

**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON  
FACULTY COUNCIL ON UNIVERSITY RELATIONS**

The Faculty Council on University Relations met on Thursday, **January 21, 2005**, at 3:30 p.m. Chair Sarena Seifer presided.

**PRESENT:**     **Professors** Seifer (chair), Fridley, Mayer, Odegaard and Parviz;  
                  **Ex officio members** Arkans, Hoard, Carrie Perrin (PSO) and Whang;  
                  **Guests** Albert Berger, Vice Dean, Office of Research and Graduate Education; John Coulter, Executive Director, Health Sciences Administration, Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs; Theresa Doherty, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs, Office of Regional Affairs; Tina Mankowski, Director, HS/UW Medicine News and Community Relations, Health Sciences Center

**ABSENT:**     **Professor** Gill, Okada and Poorkaj-Navas;  
                  **Ex officio member** Parks, Palacio and de Tornyay.

**Welcome and Introductions – Sarena Seifer, Chair**

Seifer welcomed council members and the council’s guests, and asked all in attendance to identify their departments and positions.

**Approval of minutes**

The minutes of November 12, 2004 were approved as written.

**Regional Biocontainment Laboratory Proposal – *Guests:* Albert Berger, Vice Dean, Office of Research and Graduate Education; John Coulter, Executive Director, Health Sciences Administration, Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs; Theresa Doherty, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs, Office of Regional Affairs; Tina Mankowski, Director, HS/UW Medicine News and Community Relations, Health Sciences Center**

Seifer said that serious concern has been expressed by Faculty Senate Chair Ross Heath (in his “Opening Remarks from the Chair” to the Senate Executive Committee at its meeting on January 10, 2005) about the lack of involvement of faculty governance in the proposal submitted by the University to build, on campus, a DHHS/NIH biosafety level-3 Regional Biocontainment Laboratory (RBL) to work on Category A, B and C select agents and infectious diseases.

Of particular concern to FCUR, said Seifer, is the failure to involve faculty in the vetting process of the proposal. Chair Heath has asked several faculty councils to speak with representatives of the University to find out what they can about the development of the proposal and the process through which it went. FCUR is one of those faculty councils. Seifer said the goal of the discussions such as the one being held today is “to ensure greater campus involvement” in the vetting of such proposals.

John Coulter, Executive Director, Health Sciences Administration, and Associate Vice President for Medical Affairs, said: “None of us wants this [process] to be a secret.” He said the grant proposal was a faculty-driven effort. “Faculty got the Initial Center of Excellence (ICR) grant, and sought a place in Health Sciences immediately.” Coulter said, “I worry about the safety of people in the labs.” He noted that the difference between a P3 and P4 facility [this would be a P3 facility] “is significant”. He said, “We have about 30 P3 facilities at UW Health Sciences. We have no P4 facilities here.”

Coulter emphasized that “we want to explain [the proposal and the facility] in our community. We want to have them see the grant application.” He said that, “from a health and safety aspect, we need such a building, whether on or off campus.” He noted that the grant application “got sent out two weeks before

deadline [for submission]. We want everyone to see it.” He said the state “is very supportive” of the proposal.

As for the purpose of [the work to be performed in] the building, Coulter said, “Its purpose is to develop vaccines. The government is interested in protecting against bioterrorism, and that is why we got the grant. We’re using the money to work on these vaccines.” As for safety, he said: ““We have a good faculty driven committee to check all the issues. This building would be a very safe building.”

Asked to comment on the news report that three researchers at a Boston University laboratory were infected in 2004, Coulter said that the three researchers have fully recovered their health, as their infections were fully treatable by antibiotics. Infection in a P3 level lab, he explained, can be treated by antibiotics; this is not the case in a P4 level lab. He noted that the UW has upwards of 30 P3 level labs in Health Sciences. What is new in the proposal under scrutiny is the construction of a building specifically created for P3 level laboratories.

Coulter stressed that the federal government “has encouraged the growth of such facilities. We’ve had a number of discussions about applying or not applying for this grant. We decided to apply only in mid-December 2004. We knew we could get, and would need, funding in addition to what we would get from this grant.” The grant was submitted barely under the December 29, 2004 deadline. The federal government, Coulter emphasized, informed the University that it “must do a big public relations exposure, and fully consult with the community. The grant requires this PR effort.” Coulter and those directly involved with the grant met with President Emmert and other administrators, and agreed to meet with Ross Heath, Acting Provost David Thorud, and others to work out a plan for the presentation of the proposal to the University community, and to the greater community beyond the University.

“We had two major questions,” said Coulter: “Should there be a biocontainment laboratory in the Pacific Northwest? And, if so, should it be at the University of Washington?” He stressed that Health Sciences (and those involved with environment and safety issues at the University) “have been pushing to get this done”. He said, “It would only be a risk – if it would be a risk at all – to people in the lab itself, not to the rest of the community; and it is our job to give the faculty who would be working in the lab the best facility possible, to *not* put them at risk.”

Asked to differentiate between a P3 level building such as Health Sciences [where its P3 labs are located], and the newly proposed P3 building, Coulter replied: “Our building [Health Sciences] is not only much more expensive, but contains asbestos, and is a definite security risk, as everyone walks through Health Sciences. The new building could be controlled much easier, and would thus be much less a security risk; and it would be located across the street from the offices of the University’s Police Department.”

Seifer asked if there is a plan to put all of the University’s P3 labs into the proposed new building. Coulter said, “We will still continue to use our present P3 labs where they are, but having a new building to house all high security labs started up in the future would support growth in infectious disease research.”

Mayer, who has had experience with high security buildings, asked about “external risks (of terrorist activity) to the proposed new building, and whether Homeland Security is involved in the proposal. Coulter said, “We definitely have to do background checks. But terrorists would have little interest in this sort of terrorism. Animal care and the Primate Center are really the highest security risk areas. We have tightened security in the Primate Center. But the [proposed] new building would be designed to keep terrorists out.”

Asked about the specific nature of work that faculty in the new building would be doing, Albert Berger, Vice Dean, Office of Research and Graduate Education, said, “Faculty would be working on common-type pathogens in the new building. Regarding toxic agents, we have to have secure situations in our neurological labs. There would be antibiotics if people were to be infected. We are serious with these ‘select agents’, and with the tightening of security for the building.”

Berger told the council, “We’ve had P3 level facilities for dozens of years. We use the Biological Safety Committee as one means of monitoring. And Karen VanDusen’s organization [she is Director of Environmental Health and Safety] decides if a facility meets federal and University guidelines.” He noted that the University’s guidelines are more severe than are the federal guidelines. Berger said “P3” is the third factor: “We need a secure building to house our [future] P3 labs.”

Seifer asked for a clearer explanation of the process through which the grant proposal went. “What process [particularly, what vetting process] was there, throughout the application process?” Berger said, “The application process extends all the way to [the point of] actual funding. The period up to the award notice is the application process.”

Theresa Doherty, Assistant Vice President for Regional Affairs, Office of Regional Affairs, distributed an outline of the “NWRBL Community Relations Plan”. The plan includes the development and maintenance of a “database of stakeholders, organizations and individuals interested in learning about the project and participating as it is developed. The database will initially be assembled using several existing campus and community mailing lists including various University committee and council rosters, University’s SEPA Mailing List, Greater University District Chamber of Commerce, City University Community Advisory Committee (CUCAC), and the NE District Neighborhood Council. State, City, and County agencies and local elected officials will also be included in the database as well as the Single Point of Contact. Throughout the project, names will be added to the database from open houses, through comment submissions, or through requests made via the Regional Biocontainment Grant Website and E-mail address.”

The goal of the Community Relations Plan “is to proactively create positive relations concerning this grant within the research community, the University community and surrounding residential/commercial communities, and the general public throughout the application process, construction and operation of the facility. The community outreach plan will be front loaded with the majority of the activities occurring during the first phase of the project. The second two phases will include the same activities as described in the first phase with the exclusion of the letters of support from public officials. Those phases include: 1) application process (December 2004 to June 2005); 2) design of the facility (Summer 2005 to Summer 2007); and 3) construction of the facility (beginning Summer 2007) with occupancy occurring in 2009/2010.”

Doherty stressed to the council that “the University will not know until late summer 2005 whether or not it has been awarded the grant.” She said there will be several on-campus and off-campus forums. “Many articles will be written to further explain the proposal. And the president will invite the community to be involved in the vetting process.” Doherty emphasized that “we planned all along to effect a strong community outreach plan.”

Coulter referred the council to a sentence in page two: “The process encourages open, active, and meaningful participation by both the University community of faculty, staff and students as well as the community groups and residents that live around the University.” Coulter commented: “This is the new part of this process. We need to be able to answer questions community members may have, and those of faculty, staff and students, as well as questions other individuals and organizations may have.”

Arkans said, “There are parallel, converging tracks in the process. That it had an outreach portion already in it [i.e., in the grant application process] suggests it was planned to go to the University community.” Coulter said, “It would normally go to FCUFS, the Faculty Council on University Facilities and Services; and that has now happened.” [Coulter and Doherty visited FCUFS at its meeting on January 14, 2005.] Coulter said, “Perhaps we should re-establish a committee we used in the 1980’s and 1990’s, a facilities planning committee that was chaired by the provost.”

Friday asked if the proposed building is consistent with the Master Plan 2002-2012. Doherty said that it is completely consistent with the Master Plan. Berger said, with respect to the issue brought up by Chair Heath [cf. above], “Oceanography [Heath’s department] thought this space [in which the proposed new building would be located], could possibly be theirs.” He also pointed out that the Hutchinson Center has

P3 facilities on South Lake Union. Fridley further asked: “Are there reasonable boundaries about what can be done in town vs. country in this area? And is there a lack of education about these boundaries?” Coulter answered: “Yes, this is a problem. A newspaper erroneously compared this facility with a P4 facility elsewhere. That created further confusion about this project.” Berger said, “This facility is only P3; it can never become a P4.” Berger added that a biodefense group would go into the new building. He said, “This group of faculty want to work with Genome faculty, so it is vitally important that they be located close to their collaborators.” Thus, if the building were to be located out of Seattle, or far from the campus, it would not work for the faculty who are meant to use it.

Seifer asked what FCUR could do to help. Doherty said to the council: “If you have ideas, or want a specific group involved in the Community Relations Plan, please let me know, or let Norm Arkans know.” Coulter said the format for the public forum is currently being worked on. He said Steven Olswang, Interim Chancellor, UW Tacoma, will moderate the forum. Also, the infectious disease faculty will participate in the forum. Coulter observed: “This process – coming here to FCUR, and speaking with FCUFS and with the Regents – is *very* helpful, and will serve us well when we go to the University community, and to the greater U-District community.”

A hand-out was distributed entitled: “Language from NIH Grant for Regional Biocontainment Labs related to Environmental Analysis.” The analysis “is intended to convey available environmental information with the initial grant application and does not require expenditure of funds for extensive consultant services prior to a grant award.” Also, “the awardee will complete any further required environmental assessments or impact statements as determined by the NIH.” And there will be an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) for the proposal, and a NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process that must be carried out.

Doherty said the president will take in all the information from all groups that are being consulted, and NIH will want to know what that information is too. Fridley suggested: “You’ll want to educate people about the limitations of the danger and risk involved in this kind of P3 facility. That would be important.” Coulter concurred: “Yes, exactly; and the real value of this, ultimately, will be in the area of world health.”

#### **Update from Norm Arkans, Executive Director, Media Relations and Communications**

Norm Arkans, Executive Director, Media Relations and Communications, told the council of his new title, and the new name of his department (changed from University Relations to Media Relations and Communications). “We are not doing event planning any longer,” he noted.

Arkans said the legislature is in session in Olympia; and Randy Hodgins, Director, Office of State Relations, is hard at work in Olympia on behalf of the University. Arkans said the University “got a decent budget from the previous government, and Governor Gary Locke. Faculty and Professional Staff raises are expected to pass in this legislative session. The session is predicted to be a long one, due in part to the protracted transition of the new governor’s administration created by the lengthily contested governor’s race.

Arkans repeated what Coulter and Doherty emphasized, that anyone interested should participate in the Community Relations Plan in whatever way they are able to. “The more input we have, the better,” he added. And he recommended to the council that it ask Coulter and the other guests to come back for the March 2005 FCUR meeting to present an update on the proposal for the RBL building.

Arkans said the 2004 Annual Report, “Creating Futures,” is out; copies are available for those who want them.

Finally, Arkans said that Media Relations and Communications is “very busy”, and that he will keep the council abreast of new developments.

#### **Next meeting**

The next FCUR meeting is set for Friday, March 18, 2005, at 3:30 p.m., in 36 Gerberding Hall.

Brian Taylor  
Recorder