Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Tiffany Seagroves, at 12:09 PM on December 1, 2014, in the Coleman building, Room A101.

Attendance

The following members were present:

   Denis DiAngelo, PhD, Scott Jackson, DVM, Rebecca Anne Krukowski, PhD, Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, Linda Myers, MD, Edwards Park, PhD, Fruz Pourmotabbed, PhD, Larry Reiter, PhD, Renate Rosenthal, PhD, Tiffany Seagroves, PhD, Laura Sprabery, MD

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

   David Stern, MD, Susan Senogles, PhD

Approval of minutes

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

Business

Pres. Seagroves provided two policy amendments for discussion. They had previously been distributed by email as "Annual Leave Procedure Clarification" and "PDO memo of updates Sept 2014."

Regarding the former, Chancellor Schwab has announced that, for part-time employees, excess annual leave will be converted to sick leave at the end of each year. The concern brought to the attention of DFAC members was that this would mean that unused annual leave, if transferred to sick leave, would mean a loss of earned income at such time as the person leaves UT. Many part-time employees accumulate such unused leave time in anticipation of the opportunity to convert it to cash, and this policy removes that opportunity. Although regular full-time UT employees can carry over a limited amount of annual leave to the next year, the new policy for part-time employees will transform any such carry-over annual leave into sick leave at the end of each year, which provides no compensation when the employee leaves the University. As part of this new policy, a limited transition period provides that annual leave accumulated prior to 2014 will be reduced by 20% per year, over a 5-year period.

The question arose what recourse someone might have, if that person had been saving considerable accrued annual leave in hopes of receiving a sum of money at the time he or she departs UT. First, the policy change comes at the system level (not from the Memphis campus), hence may not be amenable to substantial input from the DFAC. It was observed that the
institution reserves the right to change benefits. However, this change will affect a number of clinical faculty who are part-time with UT and has prompted considerable concern. The Faculty Senate has a Clinical Affairs committee that may be a suitable place to which concerns might be brought.

The second policy issue concerns limiting post-doctoral fellowships to 5 years in any one lab, with 8 years total. This may make it more difficult for hiring post-doks, because service at other institutions will be included in the 5-year limit. The underlying concern promoting the change is that, in some labs, post-doks are kept on for many years as a form of inexpensive labor. Instead, after 5 years it is thought better to promote that person to the position of a research associate. On the other hand, the latter classification costs considerably more, since the person receives a significantly higher level of benefits such as retirement. Hence, one problem that may arise from this policy is that a postdoc who wants to continue to serve as a postdoc, may end up out of a job. For some post-doks, if their research project(s) is not complete at the 5-year point, they will not be able to have full credit or first authorship for their work.

DFAC members noted that some fellows have complained because the policy is mandatory rather than voluntary, and that it is being advertised as being a benefit to post-doks, rather than a mixed situation that may benefit some, to the detriment of others. The Postdoc Office at the Graduate School will be the appropriate focus for comments and concerns.

Finally, Pres. Seagroves recalled the earlier DFAC discussion regarding the need to provide discounts for use of core facilities, e.g. where a young investigator needs to use a core but does not have sufficient funds. One proposal is to identify every core, cease advertising cores that no longer exist, and create more standardized policies for access to cores. Dean Stern emphasized that he will be glad to respond to good, productive ideas.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on January 5, 2015, at 12:00 Noon in the Coleman building, Room A101.

Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD
Secretary