Dean's Faculty Advisory Committee  
University of Tennessee, College of Medicine  

November 3, 2009  

Call to Order  

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Martin Croce, at 12:05 PM on November 2, 2009, in the Coleman building, Room A101.  

Attendance  

The following members were present:  

Martin A. Croce, MD, Maggie DeBon, PhD, Allen S. Edmonson, MD, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, PhD, Bob Foehring, PhD, Gary Keyes, PhD, Stephen King, MD, Len Lothstein, PhD, Haavi Morreim, PhD, Lynn Patterson, MD, Renate Rosenthal, PhD, Claudette Shephard, MD, Laura Sprabery, MD, Parker Suttle, PhD  

The following guest(s) was (were) present:  

Polly Hofmann, PhD  

Approval of minutes  

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written. Minutes had previously been distributed by electronic means.  

Business  

Pres. Croce began by asking Dr. Hofmann about how the federal ARRA stimulus money is being spent. She replied that the stimulus dollars come into UT's central administration. It can be used for equipment and various other needs within specified boundaries. Requests must be submitted by a designated deadline, after which applications will be reviewed in light of priorities. Some stimulus money can potentially be used for startup packages for new faculty, for new buildings or for renovations of existing buildings.  

Regarding potential staff cuts, Dr. Hofmann stated that it is anticipated that we will hear further details within the next month. Interim Chancellor Schwab is currently reviewing institutional needs, prior to making such determinations. Notwithstanding the fact that the stimulus dollars will last into the next year, it is still likely that staff cuts will be made in the near future. When the financial crisis first hit a year ago, virtually every non-salary cut that could be made has already been instituted, shy of cutting staff. For this reason it is doubtful that budget challenges can be met without at least some staff cuts. Stimulus money can not be used for recurring salaries.  

Discussion then turned to the Med, which may potentially close its ER in the near future. Since UT does not own the Med, there is little to report at this time. The Med will make its decisions,
and UT must respond accordingly. UT is making contingency plans for various possibilities, but those plans have not been disclosed at this time. Pres. Croce indicated that the widely discussed problem of underpayments from Mississippi and Arkansas may not be as great as sometimes portrayed. Most of these patients come to the trauma center rather than the ER, and about one-third to one-half of of trauma patients from Mississippi, and likewise a number of Arkansas patients, are fairly well-insured. To the extent that people from Memphis and Shelby County believe that the majority of the financial difficulty stems from underpayment by Mississippi and Arkansas, they may be less willing to contribute to ensure the Med's survival.

The state of Tennessee has been making a particularly poor rate of payment to the Med. Of $80 million in DSH (disproportionate share) money that goes from the federal government to the state, earmarked for the Med, only about $25-30 million actually goes to the Med, leaving the rest in the state coffers. If the Med received the DDH money that it actually 'earns,' its financial status would be considerably better. The number of medically indigent people is currently higher than ever because of the economic recession and elevated unemployment rate.

Initially the Med indicated that it would close the entire ER if it can not accumulate $32 million by spring. This has more recently been revised to indicate that they would keep 7 ER beds open, closing the rest; this move was likely linked to the necessity to have some level of ER services in order to warrant DSH funds.

Discussion emphasized the hope that UT administration would be closely involved with the Med's decision makers, as the situation evolves.

The discussion then turned to the change of domain name, from "utmem" to "uthsc." The costs at the system level are probably not great, but the nuisance factor for faculty is likely to be substantial. Knoxville and Chattanooga concerns were primary drivers for the change, given that UTHSC is one institution that spans diverse localities. DFAC members expressed concern, not only about the basic difficulties in the transition, but especially about the short duration in which the change is to become final. For instance, where journals send out re-subscription notices only once a year, the subscription may simply be lost if the annual email arrives after the 'utmem' site has finally closed down.

The DFAC has formally requested that the Dean look into this matter to ascertain whether, at the least, a longer transition period can be effected. A period of at least a year should be sought.

Dr. Hofmann then provided an update on Dr. Smith's efforts, as interim Dean, to enhance the CoM. Dr. Smith has been meeting with various chairs in the CoM, learning what needs they express, and has taken a number of issues to the larger administration as the CoM's advocate. Dr. Hofmann indicated that he has already been highly effective in this capacity, and she encouraged the DFAC to identify important issues and improvements proactively rather than just reactively. One suggestion was that in the UT Cancer Center, there should be a closer affiliation between the clinical faculty and the research faculty.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on December 7, 2009, at 12:00 Noon in the Coleman building, Room A101.
Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, PhD
Secretary