Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Ed Park, at 12:10 PM on September 10, 2012, in the Coleman building, Room A101.

Attendance

The following members were present:

Louisa Balazs, MD, PhD, Maggie DeBon, PhD, Bob Waters, PhD (for Bob Foehring, PhD), Scott Jackson, DVM, Stephen King, MD, Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, William R. Morris, MD, Linda K. Myers, MD, Edwards Park, PhD, Kaushik Parthasarathi, PhD, Fruz Pourmotabbed, PhD, Larry Reiter, PhD, Renate Rosenthal, PhD, Claudette Shephard, MD, Laura Sprabery, MD

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

David Stern, 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

The primary focus of business during this meeting was to discuss a preliminary draft of a document entitled "Clarifying 'Meeting Expectations' in Research in the College of Medicine." The purpose of the document, as was stated by members of administration, is to lend clarity and greater structure to the process of determining whether or not a faculty member's performance during a given year "meets expectations," in the context of doing research. The draft document had been distributed in advance.

Note: these minutes contain responses received by the DFAC Secretary before and after as well as during the September 10 DFAC meeting. Comments provided at the meeting were collected from various faculty, not just from DFAC members themselves. Comments will be provided in no particular order, followed by responses offered by members of administration present at the DFAC meeting.

*The document appears to present a "floor" such that, if the faculty member's research does not reach its level, the automatic result will be "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory." Even if a chair's discretion can "save" the person, the listed criteria appear to provide a "default" such that any slippage below the line can only be salvaged by the Grace of God (the Chair).
*Many faculty will fail to meet these rather lofty "expectations," and once these criteria are enacted as written guidelines, many Chairs will feel obligated to issue even more "needs improvement" ratings than at present. UT faculty are demoralized enough as it is.

*The document does not (yet) make it entirely clear whether all of the items listed must be satisfied, to meet expectations. If the faculty member meets one or two criteria under a given heading, or several criteria scattered across several of the headings, but does not meet all the criteria of any one heading, it would appear that the automatic result will be a negative evaluation (unless the Chair "saves" the person).

*Is it fair to issue a document like this, without creating also a document to describe "Exceeds Expectations." Some faculty have produced far beyond these criteria and yet have gotten only a "Meets Expectations," hence get no recognition for high levels of productivity.

*Any criteria such as these should, when in final form, be expressly sent to all faculty, and voted upon by them.

*The faculty members recognize that the University has a right and a need to periodically evaluate the excellence of the research that is being performed by faculty members who participate in this endeavor.

*Sometimes a Chair is not actually qualified to evaluate the quality of a faculty member's work. Some departments, e.g., are so large and diverse that a Chair from one subspecialty may have little experience with the work of some other subspecialty. Faculty feel that they have a right to be evaluated by someone who has the proper background and credentials to perform this evaluation in a fair and objective manner. Ordinarily the Chairman or Division Chief will be the one who has the proper expertise to perform the yearly evaluation. If, however, the evaluator does not understand in full what the faculty member is doing, the faculty member has a right to request that an evaluation be performed by someone who has the proper background to understand what he or she does.

**Administration response: There may indeed be times when it makes sense for a faculty member to request that a person with specific expertise be invited to comment on the quality of a faculty member's work.

*The number of a faculty member's publications should not be the sole focus of attention. The evaluation of research should include but not be limited to the following types of parameters: a.) the number of manuscripts published, b.) the quality of the journals in which they are published, c.) the quality of preliminary data that has been generated that might not yet have been published, d.) contributions to ongoing clinical studies that are not yet completed, etc. In some cases a faculty member may have a project that requires several years "in the pipeline," and that person should not be penalized simply because that project is larger and more involved than some others.

**Administration response: Chairs do and should have discretion to take such factors into account. At some point, however, it is essential to recognize the judgment of the chair. In some cases a faculty member will only do a project 80% of the way … stopping short of completion.

*The following parameters appear important, yet appear to have no place in this draft evaluation form. Factors already included are: a.) How much research money does the faculty
member bring to the university and b.) Does his or her name appear first or last in the list of authors. However, other factors are also important. For instance, many manuscripts include middle authors whose contributions are so seminal to the work that the entire project could not have been performed without his/her contributions. Such projects may, e.g., require numerous different kinds of expertise, and not every author can possibly be listed first, second or last. A qualified evaluator should be invited to determine the significance of each investigator’s contribution to the work that has been performed.

** Administration response: The person must establish a body of work. If there is such a body, then that becomes compelling as to the overall quality.

*DFAC discussion and response to the immediately foregoing:
The "body of work" criterion is suitable for decisions about promotion & tenure, not so suitable for evaluations of one year's performance.

** Administration response: The document does have categories, e.g., for "co-investigator." This category would apply, e.g., to a statistician or behavioral scientist who was integral to a research project but not a PI and hence will never be first or last author

The term "Co-PI" needs to be changed to "Co-Investigator."

*The "percent of effort" issue is also important and inadequately accounted for in this document. Many grants have fixed budgets and only permit a certain number of investigators/faculty on that particular grant. At the same time, far more people may, in fact, participate in that research, yet who will receive no % of their salary from that grant. Thus, many of the people collaborating in this way will have zero "percent effort" even as they in fact contribute very substantially to the work, and devote considerable time and expertise.

DFAC discussion on this point indicated that this is a common, perhaps pervasive, problem that needs to be accounted for in any document such as this one.

*The faculty recognize that the majority of the scientific research that is being performed on this campus requires a significant amount of money. The faculty therefore believe that it is the role of the Chairman and Dean and Chancellor to do everything in their power to efforts to secure the funding they need to perform their work. Major needs include a.) providing the proper infrastructure such as core facilities, animal facilities, etc. b.) provide the proper ancillary (secretarial and other ) help so that faculty can successfully compete to receive grants from outside funding agencies, c.) perform fund raising in our community and in our state so that our corporate leaders make major contributions towards funding the research that is so vital for the survival of our medical university.

Further DFAC discussion on this point indicated that the core facilities we do have tend to "nickel and dime" researchers, depleting their grants and thereby making it difficult to actually fulfill their research obligations under the grant.

**Administration response: UTHSC administration is committed to securing the needed core facilities and infrastructure. If a meritorious, credible project needs, e.g., a particular kind of specimen analysis that cannot be done locally, administration will make arrangements to have that analysis done elsewhere.

A related issue concerns the fact that our funding is limited, and one of the major challenges administration faces is to determine how to channel the available funding—which projects and which researchers are most likely to achieve success, and in the areas UTHSC is attempting to emphasize going forward.
Additionally, administration members emphasized that if someone has a good idea for a research project and needs help bringing it to fruition, such help is readily available for the asking. A DFAC member affirmed a favorable and successful experience with this option.

*Many research faculty believe that the current business model (i.e. all faculty endeavors must be billable FTEs), simply does not work in research any more, if once it did. If the University continues on this business model approach, research will vanish from the University of Tennesse Health Science Center. More particularly, the discussion noted that sometimes, a well-established researcher simply will not have a grant renewed—not uncommon, particularly in the current economy. And once a given project is turned down twice, further opportunities for funding it will generally disappear. If someone makes consistent, persistent efforts to obtain funding, it would seem inappropriate to deem that faculty member "unsatisfactory."

**Administration response: If a person has had no success to obtain funding for several years, it may be best for that person to take an "internal sabbatical" to re-tool, figure out new directions to go, etc. Perhaps that person should act as a co-investigator to others' projects. Additionally: it is appropriate for faculty to be seeking multiple grants at once.

*DFAC discussion and response to the immediately foregoing: Becoming a co-investigator on someone else's project is increasingly unrealistic. People who have grants are increasingly parsimonious about letting others in, as it becomes evident that renewing grants is increasingly difficult to do. In sum, investigators who have grants do not particularly want collaborators. Thus, expecting someone to become a "co-investigator" may be expecting something that simply won't be an option. Additionally: the old model of "multiple R01s" is simply not realistic any more.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the committee will be held on October 1, 2012, at 12:00 Noon in the Coleman building, Room A101.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD
Secretary