Minutes
UW School of Medicine and Public Health
Medical Education and Research Committee (MERC)
February 9, 2009 at 5:00PM – Room 4201 Health Sciences Learning Center

Members Present: Paul DeLuca, Norm Drinkwater, Susan Goelzer, Tom Grist, Rick Moss, Javier Nieto, Mary Beth Plane, Pat Remington, Jeff Stearns, Rod Welch

Members Absent: Sanjay Asthana, Bill Busse, Molly Carnes, Cindy Czajkowski, Jeff Grossman, Cindy Haq, Greg Nycz, Susan Skochelak, George Wilding

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

DeLuca called the meeting to order at 5:05pm. Since there was no quorum, the ten members present elected to discuss the items on the agenda with the understanding that no action could take place.

1. Approval of draft January 12, 2008 minutes

There was general agreement by those present to accept the draft January 12, 2008 minutes.

2. Announcements

   Legislative Audit Bureau audit
   Smith indicated that the program audit by the Legislative Audit Bureau has commenced.

   Symposium on New Governance for Health Systems Change
   Smith reminded members of a recommendation by MERC in August 2008 to Thomas Oliver, PhD, and Louise Trubek, JD, regarding the Governance and Health System Change: An Interdisciplinary Initiative proposal. The Executive Committee’s recommendation was to submit a revised proposal to Dean Golden focusing on the Symposium only and to submit the expanded proposal to the competitive Collaborative Health Sciences Program.

   Dean Golden has awarded strategic funding of $15,000 over one year for the development of the Symposium on New Governance for Health System Change. An additional $15,000 will be matched from other sources. The symposium will examine how new forms of regulation and governance affect the prospects for health systems change and improvement.

   Reorganization of MERC
   MERC considered additional candidates for two of the elected positions on the MERC. There are four elected positions - three faculty positions representing the basic sciences, clinical, and public health, as well as one academic staff person. It is expected that the ballots will be released for a two week period beginning in late February.

   The Basic Sciences Chairs’ Caucus and the Council of Chairs are respectively considering chair appointments to MERC. In addition, Dean Golden is considering five appointments: four from
amongst the School’s leadership and one from outside the School. During OAC’s strategic planning meeting in March, the committee will consider the appointment of two OAC members on MERC, namely the OAC chair and an OAC public member. It is expected that the reorganized MERC will be in place no later than May, 2009. The first meeting will be an orientation.

Healthy Birth Outcomes Initiative Press Release
A press release went out today on the Healthy Birth Outcomes Initiative highlighting the work of the new Steering Committee and building awareness of the issue.

3. Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) report

Goelzer provided an overview of the December 17, 2008 and January 21, 2009 Oversight and Advisory Committee (OAC) meetings. OAC reconsidered options for budget reductions and decided to reduce overall expenditures by 15% in order to ensure adequate funds through 2010:

- **Community-Academic Partnership Fund:** Collaboration Implementation awards that began in 2006 or later will be subject to a 15% budget reduction for the remainder of their grant award. Development grantees will not be affected by the budget reductions due to the lower dollar value and shorter duration of these awards. In addition, OAC approved but did not fund three Implementation and three Development grants for the 2008 cycle of the Community-Academic Partnership Fund. OAC will assess the availability of funding for these proposals in June of 2009.

- **Public Health Education and Training Initiatives:** The OAC requested that the Healthy Wisconsin Leadership Institute (HWLI) and the Population Health Fellowship Program reduce program expenses by 27 and 15% respectively. The HWLI is jointly funded by the Medical College of Wisconsin at exactly the same level of funding.

- **Targeted Initiatives:** OAC endorsed its commitment to Healthy Birth Outcomes Initiative, including the hiring of a program officer, with understanding ramp-up and implementation will take longer than originally planned.

The first meeting of the Healthy Birth Outcomes Steering Committee, co-chaired by Phil Farrell and Lorraine Lathen, was held on January 14, 2009. The Steering Committee focused on raising the level of public awareness of Wisconsin’s high rate of African American infant mortality. Discussions resulted in the press release discussed earlier.

A call for nominations to fill the vacancy resulting from the expiration of June Martin Perry’s public member term resulted in five nominations. The Nominating Subcommittee chaired by Doug Mormann will interview three candidates in March. The OAC is expected to make a recommendation to fill this vacancy at the March 20 strategic planning meeting.
4. MERC Executive Subcommittee report

DeLuca provided an overview of the February 2, 2009 MERC Executive Subcommittee meeting and asked for acceptance by those present of the following no cost extension requests:

- $60,559 for one year ending March 26, 2010 for David Rabago’s New Investigator Program project, *Magnetic resonance imaging in a study of prolotherapy for knee Osteoarthritis*. The extension will enable Dr. Rabago to complete 12 month scans of the 42 subjects enrolled in his study.

- In February 2007, MERC approved $100,000 in additional funding for the Human Proteomics Program. The remaining additional funds of $50,000 will be used to relocate the program to WIMR.

Rick Moss indicated a conflict of interest as Director of the Human Proteomics Program and left the room during discussion of the no cost extension request. There was general agreement by those present to recommend MERC’s approval of both requests. Final approval will be sought in March.

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

- Karen Hansen, *Treatment of Vitamin D Insufficiency*. Dr. Hansen demonstrated that calcium absorption increased by 3% (p=0.04) with correction of vitamin D insufficiency. There was general agreement that the project was very successful in accomplishing its goals. The project led to several publications and a National Institutes of Health grant.

- Robert Kalejta, *Cellular and Viral Determinants of Human Cytomegalovirus Lytic and Latent Replication Cycles*. Dr. Kalejta determined that it is possible that viruses may use normal antiviral mechanisms to enforce latency in cells. Preliminary data resulted in a National Institutes for Health grant and led to a publication in the Journal of Virology. MERC funding also supported a graduate student whose work on the project helped him earn his PhD degree. Although there was general agreement that the project was successful, Dr. Kalejta has been asked to rewrite the summary of the project in succinct and plain language.

- Xin Sun, *Molecular Mechanism of Lung Organogenesis, Tumorigenesis, and Asthma*. Dr. Sun was able to identify factors that regulate lung growth. Although there was general agreement that Dr. Sun’s work has been significant, there was concern that the final report was incomplete. Dr Sun has been asked to resubmit the report including the required information. The revised report will be discussed by the Executive Subcommittee in March.

5. Discussion of MERC cash flow and budget planning projections and decision on budget reductions to current grants and planning for 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 $10.4 million based on a projected cash balance of $26.5M less existing grant award obligations of $16.1M. Mount indicated that a negative cash balance of $4.7M would result if there is no change in the current funding levels of the existing obligations and any renewals through 2009 and 2010. This amount could be reduced to a negative balance of $1.3M with a 20% reduction or a negative balance of $750,350 with a 25% reduction.

After carefully reviewing MERC’s obligations, there was general agreement by those present to implement an additional 5% reduction in expenditures for a total of 25%. This will ensure that the committee has capability to consider new proposals, such as the Collaborative Health Sciences Program and collaborative initiatives with OAC, in 2009 and 2010. This will affect the targeted “focus area” grants, reapplications and the competitive Collaborative Health Sciences Program. Education, the Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR), the Survey of the Health of Wisconsin, and the Human Proteomics Program, which are concluding shortly, will be asked to reapply at 75% of the value of the current award. In addition, ICTR will be asked to integrate the Wisconsin Network for Health Research with expected additional savings of $500,000. Authorization was given to the WPP staff to contact grantees regarding the 25% budget reductions.

6. Discussion and decision on 2008-09 Collaborative Health Sciences Program

MERC decided that it would be prudent to review the 31 Collaborative Health Sciences Program preliminary applications in the event that MERC is able to move to the next stage of the review process after further budget deliberations. Review materials will be distributed to the Application Review Subcommittee composed of Paul DeLuca, Norm Drinkwater, Cindy Haq, Rick Moss, and Greg Nycz next week.

DeLuca adjourned the meeting at 6:55pm.

Recorder, Tonya Mathison