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

November 4, 2008  

Call to Order  

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Len Lothstein, at 12:05 PM on November 3, 2008, in the Hyman building, Room 101.  

Attendance  

The following members were present:  
Maggie DeBon, PhD, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, PhD, Bob Foehring, PhD, Gary Keyes, PhD, Leonard Lothstein, PhD, E. Haavi Morreim, PhD, William R. Morris, MD, Linda K. Myers, MD, A.P. Naren, PhD, Renate Rosenthal, PhD, Laura Sprabery, MD, Thad Wilson, PhD  

The following guest(s) was (were) present:  
Don Thomason, PhD, 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. Lothstein began by introducing Dr. Bob Foehring from Anatomy and Neurobioiology, who will replace Dr. Bob Waters.  

Pres. Lothstein noted that the Chair Survey was passed at the last meeting, and stated that he is working with Charlie Brooks and the IT department to get the Chair Survey set up for online use.  

As UT's budget situation continues, Dr. Polly Hofmann observed that further cuts will be necessary. At this time the precise nature of those cuts is not yet identified. There may be a slowdown in growth packages, but they will not be cut. Hiring freezes are not anticipated, as such, but there may be some delays in hiring. Dr. Hofmann noted that it is not highly likely that whole programs and/or departments will be eliminated, because that approach can give rise to significant problems, as noted in the events surrounding the attempt to eliminate speech and audiology on the Knoxville campus.  

Dr. Rosenthal inquired whether telehealth will be a target for budget cuts. Ongoing costs are required to maintain the capacity for telehealth, she noted, yet there are significant economic opportunities, particularly for rural populations and for those in residential or captive settings, such as nursing homes, detention facilities, or prisons. To discontinue the telehealth option could, in the end, thus lead to loss of potential contract revenues. Dr. Hofmann will look into this question and bring back further information for the DFAC.
Pres. Lothstein observed that, just as one option in a budgetary crisis is to cut spending, another avenue may be to enhance income. He inquired whether, when revenue is created, it must invariably be split with Knoxville and, if so, what the proportions would be. Dr. Hofmann indicated she will check into this matter also.

Discussion also focused on the current impasse in negotiations between UTMG and the two TennCare plans that have been assigned to West Tennessee. The Blue Cross plan, BlueCare, still is in force until the end of the year. But as of November 1, there is no contract with the other plan, AmeriChoice, which is a subsidiary of UnitedHealth.

Pres. Lothstein then turned to another topic, namely, the teaching and education dimensions of UTHSC. He introduced Dr. Don Thomason, who is associate dean at the College of Graduate Health Sciences. The College, he noted, is not a bricks-and-mortar entity, but rather is comprised of its various faculty, many of whom have joint appointments with other Colleges at UTHSC. The College of Graduate Health Sciences has seven programs: Integrated Program of Biomedical Sciences/IPBS, Biomedical Engineering, Dental Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Outcomes and Policy Research, Nursing, and Pharmaceutical Sciences. Dr. Thomason particularly focused on one of those programs, the IPBS. This program has a large portion of its faculty from the College of Medicine. If we add in Biomedical Engineering and Epidemiology, about half of the CGHS students are associated with programs whose faculty are largely in the CoM.

Challenges include the need to attract students to its various programs. The number of applicants for the IPBS has declined over the past five years, for instance. Indeed, this phenomenon is true nationwide, perhaps reflecting a decline in government support for research in this area. Of note, some of the CGHS's other programs have had increased applications in the recent past, including the Health Outcomes and Policy Research program--an area in which better financial support has been available.

Another of the issues that the IPBS program will be reviewing in the near future is the question whether it is better to have breadth with limited depth in its program, or whether to emphasize greater depth. He also noted that right now the de facto chair of the IPBS program is the same person who is Interim Dean of the College, which creates a potential conflict of interest with respect to the other programs within the College of Graduate Health Sciences. Thus, a chair needs to be identified specifically for the IPBS program. Another issue concerns the extent to which students in this College can be subsidized. To remain competitive, the College needs to be able to provide adequate financial support for its students.

Overall, Dr. Thomason summarized, the IPBS program is somewhat like an adolescent with growing pains. There are great opportunities, but also some significant challenges that need to be met in the near future. One step currently planned is to bring in an outside review to assess the IPBS’s strengths and weaknesses, and to make recommendations regarding the best directions for the future. It was hoped that the DFAC might encourage the Dean to urge CoM faculty to become involved in the effort to evaluate and strengthen the IPBS and related programs.

Dr. Thomason then went into some specifics. St. Jude has a contract to take in a number of IBPS students. Of 25 students per year, ten per year are guaranteed to go to St. Jude. However, even if fewer students than 25 come into the IPBS program, St. Jude will still get its 10, and this means fewer students are available elsewhere in UTHSC. St. Jude pays the costs associated with its students[DT1]. Currently fewer than 10 are in an MD/PhD program, although initially in each year, a higher number express interest. Enhanced
funding would likely enlarge these numbers.

There is not currently a permanent dean for the College of Graduate Health Sciences, nor is there a search under way. Chancellor Wall has indicated that he would like to fill the post for Allied Health Sciences prior to filling this particular vacancy.

Next month, Pres. Lothstein indicated, we will discuss education in the medical school with Dr. Bob Schreve.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on December 1, 2008, at 12:00 Noon in the Hyman building, Room 101.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, PhD
Secretary