



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Life Sciences Institute

Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Time: 12 p.m.

Location: CMR # 1.312, & Zoom
<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/68021758334?pwd=E1xo9SSo9qsup4FtuPSY2qf3Y8RUg.1>

Meeting ID: 680 2175 8334/ Passcode: 669857

Meeting: LSI Executive Committee Meeting

Chair: Dr. Leonard Foster

Members: Leonard Foster, Sharda Muni, Michael Murphy, Edwin Moore, Jeff Richards, Joerg Gsponer, Pierre Tanguay, Sophia Wang, Hilla Weidberg, Reinhild Kappelhoff, Vanessa Auld, Ania Bogoslawski, Andrew Johnson, Elitza Tocheva, Elizabeth Rideout, Hannah Shariati, John Nomellini, Joy Richman, Hugh Kim, Matthew Lorincz

Regrets: Joerg Gsponer, Joy Richman

1. Approval of previous Meeting Minutes (January 30, 2025)

Minutes were approved as circulated.

2. Discussion on restructuring research clusters (Vanessa)

Leonard provided a brief overview of the history of research clusters. Initially, the building was organized into clusters, supported by LSI funding to develop infrastructure within each group. Over time, as individuals joined and left, the clusters continued to function in some operational aspects but largely became inactive.

The main questions for this discussion now are whether the clusters should be re-established, what form they should take, and what a successful cluster would look like.

Vanessa shared her experience as a member of the neuroscience cluster, which she described as a successful and well-functioning group. Led by Tim O'Connor and Shernaz Bamji, the cluster was highly organized and inclusive, as well as dynamic and engaging, with discussions around CIHR grants and opportunities to present proposals which proved especially valuable for junior faculty, who benefited from constructive feedback.

Leonard thanked Vanessa for her insights and invited the committee to share their thoughts on reinstating research clusters. **He asked a. what the structure setup might look like, b. whether LSI would provide resources, and c. if groups should be allowed to self-assemble.**

Vanessa responded that allowing groups to self-assemble would be preferable to assigning members, as it fosters more natural collaboration. Michael concurred to the idea of self assembled groups. Vanessa further noted that individuals could potentially belong to multiple clusters. However, she emphasized the importance of having someone dedicated to organizing and maintaining the group. She also mentioned that the small funding previously provided by LSI was helpful. Leonard agreed, adding that LSI could potentially continue matching that level of funding to support activities such as social gatherings during cluster meetings. Leonard then opened the floor to other committee members to suggest additional forms of support or ideas for the clusters.

Hilla mentioned that there is an existing Cell and Molecular Biology group that meets monthly. She offered to take the lead in organizing it and suggested opening participation to individuals from LSI, as well as from BMB and CPS. This group could serve as a starting point for a new research cluster.

Michael noted that in the past, there was some resistance to the clusters due to their involvement in LSI governance. He suggested that the governance role could be separated from the research clusters moving forward.

Leonard asked the committee to estimate the annual funding that might be required to support the research clusters. Ed responded that the amount would depend on how many clusters are ultimately formed. Ed suggested setting an overall funding cap, which could then be divided among the groups. Leonard noted that allocating funds on a per capita basis might be challenging and emphasized the need to ensure that each group has a reasonable number of active members.

Leonard also raised the concern that some individuals in the building, whose research may not align with a specific cluster, could be excluded. In response, Michael suggested that those individuals could form their own clusters if they wished.

Finally, Leonard asked whether each cluster should be required to include members from more than one department. Ed responded that such a restriction was not necessary.

Action Item 1: Develop a proposal for formation of research clusters with estimated funding figures, and circulate it to committee members for feedback before sharing it more broadly

with labs in the building. This will help determine what level of support for the clusters is feasible.

Leonard noted that there is no immediate deadline for this initiative, and it can move forward at a natural, organic pace.

3. Discussion on SAB Meeting agenda (Leonard)

The SAB meeting is scheduled for April 29th, 2025. Leonard emphasized that the SAB is a requirement from GREX in order to secure \$400K in annual funding. The next funding cycle begins in September 2026, and holding the SAB meeting/report is a condition for receiving that support.

Leonard explained that while the SAB meeting shares similarities with a five-year departmental review, it differs in that its focus is more advisory than evaluative. This first in-person meeting is intended to familiarize the board with LSI, its leadership, and faculty. The board's primary role is to provide guidance on how LSI can enhance its global impact, ensure long-term sustainability, and identify opportunities for growth.

Leonard reviewed the proposed itinerary with committee members. Michael suggested including pre-tenure faculty to meet with the SAB, and Nomo recommended organizing a tour of the LSI for the SAB as part of their visit. Leonard noted the recommendations.

4. LSC Operations and Safety Update (Pierre & Sophia)

Sophia issued a friendly reminder regarding the upcoming EM power and HVAC shutdown scheduled for May 3rd to 4th. She noted that any physical work impacting building systems must be reviewed and approved by Building Operations.

Additionally, Pierre announced that the second and third floor safety operation teams have been reorganized and operational.

5. Miscellaneous

a. No Pet Policy in LSC (Leonard)

Pierre reminded occupants that the building enforces a strict no-pet policy and mentioned that signage might be added to clearly communicate that pets are not permitted.

Points of support for a pet-friendly policy from members:

- Hilla pointed out that other comparable centers, including the pharmaceutical building on campus, allow dogs and suggested that the no-pet policy be reconsidered. She added that pet owners often act as caregivers and may need to administer medication and provide care for their pets, and a policy allowing pets could be beneficial. Hilla reiterated the value of revisiting the policy with reasonable limitations.

- Elitza expressed support for revisiting the policy, noting that dogs contribute positively to community well-being.
- Hannah concurred noting that students, particularly graduate students, would welcome the presence of dogs to support mental health, and inquired about emotional support animals and whether the latter are permitted under the current policy.

Points of reservation for a pet-friendly policy from members:

- Leonard explained that the primary reason for this restriction is the presence of an animal facility within the building, making exceptions almost impossible. Leonard further noted in response to Hannah's query regarding emotional support animals, that only legal service animals are permitted; emotional support animals are not allowed. He also mentioned concerns related to dander and predators.
- Vanessa raised concerns about allergies and safety, explaining that allowing dogs could lead to some other untrained animals in the building, potentially frightening some occupants. She also noted the possibility of fleas or other pests that the animals would carry and emphasized fairness both to the dogs, who would be confined in labs, and to all building occupants. Vanessa highlighted that opening the policy could extend to all animals, including cats, rabbits and the like, complicating enforcement.
- Sophia recalled that during the last policy review, the building's various occupant groups, including individual units and the LSI, were surveyed and voted to maintain the no-pet policy. Although LSI is the largest occupant, other groups in the building also have a voice in such decisions.
- Michael expressed concerns about the challenges of proper enforcement if a policy allowing pets with reasonable limitations is passed.

Next steps:

Leonard proposed that he and Pierre explore possible options for the future. Pierre emphasized that the building has had a no-pet policy since its inception and is skeptical about changes but supports a democratic reassessment process.

It was agreed that this topic will be revisited in the near future.

b. LSI Faculty Hires:

Medical Genetics Hire: Matt reported that the MedGen search committee has held its first meeting to review the current pool of applicants. The committee intends to focus on early-career investigators. Leonard added that, because the position is a President's Excellence Chair, the hire must be at the assistant professor level or below.

CPS Faculty Search: The initial search did not yield a successful candidate. A second search will be launched in a few months.

Zoology Appointment: Jeff announced that Callista Yee is set to join the department in September.

c. Revisiting the no-children policy at LSI Joint Seminar social hour

Ania inquired whether the restriction on children attending the social hour was a firm rule, and whether it might be possible to allow children to attend in the future, particularly during events like the LSI Christmas party.

Sharda responded that the restriction stems from RCMP's guidelines via UBC, noting that since the venue is considered an open area rather than a licensed closed restaurant, it would be harder to monitor those under the legal drinking age present in the area.

Hannah, who has previously applied for provincial liquor permits for the social hours, clarified that the permit itself does not prohibit individuals under 19 from being in the area, as long as everyone's age is verified before providing drinks.

Action Item 2: Confirm whether the UBC rules and BC provincial laws permit minors in the event space, and initiate discussion on the possibility of allowing children to attend future events.

Update: Sharda and Deepali will be working with Enrolment Services and the RCMP and will share their findings at the next Executive Committee Meeting to help decide whether minors can attend social hours. There are no LSI joint seminars taking place in summer.

d. EDI Joint Seminar

Liz informed the Executive Committee that the BMB, CPS, and MBIM departmental EDI Committees will be hosting Dr. Myrle Ballard from the University of Calgary for a special EDI-focused seminar. The event will take place on May 30th from 3-4 p.m. in LSC3, followed by a social hour in the West Atrium. She encouraged all committee members to attend.

e. Signage in LSI.

Reini noted that some labs and office spaces in the building lack proper signage and proposed that signs be added for better wayfinding. Leonard agreed with the suggestion. Pierre added that installing permanent metal signage may take some time, and hence temporary slide-in insert signs could be used in the meantime.

6. Next meeting

Tuesday, June 10 at 12 p.m.