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

November 7, 2003  

Call to Order  

The meeting was called to order by the president-elect, Dr. Chris Waters (in the absence of Pres. Tylavsky), at 12:10 PM on November 2, 2003, in the Patio on the 7th floor of the Wm. F. Bowld Hospital.  

Attendance  

The following members were present:  
Allen S. Edmonson, MD, Stanley Kaplan, MD, Leonard Lothstein, PhD, E. Haavi Morreim, PhD, Charles Mansbach, MD, William R. Morris, MD, Linda K. Myers, MD, Mildred Randolf, DVM, Kenneth D. Sellers, MD, Claudette Shephard, MD, Christopher M. Waters, PhD, Robert S. Waters, PhD, Thad Wilson, PhD  

The following members were excused:  
Peter Jones, PhD  

Approval of minutes  

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

Old Business  

The Dean's Symposium will be Friday, January 16, 2003. President Tylavsky has checked out 15 places. After removing from the list facilities that would be too small, Dr. Tylavsky found that the chief contenders included: Autozone Club), Pink Palace, Library, Botanical Gardens, Fogelman Center, Home Builders Center, and a number of others. Some of these would have rental fees of up to $1600. President Tylavsky requested some volunteers to help her finalize the location. Within the DFAC, discussion on location indicated that, while it might be enjoyable to have a different location, the fact that the Library is centrally located and free of charge is a significant advantage. Given the economic constraints currently facing the CoM, it is difficult to justify spending a substantial amount on venue. Nevertheless, it was also proposed that it might be worthwhile to check on sites such as the Civil Rights Museum.  

The majority of the discussion focused on the research incentive system, on the proposed reductions in the research incentive arrangement, and on the question whether research creates greater costs than the revenues it generates. One report suggests that UT loses 15 cents on every research dollar. This claim has been challenged from several sources, including the Faculty Senate, and the question is now being investigated further. Dr. Waters provided a summary of a RAND report, prepared by Dr. Theresa Waters and the Faculty Senate Research Committee, chaired by George Cooke. Dr. Chris Waters reviewed the report's salient points.
"1. While the average cost of a research project is high, the marginal or incremental costs (costs that are added by doing the project versus not doing the project) are far lower and almost always worthwhile to the university."

"2. The method for allocating overhead is somewhat arbitrary and determines how costly research appears to be."

"3. Because fixed or sunk costs are so important to the cost of research, we need to focus on making the most efficient use of the resources devoted to research."

"4. the answer to the question about the cost of research depends on the audience for that question."

Dr. Charles Mansbach, current president of the Faculty Senate, explained that one important source of the alleged costs of receiving research grants concerns 'bridge funding,' i.e. funding to keep researchers, post-doc fellows, graduate students, and other key personnel funded until the next grant comes through. Without such support, the costs of doing the next research project can be substantial, given the need to hire and train new people for these positions. Dr. Mansbach said that the Research Committee in the Faculty Senate is exploring the question further.

Referring to one element in the cost of research, Dr. Randolph indicated that, contrary to some impressions, the cost of animal care here at UT is not among the highest in the country, but rather is mid-range. The documentation for this will be forwarded to those who are investigating research costs.

Further discussion focused on the importance of identifying just where the money for indirect costs goes. The effort to learn where the F&A money goes may need to be accompanied by some exertion of leverage, such as reminding administrators that the 'Sunshine Law' requires that this information be open. It was suggested that we need to see specifically where the F&A money goes, in order to see where the priorities are. Only then can we discern whether spending priorities need to be rearranged in order for research to thrive at UT.

Perhaps the most basic question underlying the discussion concerns whether institutions such as UT should focus on research at all. If it is simply a side-interest of the institution, then a finding that it presents a net cost may be reason to back away from research as an institutional mission. However, there is little indication that anyone in authority takes this position seriously. Reasons for supporting research include the fact that it is a fundamental mission of a university, that it ultimately inures to the public good, and other reasons. If it is agreed that UT should pursue a research focus, the question then becomes how to approach research in a way that is scientifically productive and fiscally responsible. DFAC discussion indicated that, if research and research grants are thought to be desirable, then encouraging the people who bring in grants would seem to require appropriate incentives.

It was pointed out that in the search for a new chancellor, we need to avoid candidates who think that research is unimportant, or that it is a net cost to the University. Dr. Edmonson, who has been involved in the chancellor search, indicates that those leading the search have stated that research is an important part of UT's future.

The effort to respond to the proposal to reduce research incentives is campus-wide, and the DFAC will collaborate with other entities such as the Faculty Senate.

New Business

No new business was discussed.

Next Meeting
The next meeting of the committee will be held on December, 2003, at 12:00 Noon in the Patio on the 7th floor of the Wm. F. Bowld Hospital.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, PhD
Secretary