Members Attending: Shelia Bradley, Ron Henry, Hugh Hudson, Fenwick Huss, Susan Kelley, Jerry Rackliffe, P.C. Tai

Others Attending: Lauren Adamson, James Alm, Charles Derby, Don Edwards, Michael Eriksen, Edi Guyton, Charlene Hurt, Steve Kaminshine, Randy Malamud, Michael Metzler, Robert Moore, Jane Mutchler, Mary Ann Romski, Edgar Torbert

Minutes of March 24 were approved as presented.

Areas of Focus

Dr. Henry opened discussion of the review process for the area-of-focus full proposals. He suggested lessons learned from the review of the pre-proposals might inform the process for the full proposals. He noted the fourteen pre-proposals totaled approximately $32M, the seven pre-proposals selected for development of full proposals totaled $19M, and the available funds for FY2005 would likely be in the range of $4-5M. He invited discussion of a variety of considerations, including whether to fund all seven selected pre-proposals or a smaller number, how to stimulate the interdisciplinary connections formed through the development of the pre-proposals, how to gauge the opportunities to propel to higher national and international levels, how to continue efforts in areas which are not funded in FY2005, and whether to use a holistic or analytic (points system) rubric in the review of the full proposals.

Ms. Hurt commented that the five-page limit on the pre-proposals had limited the extent to which the ideas for areas of focus were developed on paper and that consequently the review team had leaned toward including more in the category for development of full proposals, without intending to recommend funding for all seven.

Dr. Malamud and Dr. Alm noted difficulty in striking a balance between already well-established areas of focus and brand new areas.

Dr. Kaminshine asked if leveraging of external funds was a consideration in evaluating the pre-proposals. Ms. Hurt responded that while not a deciding factor, some of the pre-proposals did mention prospects for leveraging.

Dr. Eriksen pointed out the pre-proposals were very diverse and did not lend to use of common metrics. He also noted inherent conflicts of interest in spite of the exclusions for primary and secondary reviewers. He suggested that outside reviewers might be considered in future cycles. He observed that in spite of the mentioned limitations he thought the review was well done and commended Ms. Hurt for her direction of the process.

Dr. Guyton cited as a shortcoming that in most cases the only person, who had significant expertise related to the pre-proposal was excluded in the discussion by the primary and secondary reviewers. Dr. Henry suggested the deans might choose advocates for their pre-proposals from within the evaluation team. Dr. Alm suggested an informational presentation to the evaluation
team by an author of each pre-proposal. Dr. Henry commented there might be benefits by having public presentations of the pre-proposals.

Dr. Adamson cautioned about negative feelings among major groups of faculty if they perceive their ideas were rejected and their work not validated. Dr. Henry responded that the intent was clearly not to invalidate, but the amount of money available for areas of focus was limited and required difficult choices.

Drs. Guyton and Mutchler reiterated that the evaluation team had not proceeded on the assumption all pre-proposals selected for development as full proposals would be funded, rather that the competitive process would continue. Dr. Malamud added that the evaluation team also did not agree that any of the selected pre-proposals were unworthy of funding.

Dr. Adamson reiterated that there would be major groups of faculty unhappy with the results. Ms. Hurt acknowledged such concerns had prompted the evaluation team to change its designation of the three categories of pre-proposals from yes-maybe-no. She also stated that none of the pre-proposals had been deemed unworthy. Dr. Romski continued that invalidation was not the intent of the evaluation team, but perception would not equate with intent. Dr. Alm commented that inevitably some pre-proposals were better than others, and that the deans had selected the members of the evaluation team on the basis of their abilities and experience in evaluating research.

Dr. Kaminshine noted that regardless of the shift away from the designation as yes-maybe-no categories, the funding situation would in fact make them yes-maybe-no categories in the minds of those submitting the pre-proposals. He characterized the mindset as cynicism.

Dr. Romski noted as at the previous FACP meeting that there was the need for the evaluation team to have another round of discussion about the process. She noted the team had not attempted to assign points the first round, and would need more specificity about what to rank if expected to do so with the full proposals.

Dr. Eriksen noted the difficulty of applying the peer review process internally even though it is well accepted in the case of external review processes. He suggested the work of the evaluation team might be at an end with others to decide how the selected pre-proposals fit in the university strategic plan. Dr. Henry answered that if the evaluation team punted, it would be to FACP, and the process would be more political.

Dr. Eriksen pointed out the contrast of areas of focus, which had been well funded in the past, versus those, which were essentially new. He commented this would be crucial issue regardless of who made the call on the full proposals. Dr. Henry responded that all had strengths regardless of funding history. Dr. Alm added that the selected pre-proposals were chosen on the basis that the team wanted to see full proposals. Ms. Hurt commented that a number of the pre-proposals were key to Atlanta or Georgia and hence would be better reviewed by those with local knowledge.

Dr. Derby commented that it would be important for those submitting full proposals to know who was evaluating and on what criteria. Dr. Henry indicated this was the purpose of this meeting with both FACP and the evaluation team. Ms. Hurt noted the evaluation team used the given criteria,
but did not assign points. Dr. Hudson responded that this was a change from the directions from FACP.

Dr. Moore observed the areas of focus initiative originated because of the scarcity of resources and the need to pick a few areas to be made outstanding, which would enhance the reputation of the university. He suggested that funding too many areas with modest funds would not enhance reputation. He urged attention to impact on the university.

Dr. Adamson stated this was critical juncture as the field had already been winnowed down to a small number of areas. She commented that it would be very difficult to choose only 3 or 4, and suggested concentrating on how groups would manage the funds and the level of funding needed. She also spoke of the need to motivate broadly. Dr. Alm responded that the full proposals would be expected to address the management of funds and justify the amounts requested. Dr. Kaminshine phrased the question as what would be needed to go to the next level.

Dr. Guyton commented that damage had already been done to morale in several areas. She added that this discussion would lead to questions of why these issues were not addressed at the outset.

Dr. Romksi noted that while the selected pre-proposals totaled $19M, not all funds were needed in the first year. She suggested more attention in the full proposals as to the timeline for implementation. Dr. Henry replied that if all were fully funded, it would commit large amounts of funds over several years with uncertainty about availability of future funding.

Ms. Hurt pointed out the comments on the pre-proposals were in line with many of the observations made in this meeting. She stated the evaluation team would meet again with Dr. Henry to go over these.

Dr. Derby voiced concern that there were strategic issues to be addressed, which were not the purpose of the evaluation team. Dr. Hudson cautioned that the outcome should not result in making the university too narrowly focused. Dr. Henry noted the selected pre-proposals involved 35-75 faculty and had broad foci.

Dr. Huss pointed out the Robinson College of Business had two disappointed groups who were not asked to develop full proposals, but that they knew going in that all would not be funded and that a negative outcome would not mean their initiatives were unimportant. He added that these groups had now been encouraged to seek third party funding to continue their proposed endeavors. He urged following the process as started.

Dr. Tai stated he had discussed the situation with Dr. Edwards and that his question was how to judge within the remaining group, mainly with respect to established versus new. Dr. Tai noted that the Department of Biology had two proposals and was also involved with the Urban Health proposal.

Dr. Alm reiterated the criteria had been stated by FACP in the guidelines up front, and that guidance was needed from FACP as to how to judge. He pointed out that department chairs, deans and vice presidents make these kinds of decisions every day and the task was not
Dr. Kaminshine again raised the question of having a spokesperson for each of the selected pre-proposals. He stated his preference for spokespersons rather than public presentations. Dr. Huss responded that an opportunity to present publicly at some point would be good for the university community.

Dr. Romski observed that it would be more helpful to have someone available to answer questions rather than have a formal presentation. She asked for more specificity about the supplemental materials to accompany the full proposals, and asked that the point system be revised to total 100.

Dr. Kelley suggested that the evaluation team tweak the guidelines and come back to FACP. Dr. Derby injected that the strategic planning committee had been originally involved in the development of the guidelines. Dr. Henry responded that there was a timing issue. Ms. Hurt added that the evaluation team would clarify, not change radically.

Dr. Tai called for use of a points system in the next round. Dr. Eriksen stated that the evaluation team had used a grid with the criteria and by that method ranked the pre-proposals. He cited the process as difficult, but not flawed, and spoke in favor of the question-and-answer opportunity for each group.

Prepared by Edgar Torbert
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