Center for Transformative Research in Metabolism ("TRiM")
Strategic Advisory Committee (SAC) Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, April 23, 2024, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Zoom Link

Meeting Objective: Share updates for TRiM's planning on the COBRE renewal and request guidance from SAC members.

Members

- Kelly Drew, PhD, UAF TRiM Director and SAC Chair
- Diane O'Brien, PhD, UAF Interim Director Institute of Arctic Biology
- Brian Barnes, PhD, UAF Alaska INBRE PI/Director
- Karsten Hueffer, PhD, UAF Dean of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics
- Nettie Labelle-Hamer, PhD, UAF Vice Chancellor for Research
- Aaron Dotson, PhD, UAA, Vice Chancellor for Research
- Khrys Duddleston, PhD, UAA, Director Department of Biological Sciences
- Jenny McNulty, PhD, UAA, Dean College of Arts and Sciences

10:00 a.m. Welcome All

10:05 a.m. Old Business – Recaps by History

- Alaska and Wyoming tied for last place in NIH funding.
- 60 years of hibernation research at UA
- Chancellor's acquisition and support of MRI and NMR with a focus on metabolism
- COBRE Phase 1 award in 2019 – Founding of TRiM with 2 research cores (HaMR at UAF; AIMS at UAA) and 3 research projects (2 at UAF and 1 at UAA). Three subsequent pilot projects are now completed, and 3 new ones are ready to launch.

10:15 a.m. New Business – Updates by Kelly with SAC discussion

1. TRiM – Where we are today
2. Plan to sustain the Center without the COBRE award
3. How TRiM plans to use the remaining funds during the No Cost Extension (NCE)
4. Update on the COBRE PI for renewal

10:45 a.m. Asks for Institutional Support and the COBRE Renewal

1. HaMR Core
2. AIMS Core
3. Sustain research faculty
4. New tenure track hires

11:00 a.m. Adjourn & Thank You!

Center for Transformative Research in Metabolism ("TRiM")
Strategic Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Members Present: Kelly Drew, UAF, Chair, Director TRiM; Nettie Labelle-Hamer, UAF Vice Chancellor for Research; Aaron Dotson, UAA Vice Chancellor for Research; Diane O'Brien, UAF Interim IAB Director; Jenny McNulty, UAA Dean College of Arts and Sciences; Brian Barnes, UAF Director Alaska INBRE; and Khrys Duddleston, Director, UAA Biological Sciences and TRiM Chair Internal Steering Committee. Denise Daniello, UAF TRiM Program Coordinator, also attended the meeting.

Meeting Purposes: (1) Discuss plans for renewing the COBRE grant and consider how TRiM can help address academic and research gaps at UAF/UAA as part of the renewal by leveraging TRiM's resources and expertise to strengthen UA's research infrastructure and teaching capacity, (2) Share updates about the NIH approval for UA eligibility and the SuRE (Support for Research Excellence)/SuRE First R16 funding mechanisms, and (3) member announcements. Below is a summary of the meeting discussion.

Discussion

Planning for the COBRE renewal and finding areas of program alignment - Kelly welcomed everyone to the meeting. She asked members to focus on planning for the COBRE renewal to find synergy between TRiM's renewal and related program needs. Kelly noted TRiM's recent meeting with Dean McNulty who noted her priorities which are to (1) sustain enrollment and prevent further declines, (2) identify and fill gaps in academic program offerings, and (3) establish a more sustainable plan to support graduate students. Kelly suggested that these priorities could provide a useful structure for identifying common themes across UAF/UAA and aligning the COBRE renewal with UA's broader needs to create a synergistic impact. The HaMR Core and the AIMS Core can play an important role in achieving these desired outcomes for research productivity and student learning based on a combination of institutional support and self-generated income.

Request for Institutional Commitment - Kelly shared her comments regarding the importance of institutional commitment for TRiM's renewal application and continuation of the core facilities, which is essential to maintaining core operations and providing valuable services to the research community. The core's personnel support research by providing technical assistance, expert consultation, and state-of-the-art instrumentation. They train students on using equipment and applications, which help to inspire student learning and foster interest in biomedical research. The central core facilities house and maintain research equipment, which is less risky than having the equipment dispersed across individual labs and not receiving regular maintenance.

The core facilities are working towards sustainability through the recharge model, which aims to reduce their reliance on institutional support. By COBRE Phase 3, the core facilities are required to be mostly self-supporting.

The HaMR Core has been fortunate to have had continued support from the Chancellor's office, which is contingent on demonstrating a positive trajectory annually towards self-sufficiency. The HaMR Core has been increasing revenues through external support, including fees for vet diagnostics and core time written into extramural grants. The HaMR Core offers merit and service awards to investigators using the facility's equipment to generate pilot data sets. These awards help to leverage grant funding for the core. During COVID and financial exigency, there was a significant drop in the number of users, including loss of faculty, and that trend is reversing.

The vision for AIMS Core is to hire a full-time, PhD level manager who could market the Core, diversify services, bring in additional funding, and work with people on their projects. Institutional support is needed to hire for this position. In contrast, the HaMR Core has a full-time, PhD level manager. Using a business plan, Carl Murphy, PhD is working to expand services resulting in increased users and fees generated from external sources. He also trains students in using the core's equipment and research applications.

The AIMS Core would benefit from a similar full-time manager position at the PhD level, but funding is limited because the AIMS recharge model has only been recently implemented. Hiring for this position, whether this person is a faculty member or full-time manager is challenging because the skill set and job expectations are different. If the core manager is a faculty member, for example, they would have to fulfill their tripartite responsibilities as part of their workload in addition to core manager duties. Hiring a junior faculty member is not a viable strategy as this person would be working to establish their lab and teaching workload, which limits their time to focus on managing the core. Grooming a postdoc for this position by shifting some core manager responsibilities is a transition strategy that UAA is using. It was also observed that hiring a full-time faculty member as the core manager can be successful, depending on the person's interests and circumstances. Kelly commented that a core manager who provides training to undergraduate and graduate students promotes the recruitment and retention of high-quality students in research. Obtaining institutional support for the cores, including support for PhD level managers, will help with the renewal prospects by promoting recruitment/retention of research faculty and increasing student engagement in research. In this way, the cores help to modernize the student experience, fill academic holes, and grow student enrollment. The cores also offer a desirable setting to attract competent new faculty to teach and conduct biomedical research.

Members also discussed the merits of increasing collaboration and coordination between the cores to increase infrastructure capacity at a lower cost, versus building new cores that require substantially more funding. For example, the AIMS Core could house the ASSET lab, an innovative core development

that could be featured in the COBRE renewal. According to the members present, the level of institutional support approved by administrators will depend on the level of integration and collaboration we can achieve across cores to maximize our efficiencies. This strategy will help to increase the chances for COBRE renewal.

Announcements

UAF VCR Appointment - Dr. LaBelle-Hamer was recently appointed as the permanent Vice Chancellor of Research. Congratulations Nettie!

UA eligibility for NIH SuRE and SuRE First Grants – Aaron Dotson and Kelly shared that NIH approved institutional eligibility for UAF and UAA faculty investigators for the new SuRE funding mechanisms. Through a collaborative effort led by UAF Chancellor White and Provost Prakash with support from TRiM's Admin Core, Chancellor White advocated successfully to broaden the eligibility criteria for the SuRE grant mechanisms to include consideration for the percentage of full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students reported in the IPEDS database which is important for institutions that serve nontraditional students like UA. Aaron Dotson also helped by supplying UAA data to NIH in their request for institutional eligibility to access SuRE grants. Full-time tenure track faculty who do not have designated active NIH research project grants (SuRE) or have not been the PI on an externally peer reviewed research grant (SuRE-First) are eligible to apply. The SuRE funding mechanisms, which emphasize training students in research, will boost our collective efforts to modernize the student experience in biomedical research, provide new funding opportunities for early-stage investigators, and increase our cores' infrastructure research capacity.