

Chancellor's Translational Research Opportunities Focus Group – Summary Document

The principal charge of this focus group was to identify areas of translational research opportunity within the LSUHSC-NO Campus. Our approach was two-fold. First, we identified the primary research interests of all LSUHSC-NO NIH-funded investigators by utilizing the NIH CRISP website to obtain the abstracts of all LSUHSC-NO, NIH-funded grants. We then contacted each NIH-funded investigator by email seeking information on the Translational potential of their current work; the nature of the next 3 grants they intended to write, and the names of their existing collaborators. Second, we contacted the Directors of each Center of Excellence or Program and Departmental Chairman by email seeking their opinion regarding who, within their Center or Department, was doing work that had immediate or potential clinical application, who was doing interesting work regardless of clinical potential, and what, in their opinion were the three areas of greatest opportunity.

In taking this approach, we have compiled the following summary files which we recommend be distributed to all members of the Research Council, as well as all Center/Program Directors/Department Chairs and NIH-funded Investigators:

- a) NIH-funded grant abstracts by investigator - accompanied by each investigator's response to our questions
- b) Center/Program Director and Department Chair responses to our questions
- c) List of Non-NIH funded investigators mentioned as collaborators or suggested by Department Chairs or Center/Program Directors as doing research of interest

While there are obvious areas of existing research strength within LSUHSC-NO campus, we believe that for this institution to maximize its potential for attracting NIH Translational research dollars, an Office of Translational Research be created which, through its Director, is empowered to aid the granting process through the accomplishment of the following goals and services:

Facilitate NIH Roadmap-inspired Translational Research Initiatives within and between each of the existing LSUHSC-NO Centers of Excellence and Programs. We believe that the LSUHSC-NO Centers and Programs, because they already bring clinicians and basic scientists together around specific disease states, will most effectively attract, devise and implement new translational research initiatives. We therefore recommend that the first priority of the Director of the Office of Translational Research be to work with each Center and Program Director (as well as select Department Heads) to devise and implement a plan to increase NIH Translational Research funding over the next 3 years.

Devise, implement and maintain an LSUHSC-NO wide “Basic Science Forward” Initiative. The second priority for the Director of Translational Research is to make the Office of Translational Research the center for scientific interaction within LSUHSC-NO. It is in this capacity, that consideration be given to expanding this office to include oversight of Interdisciplinary Research. The **Basic Science Forward Initiative** would seek to aggressively foster three forms of scientific interaction for the purposes of attracting new NIH Translational (and other) research monies: 1) basic scientists seeking clinician partners to test hypotheses in human patients or tissues, 2) clinicians seeking basic scientists to test hypotheses regarding particular clinical problems and 3) basic scientists seeking other basic scientists as new collaborators.

The first goal of this initiative should be to create access to and publicize several unique resources, which currently exist but are underutilized. These include the LSU Health Care Services Division's statewide patient databases and disease management programs, which identify the principal Louisiana clinical populations of interest. The second goal should be to create new databases of active clinicians and their current research problems of interest, as well as NIH-funded and non NIH-funded basic scientists (for which the summary files we have begun, can serve as pilot data). The final goal should be to aggressively foster interaction between and among scientists and clinicians through the Director's personal energy and actions. To this end, the Director should attend Departmental research conferences, monitor and publicize NIH program announcements, host visiting lecturers and lead meetings and symposia so as to increase the visibility and effectiveness of this office.