

**Breast Cancer Research Council Meeting Minutes**  
**March 7, 2004: Priority-setting Meeting**  
**Santa Barbara, CA**

**Members present:** Kim Pierce, Elaine Ashby, Debra Oto-Kent, Georjean Stoodt, Carol D'Onofrio, Janet Howard-Espinoza, Michael Figueroa, Vicki Boriak, Christine White, Dorothy Bainton, Diana Chingos, Kathryn Phillips, Jacqueline Papkoff, John Morgan, Kathy Walters, James Ford

**Staff:** Mhel Kavanaugh-Lynch, Charles L. Gruder, Walter Price, Larry Fitzgerald, Janna Cordeiro, Katie McKenzie, Roslyn Roberts, Lyn Dunagan, Jill Stark

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 am.

**II. Priority-setting Changes to the Program**

**A. The final plan**

Mhel presented the staff's recommendations for Program priorities over the next 5 years, which were based on the four concepts developed in the retreat committees and the accumulated recommendations made during the priority-setting process.

Core Funding Strategy

Priorities:

- Detection, prognosis, and treatment
- Biology of the breast (biology of the normal breast, pathogenesis)
- Etiology and prevention (etiology, risk reduction)
- Community impact (sociocultural, behavioral, psychological issues; racial/ethnic differences; health policy/health services)

Mechanisms:

- Innovation: IDEA with new investigator checkbox and career development score, up to two competitive renewals. The application must include translation pathway/impact on breast cancer.
- Career development: Dissertation and Postdoctoral Fellowships
- Collaboration: CRC and JFCA
- RFQ
- Translation (on hold until definition can be determined)

Program Initiatives

Not part of the general Call for Applications. Spend the first 1-2 years planning.

Priorities:

- Environment and lifestyle
- Unequal burden (disparities)

#### Mechanism:

- Appoint a diverse task force for each priority issue to determine what we know, what we need to know, and to develop a topic. Utilize scientists and advocates already working in related areas and scientists and advocates from other fields, and some number of council members.
- Brainstorm, through a series of meetings over 12-18 months, to identify resources (team and financial), review the state of the science, create a roadmap (research questions and strategies), and explore feasibility
- Present plan to the council, resulting in a variety of possible strategies, such as contracting, RFPs, and partnerships

#### Budget: Based on the last three years' spending history

- 70% on Core Funding Strategy (est. \$7.55 million/year)
- 30% on Program Initiatives (est. 3.45 million/year over 5 years = \$17.25 million, plus the formative work of the task force, which comes from the 70% allocation)

#### Other Activities

- Translation: Over the next year, an ad-hoc Council committee will define the term and figure out what niche we want to fill in the translation pathway. We're leaving a placeholder for translation now so that we don't have to wait another 3-5 years for the next priority-setting process
- Revise Call for Applications and circulate to Council at June meeting
- Revisit grant scoring and definitions (innovation and impact) with volunteers from the Council (including programmatic review)
- Communication plan to get results of our research to policy makers: Outreach committee and staff

## **B. General discussion**

### **Translation**

Committee members briefly discussed issues regarding translation. While the Program is defining and evaluating the role of translation in its award mechanisms, we are encouraging translational research where it fits under any of the other existing mechanisms. The Council concluded that our goal is to clarify the distinction between translational potential and translation research, e.g., the translation of research into practice or translational research activities.

### **Program Initiative Priority Areas**

Council members discussed whether to define *unequal burden* and *environment*, including where the two topics are distinct and where they overlap, and whether the topics should be kept separate or combined into one. Members voiced concerns over such issues as narrowly defining *disparities* as race and *environment* as toxins, and differentiating between exogenous vs. endogenous environmental causes.

The consensus was to keep the priority issues separate and allow the task force members to consider the topics in the broadest, greatest possible context with the thought that the best use of an expert task force from tangential fields is to let them define the questions that they can answer. The *environment* definitions offered in the Millikan paper are broad enough and comprehensive enough to pass on to the task force as a starting point, and there is an aspect of unequal burden that does not overlap with the environmental topic.

Once the task force defines the topics, the Program will create descriptions that are meaningful not only to the researchers, but also to the lay public and legislators.

### **Task Forces**

Council members discussed several issues regarding the formation of the task force(s) and their general processes. The initial recommendation was to start with two separate task forces—one for each topic—in order to give them some clarity and boundaries. Proposed alternatives include: (1) that we start with one task force to look at both priority areas and let them decide whether they should work together or independently; (2) that we start with two task forces and bring them together after an initial phase and give them the flexibility to decide whether they work together or separately. There was concern that there might be duplication of effort and conflicting results if the two groups are too unaware of each other.

The consensus was to start with one larger task force that can later be broken into separate parts if the task force chooses to do so.

It was noted that the task force members are likely to change over the project's period, as the kinds of knowledge and skills needed change throughout the different phases of the process.

The project initiatives are not confined to one or two projects; Millikan's paper suggests lots of little projects. There may be five or six things going on, but only one central question/observation. There could be lots of straightforward, smaller projects that can be done to address the Big Question(s).

The task force will come up with a plan/recommendations within 18 months to present to the council, considering all the things that the Council has been discussing—one big project, several different things, do we go off in three or four different areas. They will determine the best way to have a huge impact on these two priority issues, either combined or separate. The Council will give input to the final recommendation that will be presented to the University. The task force will deal with all the Council's issues. The research itself will start in either Year 2 or Year 3.

The developmental work (the first 18 months) will not come out of the 30% allocation; thus 30% of Program research funds will be preserved for the research in these areas.

Documentation/Publication: An idea was raised regarding the documentation and dissemination of the task force's progress, and there were several suggestions as to topics that the task force might cover in a publication. In addition to disseminating their progress in scientific/peer journals, the Program might consider producing a publication.

Allowing the task force the latitude to publish as they progress could motivate the academics to put heart and soul into the project.

Documenting the entire process lets people know what we've done and how; also helps make the initiative visible, lay the groundwork/background that would be useful to many people.

Council members discussed whether members of the task force will be able to apply for Program funds. This topic, and the issues such as conflicts of interest, will be discussed further at future meetings.

### **Other Issues**

Competitive renewal process (IDEAs): The competitive renewal is a fast-track mechanism and not a full application; more fleshed-out progress report. We'll know who's expected to re-apply so we can put the committee together without having the applications, etc. Staff will come up with a more comprehensive procedure/process.

Some members expressed concern about the effect anticipated from some of the eliminated award types, but the consensus was that fewer, more focused award types will strengthen the Program's portfolio, and the *concepts* behind the eliminated award types will not be lost. For example, investigators who would have applied for RFAs will be encouraged to apply for IDEAs, and trans-disciplinary/interdisciplinary teams (non-CRC) may participate through the program initiatives. Program initiatives are SPRC-like and have the potential to be more effective than the SPRCs were as investigator-initiated awards.

There was concern that the proposed changes will reduce aspects of the Program's portfolio, especially in the basic sciences. Council members pointed out, however, that the majority of postdoctoral fellowships are in the basic sciences and that these awards result in great scientific progress. In addition, a portion of the program initiatives will be biology-related.

RFQs: RFQs are for timely research, and the Program will initiate/approve/monitor the RFQs. Council members discussed the initiation process—how we might monitor policy (or other) issues to identify the need for an RFQ. The intent is to have a pre-qualified list of researchers that enable us to move quickly as issues arise, and avoid waiting several months for a Council meeting. The consensus was that the staff will bring back a plan for the RFQ initiation process to the Council for input.

### **Tabled for future meeting**

June meeting—discuss raising award caps, increasing CRCs duration from 3 to 4 years.

**Motion: A motion was made by John Morgan and seconded by Vicki Boriak to recommend the new model, as presented by staff. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **III. Old Business**

#### **A. Programmatic Review**

Mhel reviewed packet materials, including the revised procedure, ballots, and due dates for scores—Council members will fax their scores to staff by May 17; staff will return committee scores to members on May 19. Committee chairs are responsible for following up on missing ballots. Funding Meeting is May 21. The preliminary list of the bottom third of applications will be sent to members at the beginning of May. The final list does not come back from the auditor until much later. Members should review the bottom tertile grants for interesting ideas, so staff can let applicants know whether their project is appropriate for resubmission.

Committee chairpersons were asked to touch bases with each of their committee members at least once to field any questions or issues about the review process, etc.

#### **B. New Council member recommendations**

Two members are leaving—Elaine and Diana—staff sent letters soliciting nominations last month.

The Council will nominate a new chair and vice-chair at the next meeting

#### **C. Breast Cancer Course for Researchers**

Susan Love MD Foundation cannot lead the course due to changing financial and organizational factors. Council discussed options: (1) cancel the course, (2) use the SLMDBCRF staff time and our money, (3) pay costs AND their staff time, or (4) come up with a modified program to add to our Symposium. Council agreed that #3 does not make sense, and the two audiences don't necessarily overlap (between BCC4R & Symposium). Staff will approach SLMDBCRF to see what they're interested in doing.

#### **D. Priority-setting Process review**

We accomplished our mission. It's an imperfect process but a great end product, and thank you everyone for participating.

The meeting was adjourned at 1 PM.