Medical Quality Assurance, Testing Services Unit. There she worked with the licensing boards while as a project manager for licensure examinations. She also has been a board member of a non-profit.

Mr. Wells informed the Council that he recently was a panelist at the American Public Health Association National Conference where he spoke on Florida's funding for biomedical research including the King Program. Funding by state and local government is around five percent of the total investment in biomedical research so it is very important for states to leverage relatively smaller amounts of money for a specific advantage.

He also attended the BioFlorida Conference where Governor Bush was the keynote speaker. The Governor mentioned the King Program as one of the significant

accomplishments during his term. Mr. Wells encouraged everyone to try to attend the next BioFlorida conference and also the annual Florida Research Consortium. A strong presence at these meetings will strengthen awareness for our programs.

The Florida Center for Universal Research (FL CURED), another program Mr. Wells oversees, held its inaugural biomedical research summit September 1. The summit sought to bring the research community together to engage in a dialog on a cures-oriented research agenda for Florida. The complete report of the summit proceedings are available on the FL CURED Website: [www.FLCURED.org](http://www.FLCURED.org)

Mr. Wells also gave an update presentation to the Florida Dialog on Cancer (FDOC), the sponsor of the legislation that led to the Bankhead-Coley Biomedical Research Program. Feedback from members was positive. Dr. Jarrad Goodwin from Sylvester Cancer Center said, "we couldn't have done any better with year one or two!" Dr. Phillip Marty of USF encouraged the program to look for ways to support the new Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSAs). Mr. Wells informed the Council that, out of 60 recent applications, no Florida universities received full awards; however the University of South Florida and the University of Florida received small planning grants to support future applications for funding. Ultimately, only 60 academic health centers in the U.S. will be selected to divide the annual budget of \$500 million in funding when fully implemented in 2012. Dr. Bookman concurred, as Dr. Marty suggested, that universities would really benefit from any effort to find a way to provide support for these CTSA programs within the state.

Finally, Mr. Wells conveyed that Dr. Goodwin asked that we "certify" our programs with NCI to enhance Florida's efforts for National Cancer Institute Core Grants. There are some advantages given during their funding decisions if a researcher has previously received funding from other peer-reviewed programs. He encouraged us to make certain that the King and the Bankhead Coley Programs seek that certification from NCI. Staff will pursue this and report back to the Council.

**Budget Proviso Language Initiative:** In response to budget proviso language, which directs the Department to give \$50,000 annually to historically black colleges in the state of Florida, Mr. Wells described a pre- and post-doc fellowship competition to be handled administratively by staff. Plans are for a mini-Call, to be released on December 01, 2006, directed to the four historically black colleges in the state of Florida. Both Dr. Bookman and Dr. Sole expressed concerns that at least two of the colleges do not have doctoral programs in Life Sciences and therefore would be ineligible to apply. A brief discussion took place among the BRAC members regarding alternate suggestions. Dr. Bookman recommended that Dr. Thomas Snowden at Florida Memorial would be a good contact to discuss program alternatives. Mr. Wells acknowledged the suggestions and will take them into advisement.

**Meeting Scheduling:** Dr. Morris expressed scheduling difficulties with weekday meetings due to the challenges of patient scheduling in his practice and suggested evenings for teleconferences or weekends for face-to-face meetings. Dr. Sole expressed concern over Saturday meetings but was receptive to Sundays. Staff indicated complete flexibility in order to meet the Council's needs. After some discussion, it was agreed that conference calls would be scheduled for late afternoons, possibly on Fridays and that face-to-face meetings would be scheduled for Sunday-Monday, ending early on Monday when a second day is necessary.

**Quorums:** On behalf of Dr. Ralston who had not yet joined the call, Mr. Wells expressed her concern over quorum issues during BRAC meetings. During the last meeting,

several members needed to leave prior to adjournment. A quorum would require at least 6 members to be present. Full attendance has only been a problem recently. Dr. Hurt suggested that it was important for everyone to make BRAC a priority, and that having a quorum requirement may hinder the functioning of the Council. Dr. Bookman agreed and said there needs to be a clear understanding among Council members of the importance of making decisions with the majority present. Council decided not to adopt a formal quorum mechanism.

**FY 06-07 Bankhead-Coley Funding Presentation:** Ms. Bernard presented competition statistics for the Bankhead-Coley Program Call for Applications (CFA). A total of 47 proposals were received, consisting of 36 Bridge Grant applications and 11 Shared Instrument applications.

**Eligibility issues:** Two eligibility questions were discussed. The CFA eligibility criteria called for the principal site of research is to be conducted within the state of Florida. The issue on the table was whether a budget that included more than 60% of funds to be spent outside the state violated the intent of the CFA. Dr. Bookman moved *that future calls for the Programs overseen by the BRAC will define "principal site" as a location within the state of Florida through which two-thirds of the awarded funds will be spent, and exceptions will be handled on a case-by-case basis.* This motion was seconded and unanimously passed. Concerning the eligibility for the specific Bridge grant application for this funding decision, council members discussed how this would be handled if awarded. Council supported the notion that principal means most, and deferred the handling of this specific case to staff if this applicant falls within the fundable range.

Ms. Bernard asked for a ruling from Council regarding Shared Instrument applications that only outline a proposed maintenance plan for one year (particularly if that is significantly less than the useful life of the equipment.) After a brief discussion, Dr. Bookman moved *that for future Calls, maintenance plans should extend for the reasonably useful lifetime of the equipment.* This motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

**Funding Recommendations:** A subcommittee met on November 2 to work with Program staff to prepare a method of ranking and presenting the Bankhead-Coley Bridge Grant applications for funding consideration. Ms. Bernard reviewed with the Council the recommendations of the BRAC subcommittee on the approach and spreadsheet tool agreed upon to support the funding recommendation process. The tool presented reflected the payline or funding information gathered by staff from the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense along with individual applicant scores and other relevant cancer relationship and collaboration scores. For future Bridge Grant programs Dr. Bookman recommended staff attempt to get more information from the federal agencies, and he offered to help staff with contacts. Ms. Bernard then went over the funding spreadsheet. For fiscal year 2006-07 up to 8.1 million is available for awards. After discussion, Dr. Bookman moved *that the Council approves the funding for 26 Bridge Grants and 7 Shared Instrument Grants with a reduction in funding for SIG application #38 due to the total instrument usage not meeting the requirement of 75%. Final funding was complete and if any additional funds become available, the first priority would be to restore funding to the Shared Instrument Grant # 38 that was reduced.* This motion was seconded and unanimously passed. Mr. Wells asked for recommendations on fundable but unfunded proposals to allow staff latitude in the event one of the awardees becomes administratively ineligible. After discussion, it was agreed that only one or two of the SIGs qualified on scientific merit. It is unlikely that \$500,000 would become available, so no recommendations were offered.

**James & Esther King 2007-2008 Call Discussion.** Ms. Bernard proposed a scheme for

handling Small Business Technology Transfer grants. Rather than offering a CFA with a single deadline, the CFA would be open for the entire fiscal year. Using a predetermined merit score threshold, staff would be allowed to make funding decisions on a quarterly basis until funds ran out. Dr. Bookman moved *that for validating the open call, a 2.1 score is acceptable as a threshold for funding, and the funding allocation will be decided in May*. This motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

Dr. Bookman asked that the Council revisit the King Program mix of mechanisms. He conveyed the strong support from the research community for the Bankhead Coley Bridge Grant mechanism and suggested a similar mechanism could be offered through the King Program. He indicated that federal funding to Florida had decreases by approximately \$25 million this year compared to last. Dr. Weissbach concurred that a bridge grant mechanism would be timely considering the current federal funding environment. After further discussion comparing the value of bridge grants to current mechanisms, including offering bridge grants only to previous King awardees, Dr. Bookman moved *to go forward with the King Program comprised of an NIR, Bridge and TSP grant mechanisms and dropping the SBTT grant mechanism*. This motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

The Council recommended that the Bridge Grant would be open to investigators of all experience levels and new investigators may seek second year funding subject to the availability of funds. Mr. Wells confirmed with Council members in attendance that it was their desire to see the citizenship eligibility requirement for the King Program also lifted as for the Bankhead-Coley Program, and that the New Investigator Research mechanism would be reduced to a total of \$375,000 with each year not to exceed \$125, 000.

**Open Discussion:** None.

**Public Comment:** Guests were invited to address the Council. Ms. Brenda Olsen, American Lung Association of Florida, responded and said her agency will do their best to find money to support these Programs.

**Future Meeting Schedule and Closing:** The next meeting will take place in January. Council discussed having this meeting on or around January 7-8 for the purpose of planning for the coming year. Staff will poll Council members with alternate options. Dr. Bookman moved *to adjourn*. This motion was seconded and unanimously passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m. (EST)

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Dr. Richard Bookman, Chair

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Chuck Wells, Assistant Director  
Office of Public Health Research