

## Minutes

### UW School of Medicine and Public Health Medical Education and Research Committee

5:00 PM November 12, 2007 – Room 4201 Health Sciences Learning Center

Members Present: Sanjay Asthana, Bill Busse, Molly Carnes, Paul DeLuca, Norm Drinkwater, Jeff Grossman, Susan Goelzer, Tom Grist, Cindy Haq, Rick Moss, Greg Nycz, Mary Beth Plane, Patrick Remington, Gordon Ridley, Susan Skochelak, Jeff Stearns, Rod Welch, George Wilding

Members Absent: Cindy Czajkowski, Javier Nieto

Guests: Kevin Wymore, Kathy Irwin

Staff: Tracy Cabot, Cathy Frey, Tonya Mathison, Ken Mount, Karla Thompson, Eileen Smith

The Committee was called to order by Chair Paul DeLuca at 5:07 p.m.

**1. The draft minutes** from the September 10, 2007 MERC meeting and the September 25, 2007 Strategic Planning Retreat were presented. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**2. Announcements:** DeLuca called attention to the 2008 meeting schedule.

**3. MERC Executive Subcommittee:** DeLuca reported that there was not a quorum at the November 5 subcommittee meeting. He stated that Executive Subcommittee has been dealing with requests for no-cost extensions. It would be useful to have a policy to allow administrative staff to handle routine requests. Susan Goelzer moved that MERC delegate authority to the WPP Director (Eileen Smith) and MERC chair (Paul DeLuca) to approve no-cost extension requests if the amount of funds remaining is less than 25% of the original award. Norm Drinkwater seconded this motion, which was approved unanimously.

DeLuca asked for MERC input on the no-cost extension request from Alexandra Adams, who has requested a two-year extension due to substantial delays in the first project year because of unforeseen circumstances. After brief discussion, MERC members agreed that a two-year extension would be appropriate. Mary Beth Plane noted that Christina Hull was requesting a seven-month extension, and DeLuca suggested rounding that to one year. Javier Nieto requested an extension for funds remaining from the SHOW planning grant that have been earmarked for a symposium to be held in early 2008. Xin Sun asked for a one-year extension, and Byron Crouse also asked for a one-year extension for the WARM grant. Goelzer moved that all extension requests be approved, with the modifications noted above. Drinkwater seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

DeLuca stated that the Executive Subcommittee has received a number of Letters of Intent, and is moving them through the review process. He reminded the group that the possible review outcomes are to reject the LOI with no further consideration, to ask the application for a full

proposal, or to ask the applicant to prepare a proposal for a planning grant. DeLuca asked for discussion about the LOI from Catherine Leith for the development of a Biobank. Plane asked about the relationship of the proposed biobank to efforts at the UWCCC. DeLuca stated that this proposal would expand the biobank at the Cancer Center to include the spectrum of projects including SHOW and ICTR. Plane asked if the expanded biobank would be available to researchers outside of Wisconsin, and DeLuca said that it would be available for a fee, but that there would also be a list of priorities for use. Susan Skochelak recommended that we ask for a complete proposal. Rick Moss seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

DeLuca reported that the Executive Subcommittee recommended deferring discussion on the LOI from Javier Nieto for the expansion of SHOW until the program is fully operational for at least six months.

The Executive Subcommittee discussed the LOI from Aaron Carrell for the development of a program for the prevention of obesity and diabetes (WiPOD). The Executive Subcommittee suggested that perhaps this group should be encouraged to submit a proposal to the CHSP program. Eileen Smith suggested that we could alternatively invite them to submit a planning proposal, in the range of \$50,000 to \$100,000 over two years. There was some discussion about which mechanism would be most appropriate. Bill Busse noted that obesity and diabetes are important problems in Wisconsin, but that this group has not developed a complete vision and may be at a disadvantage in applying for a CHSP grant. He suggested asking them to prepare a planning grant. Goelzer stated that WiPOD could become the core for development of a proposal for a CDC prevention center. The group could start with planning funds and grow into a CHSP grant, and then collaborate with OAC on grants dealing with obesity and eventually develop a CDC application. Drinkwater agreed that requesting a planning grant application would be a good way to start. DeLuca and Smith will meet with Dr. Carrell to present these recommendations.

Due to time constraints, the agenda was re-ordered.

**6. Conflict of Interest:** DeLuca introduced Kathy Irwin, UW Legal Counsel who served on the subcommittee to develop the MERC Conflict of Interest Policy. Irwin said that the subcommittee has done a good job of balancing the welfare of the programs with creating a system to avoid conflicts of interest. The subcommittee weighed the pros and cons of each of these issues. She noted that this is different from institutional COI policy, which deals with the actions of individuals without regard to their various university roles. Additionally, this policy allows MERC to apply judgment in determining if a conflict exists.

Busse, who chaired the subcommittee, explained that the various financial definitions are aligned with the university policy, and Irwin noted that in some cases, we've been even more conservative than campus policy, especially with respect to compensation levels. Busse noted that while the definition of a family relationship is very straightforward, it was more difficult to create a concise definition for professional relationships.

Busse noted that a key point of policy is that MERC members are expected to exercise their responsibilities solely in the interest of the WPP and MERC. To this end, the subcommittee felt that it would be a conflict of interest for MERC members to apply for MERC competitive funding. Therefore, the draft policy states that MERC members are not eligible to apply as PI

for MERC-funded RFPs; however, MERC members can serve as PIs on MERC initiated activities.

DeLuca expanded on this point by saying that we have asked MERC members to lead certain initiatives for the development of infrastructure. DeLuca said that we want to continue to be able to ask MERC members to serve in that type of leadership role. Drinkwater added that the real difference between the two scenarios is where the idea is initiated—whether the idea comes from an investigator in response to a MERC RFP or if MERC asks a specific faculty member to lead a particular MERC initiated initiative.

Busse noted that conflicts could arise during proposal review. He explained the policy regarding department chairs. Drinkwater asked if in each situation, a department chair must disclose their relationship, and then MERC decides if a conflict exists. Ridley asked if chairs are automatically in conflict if a faculty member from their department presents a proposal. DeLuca stated that there is not an assumption of automatic conflict, but it must be reviewed in each individual situation. Molly Carnes suggested that an important consideration in these situations will be whether the applicant has a direct reporting relationship to the department chair. Drinkwater stated that while this policy could complicate MERC's discussions, it is necessary.

Busse explained the procedures after disclosure, which allows MERC to ask a member who has a conflict to participate in the discussion of a proposal, but prevents the member from voting. He noted that each COI action must be noted in the meeting minutes.

DeLuca noted that this policy requires members to provide copies of their annual outside activity reports. He asked if that is public information, and Irwin replied that it is. Tom Grist asked for clarification of co-PI versus co-investigator in the section describing professional relationships, and Drinkwater and DeLuca suggested that the wording be changed to co-investigator. Cindy Haq questioned the wording in the policy related to MERC-targeted activities. Busse said that it was a way to distinguish from RFPs from non-competitive special projects. Drinkwater suggested changing the wording to MERC-directed, and Irwin said it should be more explicitly MERC-directed (non-competitive).

Haq asked if any existing projects that would be problematic under this policy, and DeLuca stated that would be reviewed.

George Wilding moved that the COI policy be approved with the incorporation of the changes noted above. Grist seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

**5. Strategic Retreat Overview and Outcomes:** DeLuca asked for discussion of the document summarizing the MERC Strategic Planning Retreat. He noted that the items listed in Part I: Dean Golden's Goals and Objectives, are specific to the WPP. DeLuca suggested that we use this document as template for the next five-year plan. Drinkwater reiterated that the numbering in the document does not represent order of priority, but is presented for ease of discussion. Skochelak commented that Golden emphasized that educational objectives will continue to be defined by the school leadership in concert with accreditation requirements. She asked that this point be included in the Overview document. Carnes asked that a statement about eliminating health disparities should also be included as a goal in the Overview document.

Greg Nycz recommended that in Part II, we include a focus on service as well as research and education. In this instance, service would include finding ways to apply knowledge in communities. He added that we would not be providing on-going support for community initiatives, but rather would help to get things going, for example, by doing surveys to provide information regarding the barriers to applying our research knowledge. Nycz suggested that if we know that one-time costs are a barrier to applying knowledge, MERC should provide funding for that one-time cost. After some discussion, Haq stated that this is a challenging dilemma, because we don't have the funds to implement everything we know. We need to determine what types of activities are appropriate for MERC funding. Grossman agreed, and observed that while MERC is the funding engine for the transformation, that is not the only thing that MERC is trying to accomplish. Therefore, we need to limit and/or consolidate what we do.

DeLuca stated that the items in Part II: Suggestions from Participants, represent a broad list that must be distilled further, to decide which items to pursue, and when. Similarly, Part III: Challenges and Issues, represent some major near-term decisions. However, we need a process to discuss these issues, and the MERC as a whole is probably too large to work through this list. Drinkwater suggested dividing MERC into three or four subcommittees to work on the various topic headings in Part II. Carnes liked that idea, and added that it would be helpful to have each subcommittee include in their discussion how they would link to the other areas. She also suggested having some cross-representation on each subcommittee.

Skochelak suggested that we create subcommittees as suggested above, but modified the categories to include Research, Education, Service, and OAC-MERC collaboration. DeLuca agreed, and reminded the group that we must use the Dean's priorities, but we can have additional priorities as well. Busse stated that the Dean's priorities are a big umbrella, but we need to be narrow in our scope and move forward in specific areas. Skochelak described an artificial distinction between the points in Parts I, II, and III, and suggested that each subcommittee look at all three Parts in their deliberations.

Grossman observed that a lot of this type of discussion has been done in the Dean's transformation document, and that we should use that as source material for priority setting for the next five year period. Busse asked about the timeframe for these subcommittees, and Smith replied that this work needs to be done soon, as this is the first step in development of the five year plan. DeLuca asked how to determine the membership of the subcommittees, and Drinkwater suggested that DeLuca and Smith make assignments.

**7. CHSP discussion:** DeLuca drew the group's attention to the single page document summarizing suggested changes to the Collaborative Health Sciences Program RfP. DeLuca pointed out that we are now emphasizing collaboration across boundaries; that the PI must be in the SMPH, but that co-investigators and collaborators can be elsewhere; that we have limited the percent effort that the PI and co-investigators may request to 30% FTE; and that the maximum award has been increased to \$500,000.

DeLuca remarked that we have modified the application process, which now has two parts: a Letter of Intent followed by a full application. In order to have broad peer review, we will assign specific proposals to faculty experts, who will return written reviews. MERC will rank the applications, hear oral presentations, and make final funding decisions.

Busse commented that increasing the maximum award is very useful, as is the salary limit. Haq asked if we should specify in the eligibility paragraph that co-investigators must be from different disciplines, but DeLuca noted that applicants could be in the same department but have very different research (for example, the department of Medicine). Haq asked about allowing co-investigators from community agencies, and Drinkwater suggested that we maintain the restrictions on co-investigators as written, but expand the definition of collaborators to include community agencies.

Grist suggested that we explore the possibility of developing an “exchange program” with MCW to get experts to review grants, thereby reducing possibilities of conflict. Jeff Stearns asked for clarification of the roles of the CHSP Review Subcommittee and the expert reviewers. He also asked what process we would use to go from a large number of applications to the few that will be funded. DeLuca said that we will use a process similar to that used by the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery Seed Grant Program, where we identify appropriate individuals to review each proposal and ask them to provide a written review. MERC will then go through those reviews and assign a rank order.

After some further discussion of the roles of the expert reviewers, the Review Subcommittee, and MERC, it was agreed that it would be preferable to use the LOI to triage the large pool of potential applications based on such concepts as innovation, experience of the collaborative partners, fit to the goals of MERC and the CHSP, etc. The LOIs would be reviewed by the Review Subcommittee, and the science of the full applications would be reviewed by the external experts. The results of each step of the process will be reviewed by MERC before further action is taken. Program staff will revise the CHSP application instructions to reflect this discussion and circulate the document to MERC prior to the RfP release.

**8. OAC report:** Nycz summarized OAC’s recent activities. OAC member Sue Reisch has resigned, and OAC is seeking a new faculty member to replace her. OAC has also been discussing how to provide advice and comment to MERC, and while they have made no decisions, one suggestion is to rotate OAC members at MERC meetings. Another idea is to discuss the WPP annual reports at a joint meeting in the Spring. OAC has also made the decision to embrace community partnerships and to maintain relevance to the State Health Plan in their section of the next five-year plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:  
Tracy L. Cabot,  
Recorder