Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, at 12:04 PM on December 6, 2010, in the Coleman building, Room A101.

Attendance

The following members were present:

Louisa Balazs, MD, PhD, Maggie DeBon, PhD, Denis DiAngelo, PhD, Allen S. Edmonson, MD, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, PhD, Bob Foehring, PhD, Scott Jackson, DVM, E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, William R. Morris, MD, Linda K. Myers, MD, A.P. Naren, PhD, Edwards Park, PhD, Lynn Patterson, MD, Laura Sprabery, MD, Thad Wilson, PhD, Richard Nollan, MLS, MA

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

Lacey Smith, MD, Polly Hofmann, PhD, Robert Shreve, EdD, Pat Ryan, PhD, William Pulsinelli, MD

Approval of minutes

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

Business

Dr. Bob Shreve brought the DFAC up to date on the CoM's curriculum revision. The task force has been meeting for many months. The Basic Science committee has been meeting bi-monthly for nearly a year. The Clinical Committee has been very active will soon also be meeting bi-monthly. A third committee, concerning how faculty will be integrated into the new curriculum and its processes, has also been increasing its activity. Students have played a major role in the process.

Dr. Bill Pulsinelli, who chairs the Basic Science committee, indicated that UT's CoM is under an LCME directive to modify the curriculum. Strong recommendations from LCME include greater integration between basic and clinical sciences, and a much greater emphasis on self-directed learning and a commensurately reduced emphasis on live lectures. He noted that the committee's strategy has evolved considerably over the past year. They have now produced a primary outline, called "foundations of medicine," which is subdivided into scientific foundations and clinical foundations. He elaborated further on the elements of each. Each individual course will have a clinical leader and a basic science leader. Other goals of the curriculum include stimulating life-long learning and analytical thinking. For basic sciences, clinical basic conferences and team-based learning will be added to molecular biology, anatomy, histology, embryology, and principles of clinical medicine. Across the curriculum, organ systems will occupy a focus. For instance, study of the cardiovascular system will feature pathology, physiology, and a broad diversity of other basic science areas, as well as tracing out the clinical implications.
Many lectures are being turned into podcasts that students can download and listen to on their own schedules. UT has been quite successful in its pass-rates for the Boards, and so a strong effort is being made to avoid losing on content. Thus, lectures are not being lost, but rather are being provided in different formats. There will be fewer live lectures, but it would be erroneous to suppose that lectures will simply be replaced by team-based learning. Rather, there will be a gradual transition for students, in which students increasingly will meet in smaller groups and take greater responsibility for their own learning.

The process and curriculum will evolve over the next half-dozen years. Dr. Pat Ryan noted that, as one major advantage of the change, redundancies are being eliminated: as more time is allocated toward clinical and other kinds of integration, faculty become much better acquainted with what other faculty are providing to students and can avoid replicating what has already been presented under another name.

Dr. Hofmann also emphasized that the process will evolve, as we become more experienced and better at things like team-based learning. In the first year there is especially a pursuit of greater efficiency; ensuing years will focus on developing other components. Although the emphasis will be on learning by organ systems, foundational courses will precede that part of the curriculum, to ensure that students have the basic tools to understand the subsequent material.

One question concerned how and at what points this new curriculum will be evaluated, to ensure that we recognize early if, e.g., students perform less well and thereby do less well on board exams. Dr. Shreve observed that other schools have found that, while Step One board scores may actually go down in the first year or so, once the curriculum becomes better entrenched, the Step One scores return to baseline, often followed by some improvement in Step Two scores. He summarized one report that indicates the bottom 1/3 of classes tends to do better, although the students at the top do not necessarily improve.

Another question concerned third and fourth years. There will be some greater integration of basic science into those later years, although the precise form is not yet clear. As the basic science faculty's time becomes somewhat more free, they will be better able to participate in students' later years. Currently, clerkships are fairly rigid. Each is 8 weeks, with the exception of neurology and psychiatry. The committee will be evaluating the question whether there is a better way to do this.

An additional question is how to credit properly those faculty who will now be doing larger amounts of teaching. Although there are no specific plans as yet, something will be constructed to introduce students to the basics of doing research.

Students will still take exams, but the exams will feature questions from a variety of disciplines rather than simply a block of questions all from one discipline. Planning about how to do exams is still evolving. At some point the students will be taking four-hour exams, as these help students prepare for the 8-hour Step exams.

Dr. Shreve indicated that there is a web page that invites suggestions or expressions of concern. He welcomes any suggestions or comments. Commentators should go to the CoM's main web page at www.uthsc.edu/medicine; about a third of the way down click on "curriculum revision initiative"; this will take the viewer to a web page with links to the appropriate committees and to Dr. Shreve.

Updates on other matters: Both major searches (Exec. Dean and Vice-Chancellor for Research) have begun. In late January or early February we might see public interviews for Executive Dean, whereas the search for the VC of Research is a bit further behind. The search for the new chair of Pediatrics is
moving forward. There are excellent candidates, now reduced to five in number. Visits will begin mid-December, running through January.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on January 3, 2011, at 12:00 Noon in the Coleman building, Room A101.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD
Secretary