

Department of Medicine
Case Western Reserve University
University Hospitals Case Medical Center
Research Retreat
January 17, 2009

Executive Summary

On January 17, 2009, a one-half day Department of Medicine (DOM) Research Retreat took place with the goal of evaluating our current activities in the basic, translational and clinical research areas and most importantly to develop a strategic plan for enhancement of infrastructure, research themes and research directions for the future (Appendix 1). Sixty Departmental faculty representing every Division attended the retreat as well as key administrative personnel from the Department and UH research office.

The goals of the retreat were articulated in opening remarks by Richard A. Walsh, MD Chair of the Department. Thereafter, Henry Boom, MD, Vice-Chair for Research presented information on the state of research activities in the DOM. This presentation (Appendix 2) detailed the numbers of research faculty demonstrating that there is an imbalance in more senior investigators and that we need to do more to hire and mentor younger research-focused faculty. Research funding from federal and non-federal sources was seen to decrease in academic year 07-08, likely in part to flat funding and the economic downturn. The DOM research portfolio is mainly bolstered by several large programs but, even so, there are too few NIH-sponsored PO1s, RO1, Us, T32s and K-awards or VA-sponsored Merits and CDAs. Multiple obstacles to our research initiatives were identified including the tight federal funding (which has already improved as of 2009), diminished funding from private foundations and industry given the economy, decreased state funding (e.g. Third Frontier), institutional politics (UH, SOM, VA, CC), SOM and UHCMC Research Offices and missing or inadequate services/core such as biostatistics within the institutions. Recommendations for the future focused on the development of innovative/collaborative grant applications and taking advantage of RFAs (such as the new Challenge Grant opportunities from the federal stimulus initiative), increased leveraging existing strengths and the traditions of collaborations across Departments and institutions, nurturing/mentoring junior faculty as well as residents and fellows for research careers, better use of the CTSA, improvements in efficiencies the research offices and the possibility of centralized DOM research support.

Three plenary presentations were then given by groups exemplifying models of mature or recently established programs of multidisciplinary research in the DOM. These presentations (Appendix 3) were given by Michael Lederman, MD on ID/HIV research, Stanton Gerson, MD on Cancer initiatives and Daniel Simon, MD on the new cardiovascular research efforts. These presentations stimulated important and lively discussion about how innovative and interdisciplinary research can be accomplished as well as excitement about the potential of even more collaboration in these and other DOM programs.

After the first plenary session, 4 breakout sessions took place focusing on: 1. Mentoring and Career Development of Young Investigators led by Mukesh Jain, MD; 2. Optimizing the use of the CTSA led by Jackson Wright, MD; 3. Capitalizing on University and school of Medicine Strategic Plans led by Jeff Kern, MD; and 4. Enhancing Industry-sponsored Research Activities led by Marco Costa, MD, PhD, Appendix 4. Several important discussion points were covered in each breakout sessions and are detailed in Appendix 1. The materials provided summary reports from each breakout session are provided in Appendix 5. Major important recommendations from the breakout sessions and leaders included: establishment of a seminar series on research career development for junior faculty and aspiring trainees, development of a “Grant Library” which will include previous successful F and K series as well as foundations grants, the establishment of a separate DOM Research Mentoring Program for young investigators to enhance that already provided by the Division and research mentors/committees, wide dissemination of the information on the CTSA, develop a DOM level process to identify research themes and developmental areas (i.e. a DOM Research Committee chaired by the Vice-Chair for Research), initiation of a DOM Research Seminar Series with presentations by senior as well as junior faculty), evaluation of the grants management within the DOM so as to eliminate duplication, improve education about the grant application process and sources and improving the grant submission and maintenance process, the development of a mechanism at the DOM level to support clinical research (ARO), development of a Divisional process to vet clinical research proposals to assess feasibility, innovation and scientific rigor, and improved communications with the research office for clinical research faculty and access to external reviewers and reviews.

A final plenary session took place after the breakout groups and discussion of the identified areas above took place. In meetings held after the retreat an overall action plan was developed as follows:

1. For young investigators, senior fellows and post-docs, a DOM seminar series on research career development and a mentorship program will be initiated in the next academic year 2009-2010 (Mukesh Jain and Bob Salata)
2. Will broadly distribute information to DOM faculty on the CTSA (Jackson Wright)
3. Faculty-wide meeting to be scheduled in concert with completion of the Executive Summary in Fall 09; at faculty meeting need to carefully articulate specific goals and objectives of this process
4. DOM needs to be appropriately represented in strategic planning for SOM; invite Bob Miller and/or Pam Davis to a DOM Leadership Council meeting
5. Invite Fred Rothstein to a DOM Leadership Meeting to specifically discuss UH-based research issues
6. Establish an ongoing DOM Research Conference quarterly using time already allotted to M & M Conference or Grand Rounds; 3 presentations of 20 minutes each by DOM faculty representing basic, translational and clinical research areas and across ranks
7. Formation of Focus groups (committees to be formed and initiated in April 2009 with range of focus group topics identified)

- Research career development and infrastructure support across the spectrum of rank – for basic, translational and clinical investigators in the DOM (Jeff Kern and Marco Costa)
 - Support and mentoring for young investigators (Mukesh Jain and Jackson Wright)
 - Current and future interdisciplinary research themes – (suggested themes: metabolism, inflammation, cardiovascular and renal disease and cancer); (Henry Boom and Bob Salata)
8. Final (3-5 year) research strategic plan for DOM to be completed by end of Fall of 2009