

Minutes

UW Medical School Medical Education and Research Committee 5:00 PM June 12, 2006 – Room 4201 Health Sciences Learning Center

Members Present: Bill Busse, Paul DeLuca (phone), Dave DeMets, Norm Drinkwater, John Frey, Susan Goelzer, Jeff Grossman, Debra Hullett, Javier Nieto, Greg Nycz, Gordon Ridley, Susan Skochelak (phone), Doug Smith, George Wilding

Members Absent: Lynn Allen-Hoffmann, Sanjay Asthana, Maureen Durkin, Rick Moss, Jeff Stearns

Guests: Pat Remington, Kevin Wymore

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

The Committee was called to order by Vice Chair Jeff Grossman at 5:03 p.m. He reviewed and re-ordered the agenda.

1. The draft minutes from the April MERC meeting were presented. No modifications were suggested and the minutes were approved unanimously.

8 and 9. Paul DeLuca reported on the activities at the June 5 Executive Subcommittee meeting, which focused on the proposed revisions to the New Investigator Program Request for Proposals (RfP). Review of the New Investigator Program was the result of suggestions made the Reviewers and MERC to clarify the requirements of the program and to align it more clearly with the goal of improving public and community health. A task force of MERC members has made a number of changes to the RfP application instructions and review criteria to make the connection to community health more explicit. A screening document was developed for the use of the ARS. This tool will help focus the review on the goals of the program and the relative weight of each review criterion.

DeLuca also outlined that the review process has changed only slightly. Assuming that MERC envisions making five awards in a grant cycle, the ARS would be expected to review the proposals and forward the top ten applicants in rank order to MERC. Those finalists would come to a pre-determined MERC meeting to make a brief presentation and answer questions. MERC would make the final award decisions.

Bill Busse noted that a number of people worked on the document, which has much more emphasis on health improvements and increased collaborations. In addition, there are very specific guidelines for proposal review. Because of the timeline, there will be one grant cycle in the remaining calendar year.

John Frey asked if the applicant interviews would be held in an opening meeting, and it was decided that because it would be the basis for a funding decision, the interviews would have to be held in closed session. Frey suggested that it would be useful to hold public presentations, such as an annual symposium or poster session, for all funded programs.

There being no further discussion, George Wilding moved that MERC approve the revised RfP and screening document, and Busse seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

5. Pat Remington presented a progress report on the MPH program. He detailed the hiring of an Associate Director (faculty associate) and a student services coordinator, which brings the program to full staffing levels.

Remington explained that the admissions experience this year has been different from last year. The first year acceptance rate was 98%. The second year acceptance rate was lower; probably based in part on the early deadline of January 15. The deadline has now been extended to July 1; which has generated 15 additional applicants, including three medical students. The UW program is now really competing with other schools of public health. Therefore, our program needs to spend more time in recruitment outreach. Remington characterized this as part of the learning curve for the program.

Remington noted that the program is in the process of having an outstanding curriculum, with about half of the courses fully developed, and the other half under development. He also said that the staffing and other issues have caused a slight delay in the accreditation process. Remington reported that the Schools of Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy, and SMPH are all working on dual degree proposals. Finally, he stated that the first group of 18 students will be graduating, and will present their research results in August at a symposium at the Pyle Center.

Busse asked what is the optimal class size. Remington explained that in the past, the accrediting body had no set requirement for number of necessary credits, so we developed a one year program of 36 credits. However, the accrediting body has now adopted a minimum requirement of 42 credits, which means it is no longer possible to have a one year program. So, the program has expanded to two years, and the goal is to have about 50-60 students at steady state (total year one and year two classes). The program can give up to 12 transfer credits for appropriate public health elective classes taken recently, which would allow students to complete the program in one year. However, it will be difficult for someone who has been a practitioner greater than five years. Susan Skochelak added that rotational credits received during residency would make it possible to finish in one year. Remington also said that it helps if students begin the program in July, between their third and fourth years of medical school.

Grossman asked about the practical effect of accreditation on the students. Remington said most jobs require a “degree from an accredited institution” NOT “a degree from an accredited program.” When accreditation occurs, it will not be retroactive. This information is included in the MPH program FAQ’s.

7. Susan Goelzer reported on the Evaluation Team. This team has been expanded, and includes both OAC and MERC members, a consultant, Ross Conner, and ex officio members Pat Boyle and David Kindig. A retreat was held on June 1, with the goal of developing a set of questions to be addressed by the evaluation process. The questions were divided into the general categories of Overarching Questions, Education/Knowledge Transfer, Research, Strategic Initiatives, Community Academic Partnership Fund, Population Health Initiatives, and Workforce Development. Questions were

evaluated and prioritized. The group will meet again to finalize a working set of questions for the evaluation. The Evaluation Team will make a report at the joint OAC / MERC meeting on October 24.

(Paul DeLuca ended his conference call)

2. Eileen Smith announced that SMPH faculty and academic staff are voting on new members for MERC, with the ballots closing on June 15. The results will be presented to APC on June 21. New members will be present for the July MERC meeting.

Norm Drinkwater has been reappointed as a basic science chair representative to MERC. The clinical chairs are voting on a replacement for John Frey, whose term ends this month. The appointment of focus leaders will be made by Dean Golden. Smith and MERC offered thanks to retiring members John Frey, Doug Smith, and Deb Hullett. Frey suggested that the orientation for new MERC members include the slideshow that Eileen Smith used at the SMPH leadership retreat.

3. Eileen Smith announced that the Board of Regents unanimously approved the Wisconsin Partnership Program annual report at their May 5 meeting. The annual report has been forwarded to WUHF; we expect to receive questions from WUHF before the public review meeting. If WUHF approves the report, about \$60M will be transferred from the restricted fund to the endowed fund. The WUHF meeting will be held on June 26 at 1:00 at the Madison Concourse Hotel.

Smith also reported that the Human Proteomics program held a workshop last week at HSLC. The workshop was very well attended; and she noted that recognition was given to the Wisconsin Partnership Program and MERC for funding support. The goal of the Human Proteomics program is to have event annually, and perhaps expand to an event for the public.

4. Ken Mount presented the usual financial report, including a summary of all projects. We're seeing spending in almost every category. Occasionally there are expenditures after the grant period has ended, which have to be transferred—these show as negative numbers. Busse asked if there is concern if no spending has occurred on an account after a certain length of time. Mount explained that sometimes there are human subjects or other issues that delay spending. Busse asked if the awards include benchmarks and timelines for spending. Mount replied that we do not have specific benchmarks at this time, except for six-month project reports. We may have to build benchmarks into future award documents. Mount observed that we may have criticism from external sources about the rate of spending on awards. Some of the projects are just ramping up; only about \$3M has been expended out of \$18M awarded—however, the latter figure includes multi-year awards.

Frey asked if the New Investigator Program is funded 2/3 from MERC and 1/3 from Strategic Initiatives, and Mount responded yes. Greg Nycz asked if the split could change with the new dean, and Mount said it could. Frey asked if the Dean could direct funds to a specific proposal from the New Investigator program, and Mount said that could be possible.

Mount reported that the Cancer Control Project has requested an extension that is less than 25% of the budget, but is greater than six months. We usually approve requests of less than 25% or less than six months administratively. They need nine months to complete a survey. This project was funded by the Strategic Initiative. Approval was granted unanimously.

6. Nycz reported on OAC activities. Both Goelzer and Nycz have been reappointed to serve as OAC representatives to MERC. He also reported that there will be a joint meeting with OAC and MCW's Consortium on June 21. Items on the agenda include evaluation and how we're allocating resources across the state. Drinkwater asked that the link to the MCW Annual Report be circulated.

Nycz reported that there have been two surveys related to the Community Academic Partnership Fund, with about 118 responses in 2005 and 112 responses in 2006. In comparing the results, about 66% of the time, respondents felt that the program is making good progress. When asked if the OAC should focus or target RfPs to specific state health plan objectives, only about 32% agreed—the majority of respondents felt that the program should continue to accept applications from a wide range of health areas. Identifying an SMPH partner was listed as “easy” by 53% and 31% of respondents in the two years, respectively. As a result of the feedback, some changes have been made to OAC's RfP.

Frey asked Nycz about the problem of finding faculty partners for community applicants. Nycz said that faculty need to be very engaged, and it will be important to get some early successes to build upon. There is concern about unequal treatment of the faculty partner, because faculty cannot receive salary support from the OAC grants. Also, it is necessary to expand the set of faculty interested in these activities. Nycz noted that it will be helpful if NIH follows its roadmap, and other funding agencies reward faculty by making grants to those who are engaged in community-based research activities.

Grossman asked about the mechanism for linking faculty and community agencies. Nycz explained that a survey was circulated to faculty so that they could self-identify their areas of interest. We have also been able to reach out to faculty in other colleges, UW campuses, and UW Extension to create zero dollar appointments in the SMPH to facilitate faculty participation. Eileen Smith added that Cathy Frey has put effort into creating these links. Smith added that while faculty cannot receive direct salary support for their work on OAC-sponsored programs, support is given to the participants' departments through MAMA funding. Cathy Frey said that although the current situation is a one-way street, where communities are seeking faculty partners, we hope to make it a two-way street in the future.

10. Eileen Smith outlined topics for the next MERC meeting on July 10. These included a welcome for new members, discussion of a proposed RfP for Established Investigators, and of proposed guidelines on reviewing ad hoc proposals. There will also be reports on the WUHF meeting and the meeting with MCW.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Tracy Cabot, Recorder