Minutes
Research Strategic Plan Subcommittee of the
Medical Education and Research Committee (MERC)
January 3, 2008 at 3:00pm – Room 4250 HSLC

Members Present:  Bill Busse, Cindy Czajkowski, Paul DeLuca, Tom Grist, Javier Nieto, Rod Welch, George Wilding

Members Absent: Norm Drinkwater

Staff Present:  Tracy Cabot, Cathy Frey, Tonya Mathison, Eileen Smith

1. Call meeting to order

DeLuca called the meeting to order at 3:05pm.

2. Review charge to the MERC Strategic Plan Subcommittees

In order to ensure thorough input in the development of the MERC section of the 2009-2014 Five-Year Plan, MERC developed three Strategic Plan Subcommittees – Research, Education, and Service/Outreach. The “Strategic Retreat Overview and Outcomes” document, which summarizes the MERC strategic planning retreat, will guide the discussions.

DeLuca reported that the Research Strategic Plan Subcommittee was charged with prioritizing the participant suggestions under Research in Section II while considering Dean Golden’s Goals and Objectives in Section I. The Subcommittee must also consider Faculty Development and OAC/MERC Collaboration in Section II, and Challenges and Issues in Section III, as they relate to research. A two- to three-page rationale will be developed explaining the prioritization which will be discussed by MERC in March, 2008.

3. Discuss the research initiatives proposed by participants at the MERC Strategic Planning Retreat

The Research Subcommittee emphasized that a balanced portfolio along a spectrum from basic, clinical, and population research to education is essential for MERC to capitalize on the School’s strengths in the basic sciences and to cross bridges to the translational and applied sciences. Smith mentioned that the Guide for the Classification of Research and Education Proposals, which has been incorporated in all MERC applications, can be used as an ongoing measurement of balance.

The Research Subcommittee discussed each of the participant suggestions under Research in Section II of the “Strategic Retreat Overview and Outcomes” document:

Participant Suggestion: Expand the Collaborative Health Sciences Program through increased awards and through emphasizing proposals to cross a boundary of basic or clinical to population health.

The Research Subcommittee recommended either changing the Collaborative Health Sciences Program (CHSP) RFP or developing a parallel competitive process targeting Dean Golden’s priorities for Research and Education in section I. This program will target up to three of the
Dean’s priorities each year. MERC may expand the Dean’s priorities to include processes and systems such as access to care or health disparities, and additional diseases such as cardiovascular disease or cancer. Proposals must comprehensively bridge basic to translational and applied research, address the Wisconsin Partnership Program goals, and comprise at least three investigators along the spectrum of basic, clinical, and population health science. Projects will be structured like NIH program/project grants. Awards will be up to $600,000 over two years and will be used to leverage NIH program/project funding.

**Participant Suggestion:** Provide funding for a grant supplementation program for RO1 funded community-based research for education or dissemination. There was general agreement by the Research Subcommittee that OAC consider providing supplemental funding for the translation of the results MERC-funded CHSP grants into communities. This could be incorporated into the CHSP application and review process.

**Participant Suggestion:** Seek CDC support for a Prevention Center. The Research Subcommittee suggested that the Education Strategic Plan Subcommittee consider this suggestion since it requires a preventive residency program.

**Participant Suggestion:** Increase funding of the New Investigator Program and develop separate review processes for the types of research. Members suggested broadening the criteria for the New Investigator Program (NIP) to emphasize the entire spectrum from basic to clinical and population health science and revising the review process to ensure appropriate expert reviewers. The Subcommittee does not recommend developing separate review processes for the types of research in order to avoid the creation of silos.

**Participant Suggestion:** Develop a global tissue bank. DeLuca reported that this participant suggestion will be addressed in Catherine Leith’s proposal to MERC for Development of a Centralized UWCCC Biobank which will be used to establish a centralized biobank for the UW Comprehensive Cancer Center (UWCCC) for collection and storage of human tissues and other human biological material. An expansion is planned in 2009 to incorporate non-cancer related programs within the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), such as SHOW and WiNHR. MERC will review this proposal on January 14.

**Participant Suggestion:** Develop a high-throughput screening facility for drug development. DeLuca reported that this participant suggestion will be addressed in Bruce Klein’s proposal to MERC for the creation of a Center for Infectious Disease to promote, expand and integrate the microbiology and infectious disease research and training on campus, while linking those efforts with state health professionals and agencies. The Center will address: new drug discovery, immunity/inflammation/vaccine development, symbiosis and probiotics, and clinical and translational research. MERC will review this proposal on January 14.

After discussing the participant suggestions under Faculty Development in Section II, the Research Subcommittee recommended setting aside approximately $5-10M from the endowment growth, and using the funds from the endowment growth to recruit at least five faculty positions – similar to a named professorship – in priority areas aimed at supporting the transformation of
the School. Although agreement was not reached on the track of the professorships, consideration was given to tenure and CHS tracks. The Subcommittee agreed that the Research Advisory Council should set the priorities for the strategic hires.

After discussing the participant suggestions under OAC/MERC Collaboration in Section II, the Research Subcommittee strongly supported collaborating with OAC and recommended that MERC and OAC discuss the development of a special initiative on a topic agreed upon by the two committees. In addition, consideration should be given by both committees to the development of a joint RfP on a common priority topic. The Subcommittee reiterated their earlier recommendation that OAC consider providing supplemental funding for the translation of the results of MERC-funded CHSP grants into communities.

DeLuca introduced consideration of continued support for MERC’s infrastructure investments in programs such as WiNHR, SHOW, Human Proteomics, and Regenerative Medicine. He recommended including in the next Five Year Plan a process for consideration of renewal or continuation of such programs, including a method for establishing benchmarks and ensuring that the programs become self-sustaining. Wilding recommended encouraging faculty to take advantage of such programs by using their data or infrastructure to apply for a New Investigator Program or Collaborative Health Sciences Program grant.

4. Develop a priority list of research initiatives for consideration by MERC

The Research Subcommittee will meet in February to discuss the document summarizing today’s discussion. Staff will draft and distribute the document in advance of the next meeting.

5. Adjourn

DeLuca adjourned the meeting at 5:00pm.

Recorder, Tonya Mathison