The University of Western Australia

SCHOOL OF PATHOLOGY AND LABORATORY MEDICINE

The Minutes of the meeting of the PathWest/PaLM Research Advisory Committee held in the ten Seldam Seminar Room 1.6, First Floor, M Block, The Queen Elizabeth II Medical Centre on Thursday, 19 March 2009 from 8.00am to approximately 9.00am.

JANETTE JUDGE
Administrative Officer

MINUTES

PRESENT

Professor Paul Waring (acting chair), Associate Professor Patricia Price, Dr Adrian Charles, Dr Campbell Witt, Adjunct Professor Ursula Kees, Clinical Professor John Burnett, Adjunct Associate Professor John Beilby, Mr Brett Tizard, Ms Janette Judge.

APOLOGIES

Professor Frank Christiansen, Professor Nigel Laing, Associate Professor Wally Langdon, Professor Tom Riley.

DECLARATIONS OF POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT OR PERCEIVED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Nil.

1. MINUTES

Minutes from the meeting held Jan 16th, 2009 were accepted.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Professor Laing is unable to attend the meetings due to pre-existing schedule clash. Professor Waring will seek re-nomination for a WAIMR rep from Professor Klinken.

3. UPDATE FROM EACH OF THE DISCIPLINE GROUPS

3.1 Research data collection.

To date 11 of the 20 departments have provided their information. Professor Waring to follow up with the remaining departments.

3.2 Research subgroups.

Some disciplines eg immunology, haematology have organised research subgroups and are actively discussing proposals for new research areas. Others eg anatomical pathology and biochemistry are working independently whereas genetics and microbiology need to establish their subgroups.

3.3 New initiatives.

Adrian Charles reported that he is establishing a new research program on Wilm’s tumors and has accepted a PhD student, who is an anatomical pathologist funded by the Malaysian Govt.

Paul Waring announced that he is supporting a research program on multiple sclerosis at the QEII site using discretionary funds provided by the Vice Chancellor. He has submitted grants to the NH&MRC and SCGH Research Foundation.
4. **PATHWEST/PALM RESEARCH RETREAT**

Retreat deferred until research information has been collated for each discipline across all sites.

5. **OTHER BUSINESS**

5.1 **Decision-making regarding new hires.**

Paul Waring solicited guidance from the RAC on how to approach creating and filling new academic positions. There are funds for 3 potential new academic posts, one ongoing PathWest-funded pathologist and two four-year fixed-term appointments at level B, each with a departmentally-funded research assistant. How these funds are to be used will be determined by the School Executive with recommendations from the RAC.

New hires will need to support teaching and establish grant-funded research programs. There was discussion regarding the merits of hiring the right staff to meet strategic research objectives vs the merits of hiring the best people and allowing them to pursue their own interests. There was general agreement that the School needs to support areas that are strategically important to UWA and to play to our existing strengths.

5.2 **Decision-making regarding research support.**

Paul Waring solicited guidance from the RAC on how the School should decide which areas of research or individuals to support. The consensus view was that the additional resources provided to rebuild the School should be used to support new initiatives rather than existing activities. There should be equity of opportunity in proposing new initiatives but support should be allocated based on merit. The RAC will be asked in coming months to make recommendations regarding which areas to develop and support.

5.3 **Decision-making regarding infrastructure support.**

Paul Waring solicited guidance from the RAC on how the School should decide what infrastructure should be established to support research programs. What proportion of the School’s funds should be used to enhance infrastructure eg bioinformatics or platform technologies to enable many research groups vs used to fund individual researchers?

Discussions are already underway between PaLM, PathWest and WAIMR regarding the lack of bioinformatics support especially for microarray technology. Consideration is being given to creating a Chair of Medical Bioinformatics. **Action:** Paul Waring to progress and report back.

5.4 **Statistical support.**

Priyanthi Kumarasighe had enquired whether the School was able to provide statistical support for research projects. Brett Tizard advised that UWA’s School of Mathematics has a Statistical Consulting Group that provides stats support and runs free training courses for post graduate students. **Action:** Janette Judge to circulate information to whole School.

5.5 **Worldwide University Network.**

UWA belongs to the WUN. Funding will shortly be available to support collaborations between WUN member institutions.

6 **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday April 16th commencing at 8.00am and will be held in the ten Seldam Seminar Room 1.6, First Floor, M Block, QEIIIMC.