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

April 7, 2009  

Call to Order  

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Len Lothstein, at 12:06 PM on April 6, 2009, in the Coleman building, Room F302.  

Attendance  

The following members were present:  

Martin A. Croce, MD, Allen S. Edmonson, MD, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, PhD, Bob Foehring, PhD, Degis DiAngelo, PhD (for Gary Keyes, PhD), Stephen King, MD, Leonard Lothstein, PhD, E. Haavi Morreim, PhD, Linda K. Myers, MD, Edwards Park, PhD, Lynn Patterson, MD, Renate Rosenthal, PhD, Claudette Shephard, MD, Laura Sprabery, MD, Thad Wilson, PhD  

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

Steve Schwab, MD; 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 reporting that the chair survey was extended after minor glitches were repaired. Altogether, 140 faculty replied. It is not clear how many of these were technically ineligible, since the Dept of Medicine chairman has been here less than one year and any evaluations of him are not valid. Only 27 "chief surveys" were completed for evaluation of division heads. This year was the first run for this survey, and Pres. Lothstein expressed the hope that it will become increasingly well-entrenched and useful in the future.  

Dean Schwab then provided an update on the CoM's fiscal status. He stated that stimulus money will improve our situation for two years, thus buying time even though it will not ultimately fix any problems we have, or make the more basic changes that need to be made. We must still move aggressively to refine our mission, in the knowledge that state funding is likely to shrink in the future and that we must be increasingly self-reliant in the CoM.  

As a further implication of stimulus funds, furloughs and salary reductions are now unlikely. By the close of business on this day, the dean expected to be clear about whether any departments or other units will be discontinued. Dean Schwab indicated that it will likely take upwards of six years for the state to recover to pre-recession levels, and that we can not presume that there will be any significant upswing in state support in the foreseeable future. Therefore, redefinition of mission, reallocation of assets, investment in focused directions, and related actions will be
continued energetically. The CoM's growth strategy will resume, but focused more on things that will not require state funds. The CoM has been undertaking a lot of restructuring, which has saved large amounts of money.

Going forward there will be a major emphasis on focused growth--focused, in the sense that it will be defined by things that are likely to produce a good turnaround in terms of research and clinical dollars. Money has been and will be invested according to several "themes," such as neuroscience, that cut across several departments, and have been very successful. Similarly, cardiovascular research and its related clinical emphasis have been very successful. Areas such as this are likely to be developed as the UT CoM's special emphasis for growth in the future.

The discussion then turned to the indirect funding that grants often bring in. Historically, indirect funds used to be returned to the CoM. However, since about 2000 or so, increasing amounts have been re-directed toward funding pools for the campus as a whole. Dean Schwab stated that this redirection of our grant indirects took a substantial toll on our ability to undertake and fund productive research and that, in the near future, a substantial effort will be made to recoup those monies into the CoM.

In discussion it was noted that sometimes monetary expenditures were seen as only that--expenditures--rather than as investments that could produce financial and medical benefits. In a related matter, the query arose whether UT's research productivity is adequately protected and promoted via appropriate patent protections. Dean Schwab replied that, at UT, patents go through a nonprofit corporation, which is an independent 501-c-3 corporation. This is UTRF, the University of Tennessee Research Foundation. One of its offices is in the 910 building, and more than half their employees, for UT system-wide, are at this office. UTRF governs research contracting and related matters system-wide, hence the CoM has limited influence over this particular structure. They do employ patent attorneys, though the concern has been expressed that funding is not always adequate to support the amount and quality of legal advice that is ultimately needed. Although UTRF has its imperfections, it is vastly an improvement over the prior situation, in which private corporations had to negotiate with the state, leading too often to significant delays and inadequate outcomes.

The conversation then turned to other opportunities for research collaboration. Memphis BioWorks is an independent, not-for-profit company on whose board UT has 3 seats. UT has developed a good working relationship with BioWorks, although our structures are governed very differently, since UT is state-run and BioWorks is an independent corporation.

Pres. Lothstein suggested that it could be very helpful to provide more information to CoM faculty and staff about how BioWorks functions and how we can most productively interact with them. One comment in discussion indicated that the mechanisms for interaction with BioWorks may not, in fact, be as clear as they need to be, to maximize potential for future interaction. It was proposed that Steve Baers, director of BioWorks, should be invited to speak with the CoM and/or the DFAC, or perhaps a subcommittee could be formed to explore ways to collaborate with BioWorks. Dean Schwab indicated that, because the CoM has considerably greater resources than BioWorks at this time, it is important to exercise appropriate prudence in negotiating any collaboration. A key focus in this area concerns the appropriate percentage of intellectual property ownership that should be assigned to each.

Turning to somewhat more mundane matters, Pres. Lothstein then called for nominations for the President-Elect of DFAC. Since Martin Croce, the current President-Elect, is a clinical member, a special emphasis will be on seeking nominations from basic science departments. It was
proposed that the department of Pathology could be included among basic science departments to broaden the pool, even though Pathology has a mix of both clinical and basic science activities.

The CoM Annual Meeting is usually held in May, partly to permit the faculty to vote to approve the graduating class, and partly to discuss the State of the College. An appropriate time will be chosen and promulgated.

Dean Schwab then wrapped up with a few more observations about future directions in the CoM. The CoM's clinical strategic plan is to grow, until we become the dominant partner at a number of hospitals, then negotiate for a substantial retainer. UT has a substantial and growing book of business at LeBonheur and MUH, and plans to increase our relationship with other hospitals.

Research needs to grow in a thematic manner, rather than attempting to be all things to all people. Some of this will involve new buildings. For this, the state will permit the CoM to go to bonding agencies and get favorable rates. The CoM must then pay back the bonds and retire the debt, although the state will back the bonds. This was how the cancer research building was constructed. For the strategic research plan, the goal is to focus on themes: inflammation and immunity, neuroscience, cardiovascular research have been particularly successful thus far; more moderate success has been realised in cancer. Each of these spans multiple departments.

Dr. Schwab observed that a research building needs to be built, and soon. A clinical building is not as imminent, and can only be justified if the financial case is strong. Stimulus funding, available over the next two years, may be of help, depending on overall campus priorities. What is currently proposed is a building that would house the dental practice, allied health, nursing practice, and in which UT would put occupational health. This would not conflict with our connections with MUH. In addition, federal stimulus money includes funding for renovation projects. The Memphis campus will submit three capital renovation projects for this stimulus money, one of which will likely be to build out the fourth floor on the cancer building. One will be $0-5 million, another will be $5-10 million, and the third will be $10-20 million. The cancer center would be in the least expensive category, and it can be easily shown both how it would be constructed and how it would be used. Other projects could potentially include renovating the Moody building, filling out the currently-unfinished space in the new pharmacy building, or renovating the Coleman building, although this last project is already slated for (somewhat delayed) state funding.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on May 4, 2009, at 12:00 Noon in the Coleman building, Room F302.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, PhD
Secretary