Members Present: Sanjay Asthana, Bill Busse, Cindy Czajkowski, Paul DeLuca, Norm Drinkwater, Tom Grist, Jeff Grossman, Cindy Haq, Rick Moss, Greg Nycz, Mary Beth Plane, Pat Remington

Members Absent: Molly Carnes, Susan Goelzer, Javier Nieto, Susan Skochelak, Jeff Stearns, Rod Welch, George Wilding

Staff: Cathy Frey, Tonya Mathison, Ken Mount, Eileen Smith, Karla Thompson

Guests: Justin Martin, Legislative Audit Bureau

DeLuca called the meeting to order at 5:10pm.

1. Approval of draft minutes

Busse moved approval of the draft minutes of January 12 and February 9, 2009. Drinkwater seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

2. Announcements

   Legislative Audit Bureau audit
   Smith indicated that the program audit by the Legislative Audit Bureau is underway. The audit team is currently arranging interviews with 40 grantees distributed evenly between OAC and MERC.

   Collaborative Health Sciences Program
   Members of the Application Review Subcommittee –Paul DeLuca, Norm Drinkwater, Cindy Haq, Greg Nycz, Rick Moss – are conducting independent reviews of each of the 31 preliminary applications. The Review Subcommittee will discuss the preliminary applications on March 31 and decide which applicants should be recommended to MERC to be invited to submit full applications.

   Reorganization of MERC
   Faculty and academic staff elections are respectively underway for the following positions on the reorganized MERC: basic sciences, clinical and public health faculty, and academic staff. Ballots close on March 11, 2009. It is expected that the new committee will be appointed by the end of March.
3. Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) report

Nycz reported on the February 18, 2009 OAC meeting. OAC voted unanimously to reappoint the following officers to two year terms: Susan Golezer as Chair, Doug Mormann as Vice Chair, and Lorraine Lathen as Secretary.

The second meeting of the Healthy Birth Outcomes Steering Committee, co-chaired by Phil Farrell and Lorraine Lathen, was held on February 11, 2009. The initial focus for the committee will be threefold: 1) to coordinate a public awareness and media campaign, 2) to identify and provide a structure to engage funding partners, and 3) to release funds for community organizing and planning. Frey distributed a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article on the healthy birth outcomes initiative and the work of the new Steering Committee.

Patrick Remington presented an overview of renewal applications for the Population Health Fellowship Program and the Healthy Wisconsin Leadership Institute (HWLI). The renewal requests were respectively reduced by 15 and 27%. The HWLI is jointly funded by the Medical College of Wisconsin at the same level of funding. Revised proposals will be considered by OAC in March.

WPP staff have been working with the 2007 and 2008 Collaboration Implementation grantees on implementing the 15% budget reductions. Awards that began in 2008 will be reduced during years 2 and 3 of their grant, and awards that began in 2007 will be reduced during year 3 of their grant. Revised budgets have been submitted by all but one grantee.

4. MERC Executive Subcommittee report

New Investigator Program final reports:

Grossman reported that the Executive Subcommittee discussed the following New Investigator Program final reports:

Christopher Crnich, Epidemiology of antibiotic resistance in Wisconsin nursing homes, was successful in assessing the prevalence of antibiotic resistance in four nursing homes with work planned in an additional twelve facilities. He has preliminary data to estimate the incidence of transmissions as well as characterize determinants of transmission, and is moving forward with recruitment of additional nursing facilities with funding from the Infectious Disease Society of America, a National Institutes of Health KL2 grant, and the Department of Medicine. Dr. Crnich is also seeking two R01 grants to extend this work. Furthermore, he has presented this research in poster and oral presentations, prepared three abstracts and is preparing to submit a paper to the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society.

Xin Sun, Molecular Mechanism of Lung Organogenesis, Tumorigenesis, and Asthma, provided the additional information requested by the Executive Subcommittee at the February 2 meeting.
and the final report for her project has been revised and clarified in accordance with the Subcommittee’s request. The grant will now be closed.

**Decision on no cost extension requests:**

Marc Drezner, MD, requested a no cost extension of $3,237,468 over one year for the *Institute for Clinical and Translational Research* (ICTR). $2,930,179 of the request has already been committed and is expected to be expended by June 30, 2009, leaving only $307,289. Grist moved approval of the entire $2,930,179 of committed funds along with a 25% cut to the remaining amount. Nycz seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

David Rabago, MD, requested a no cost extension of $60,559 over one year for the New Investigator Program project, *Magnetic resonance imaging in a study of prolotherapy for knee Osteoarthritis*. Subject recruitment was slower than expected. Haq moved approval of the request. Busse seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

5. **Discussion of MERC cash flow and budget planning projections, approval of increase in budget reductions to current grants by an additional 5% and planning future commitments**

Mount presented a financial status report on the Wisconsin Partnership Program’s (WPP) cash flow and budget planning projections. Since the value of the endowment has dropped below its original value, all expenditures must be covered by MERC’s remaining spendable funds. As of December 31, 2008, Mount estimated spendable funds for MERC of approximately $10.4M based on a projected cash balance of $26.5M less existing grant award obligations of $16.1M.

After MERC carefully reviewed its obligations, Busse made a motion to reaffirm the committee’s February 9 decision to implement an additional 5% reduction in expenditures for a total of 25%. The targeted core grants as well as the competitive Collaborative Health Sciences Program will be reduced by 25%. Drinkwater seconded the motion which was unanimously approved. This reduction will ensure that the committee is able to cover expenses through 2010, including the renewal of core grants, new initiatives such as collaborations with OAC, and administrative expenses. Grantees preparing renewals have been instructed to reduce their requests by 25% or more from the original award. And, ICTR has been asked to integrate the Wisconsin Network for Health Research.

6. **Happy 5th Anniversary! Looking Back: Five Years and 51 Meetings Later**

DeLuca adjourned the meeting at 6:15pm following a brief celebration of MERC’s fifth anniversary. The reorganized committee is expected to meet for the first time in April.

Recorder, Tonya Mathison