

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

December 7, 2020

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by the president, Dr. Lawrence Pfeffer, at 12:03 PM on December 7, 2020, on the Zoom online platform due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Attendance**

The following members were present:

Penny A. Asbell, MD, Mace Coday, PhD, Julio F. Cordero-Morales, PhD, Terry Cooper, PhD, Denis DiAngelo, PhD, KU Malik, PhD, DSc, Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD, Katherine Nearing, MD, Lawrence Pfeffer, PhD, Crystal Pourciau, MD, Ryan Rahman, MD, Reese Scroggs, PhD, Burt Sharp, MD, Claudette Shepherd, MD, Laura Sprabery, MD, Neena Thomas-Gosain, MD, Jerome Thompson, MD, MBA, Joe Willmitch, MPAS, PA-C

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

Scott Strome, MD, Polly Hofmann, PhD, Andrew Griffith, MD, PhD, Richard Smith, PhD

### **Approval of minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written. Minutes had previously been distributed by electronic means.

### **Business**

Pres. Pfeffer updated DFAC that the revised COM By-laws were approved by faculty vote, with the results: 55 yes, 5 no, 6 abstain. The updated ByLaws now go to the Chancellor; when he approves, they will go into effect.

Dean Strome reported that, notwithstanding a changing relationship with Methodist, UTHSC's residency programs will all be maintained, even expanded in certain areas such as psychiatry. Negotiations with Baptist have been very promising, and negotiations with Methodist are ongoing, with developments anticipated early next year. He indicated that things in this arena are going well.

Regarding the pandemic, Dr. Strome observed that we are witnessing a massive increase in the number of Covid-infected patients. Mobile refrigerated trucks are now being used to keep deceased patients until all the appropriate post-mortem procedures can be completed. UTHSC is working closely with the state regarding Covid vaccine distribution. Important scientific questions remain regarding Covid vaccines. For example, the side-effects observed in people who receive the vaccine after having been exposed to the virus at an earlier point. Dr. Strome emphasized that the criteria for the Regeneron antibody trial are quite specific; this medication seems quite effective early in the disease's course, but not so effective later,

which is not very surprising. Regeneron has a trial open at ROH and another will likely be added at LeBonheur. Accrual into this trial is going well.

A question arose regarding the state's budget process and its potential impact on UTHSC and the CoM. At this point there is nothing new to report, and much will depend on how the first quarter of 2021 goes. The state's lack of a mask mandate appears to be hampering some efforts to tamp down the current surge. In Shelby County, the mask mandate is having a positive effect, with a mortality rate of 50% less than in localities where masks are not mandated.

Dr. Strome informed DFAC that Dr. Robert Redfield, CDC Director, will join UTHSC on December 14 for a Town Hall/Fireside Chat. This will be co-sponsored with the Faculty Senate, and will be of interest to medical and nonmedical people alike.

Dr. Andrew Griffith, the Associate Dean for Research in the COM, provided an update on the research vision and strategic planning in the COM. He has engaged in broad discussions, not just at UTHSC but also across the state. He noted the close relationship between the quality of research, and the quality of research training in the labs and the support and development of faculty. Doing excellent science, recruiting excellent scientists, and mentoring will all be critical for UTHSC CoM's success. Diversity and sustainability are likewise essential components.

Going forward, the schedule for developing the Research plan will tentatively be:

Month 1 (December 2020): planning

Months 2-4 (Jan – April 2021): focus groups

Month 5 (May 2021): Writing

Month 6 (June 2021): town halls

Month 7 (July 2021): final revision

The first phase is happening right now, as recruiting is ongoing for focus groups comprised of numerous stakeholders. The focus groups will discuss research, research training, and faculty, and collectively will develop a working template. The assessment and planning for research operations will be a separate process, and will be coordinated in consultation with DFAC.

Focus groups will likely include DFAC, tenure-track faculty, non-tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, trainees, research-intensive department chairs, the CoM Council, various deans and associate deans for research across the various campuses and UTHSC colleges. With this input an initial draft of a comprehensive summary and plan will be written, then shared and discussed in town halls widely available to the CoM community. The plan will be revised as needed, as various issues may emerge or be added, with a tentative completion date by July of next year.

Some important questions the plan will address include:

What are the scientific areas of excellence that the CoM should nurture and grow?

Is rare disease an area we should pursue?

What are barriers to obtaining research funding?

The overall vision includes:

Grow a UTHSC pipeline of physician-scientists by enhancing recruitment and training at all levels

Improve the quantity and quality of research trainees at all levels

Recruit, train and retain a diverse scientific workforce

Actual or potential specific goals include:

Identify and implement best practices for recruitment

Identify and implement best practices for faculty development  
Identify and implement best practices for retention  
Identify and propose modifications to tenure and promotion

The DFAC subcommittee on research was noted to have a breadth of backgrounds and interests, as well as diverse senior and junior members. The committee's roster will be sent to Dr. Griffith, who indicated he would welcome their help throughout the strategic planning process. It was also suggested that the writers of the final strategic plan document be involved throughout the process, so that they will be able to understand and track the ideas as they are proposed and considered.

It was also suggested that data gathering will be critical for the success of the strategic planning process, regarding a variety of issues: what research is currently funded, scientific productivity, what works in recruitment and retention, what funding has been secured and what funding has not been awarded and what factors appeared to impede such funding, etc.

On another matter: at the October meeting DFAC encouraged Dean Strome to speak with chairs and encourage them to recognize ways in which Covid-19 has affected faculty performance – in what ways it has impeded research, teaching and clinical care and, conversely, what new opportunities have opened and been developed for research, teaching and clinical care. Dr. Hofmann indicated that on Monday December 14, Dean Strome will be meeting with all department chairs, and he will indeed encourage them to take the positive and negative effects of Covid-19 into account on the APPR evaluations.

Dr. Cooper noted that the annual "upward evaluation" survey of administration and chairs is now available online, and faculty are strongly encouraged to participate. The deans have committed to sharing outcomes of the evaluation with the Senate (faculty). However, the evaluation will have little value for affecting change, if only 12-14% of COM faculty complete the survey (which is the most recent level of participation in the CoM). This under-participation is emphasized by the facts that other colleges are obtaining 30-45% participation. The survey has been streamlined and is much easier to complete than in previous years.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the committee will be held on January 4, 2021, at 12:00 Noon by Zoom.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Haavi Morreim, JD, PhD  
Secretary