

## REPORT FROM THE CHANCELLOR'S COLLABORATION TASKFORCE ON RESEARCH COLLABORATION AMONG CAMPUSES

Members of the Taskforce:

Brian Blagg  
Bill Brooks  
Barbara Earl  
John Ferraro (Co-Chair)  
Tim Fields  
Bob Hanzlik  
Eli Michaelis (Co-Chair)

The initial meeting of the Taskforce took place on December 18, 2008, during which our group was asked to discuss ideas and strategies for facilitating research collaborations among faculty from the different campuses of our own University as well as the potential for extending these collaborations to other universities within and outside of Kansas. Based on the composition of the Taskforce, it appeared that the main focus for enhancing collaborations was on the interactions of biomedical scientists of the University of Kansas Lawrence and Medical Center campuses, including the VA medical centers. The Taskforce conducted most of its interactions via email, but did have an additional face-to-face meeting to finalize its discussions on February 26, 2009.

The Task Force discussions indicated that there was a tacit assumption that collaborations within and across campuses occur smoothly. However, evidence indicates that there is substantial lack of knowledge among scientists of each other's research and of the best approaches to be followed in establishing both same- and cross-campus collaborations with fellow investigators.

Given the above observations, the Task Force identified three general areas on which its discussions were focused: 1) developing mechanisms to facilitate more awareness of what other investigators within and across campuses are actually doing, 2) facilitating interactions among investigators within and across campuses, and reducing barriers to such interactions, and 3) selling ourselves beyond KU boundaries. Issues related to these three areas are presented below.

### **A. Knowing what other people are actually doing**

In general, faculty members tend to "pigeon-hole" themselves and make little effort to gain awareness of the skills and interests of other individuals within and among campuses that could lead to research collaborations. Mechanisms for facilitating efforts to become aware of what others are doing are lacking or limited. The following mechanisms were identified by the Taskforce to help with this situation:

- Create indexed websites that contain easily researched information about the experimental approaches and funding of investigators in the biomedical sciences at the University of Kansas Lawrence and Medical Center.

- Create more interactive websites on topics related to preparing joint proposals and submissions involving faculty in different departments, on different campuses, and in various centers, as well as guidelines for collaboration.
- Find a common time in the week (or some other unit of time) when a limited number of classes are scheduled on either campus and develop bi-campus seminars or meetings of collaborating investigators during these times. Utilize distance-education models (e.g. interactive video) to facilitate these meetings.
- Develop a more effective, fully functional, and accessible interactive video system among KU campuses.

**B. Facilitating interactions among investigators and reducing barriers to such interactions**

Evidence supports the concept of a “Center” as an effective model for promoting multidisciplinary research collaboration. The following suggestions are offered to help facilitate interactions among investigators which, in turn, may lead to the development of more Centers within the University.

- Identify common themes around which there can be a coalescence of research and create research centers that include scientists from both campuses
- Improve the methods for making faculty in the biomedical sciences aware of the various research teams and research centers. The new drug development program headed by Scott Weir was identified as an excellent example of such a team.
- Re-define policies for hiring new faculty so that they are designed to prioritize research themes/directions versus teaching and administrative duties.
- Develop a better program of incentives and other vehicles to promote cross-campus/-disciplinary collaborations. An example of such a vehicle could be an internal grant funding program (e.g., pilot and/or bridging projects) that supports cross-campus collaborations. This program could be administered jointly by the research institutes on each campus.
- In decisions relating to tenure and promotion, consider giving special or additional weight to interdisciplinary and/or collaborative activities and faculty efforts to promote or enhance such activities.

- Improve reciprocity policies between campuses in areas such as material transfer agreements, regulatory procedures, and tuition and fee structures.
- More reciprocity opportunities with universities outside of Kansas also should be explored, especially for Ph.D. students.

The following areas were identified as deterrents to interactions among investigators across campuses:

- The sense among departments or schools of a lack of equal distribution of funds in successful, cross-campus collaborative research programs; an example is the potential loss or diminution of indirect cost returns to departments and schools as a result of the funding of cross-campus collaborative programs.
- Differences in compliance standards among campuses (e.g. human subjects research policies/approval procedures; insurance issues across campuses) which add confusion and extra effort in developing collaborative projects among campuses. These differences should be eliminated or at the least, decreased.
- The lack of good balance between minimum legal requirements and the tightest possible constraints on policies related to research, and the attitude of our compliance offices which is perceived as being focused on regulation rather than facilitation of research.
- The lack of reciprocal library rights between campuses.
- Issues arising from differences in definitions or expectations related to awarding of PI status, eligibility for entering a tenure track, and distribution of F&A returns can make it difficult to recruit and retain faculty with multi-unit or multi-campus appointments such as, for example, appointments of faculty split between KUMC and the Kansas City VA Medical Center.

### **C. Selling ourselves beyond the KU boundaries.**

- Utilize the Community of Science “Expertise Database” as a means of getting our researchers’ interests viewed by investigators around the globe. Years ago KU joined the Community of Science, and we pay a fee of ~ \$12K/yr (both campuses have access). We mostly use this powerful research engine for funding opportunities, but if we could

engage more KU researchers to enter information about their research, they could promote their research and possibly identify potential collaborators.

- Review and modify the University's international contract standards to make them more conducive to promoting/facilitating international research collaborations.