THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Life Sciences Institute

Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, January 30, 2025

Time: 12 p.m.

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 Bogoslowski, Andrew Johnson, Elitza Tocheva, Elizabeth Rideout, Hannah
                 Shariati, John Nomellini, Joy Richman, Hugh Kim, Matthew Lorincz

Invited Guests: Gurm Dhugga, Associate Director, Research & Core Technology, FoM, Digital Solutions,
                 Anna Neufeld, Portfolio Manager, Research & Core Technology, FOM, Digital Solutions

Regrets: Michael Murphy, Hugh Kim, Joerg Gsponer

1. **Approval of previous Meeting Minutes (November 8, 2024)**

Minutes were approved as circulated.

2. **LSI Med-IT Update (Gurm Dhugga and Anna Neufeld)**

Gurm and Anna discussed in detail four agenda items through a slideshow presentation. The agenda items
covered were:

1. How LSI and FoM Digital Solutions (DS) have engaged
2. How FoM DS is restructuring the arrangement
3. What work has been done
4. Next steps.

Gurm noted that the LSI is a multidisciplinary institute with multiple departments and that there has not been a unified approach to IT management across LSI as a whole. The existing IT models were fragmented and segmented. To address support gaps and ensure cybersecurity and compliance, the LSI FoM initiative was launched.

Gurm identified six key components:

1. **Networking** – This touches upon core IT infrastructure, including network availability, Wi-Fi, and how computer systems communicate with one another. This is a critical focal point and central to many IT issues.
2. **Core Facilities** – Supporting core facilities and facilitating the movement of data.
3. **AV Technology** – Essential for ongoing operations and supporting hybrid work.
4. **End-User Support** – Ensuring adequate support for users.
5. **Platforms/Applications** – The LSI research community should have access to platforms that enable collaborative research. There will be ongoing efforts from DS to understand and improve these resources over time.

The DS has so far engaged in the first four components. For all four, the approach follows a hierarchy:

1. **Current state assessment** – Understanding the existing situation.
2. **Future state recommendations** – Gathering feedback on potential improvements.
3. **Leadership discussions** – Engaging with leadership and Leonard and Sharda to ensure alignment and collaboration.
4. **Implementation** – Moving forward with the execution phase.

Currently, the DS is in the fourth stage (implementation) for **AV technology** and is working with leadership for alignment and collaboration on **Networking** and **Core facilities**. For **End-user support**, since users are distributed across various labs and research centers, the DS is conducting an assessment via a survey. Based on the survey results, the next steps will be developed.

Anna provided updates on the meeting rooms that have been upgraded to FoM DS-supported AV. She mentioned that they met with core facility managers to discuss pain points related to networking barriers. The DS Systems and Collaborations team worked with UBC IT to create a comprehensive list of networks and firewalls at LSI and conducted an operational impact assessment. They evaluated how these firewalls and the over-segmentation are contributing to day-to-day IT issues for the LSI research community. Some of the reported challenges included network ownership, network complexity, and gaps in network support.

Anna also reported that the main recurring themes and common issues faced by the 8 core facilities they met with were:

1. **IT support gaps**
2. **Data storage limitations**
3. **Data transfer/sharing challenges**.

Gurm further shared recommendations for **Networking** and **Core facilities**.

For **Networking**, the FoM IT group a.k.a DS MED-IT will take ownership of the LSI network and work to simplify it over time, which will be a multi-year effort. The DS MED-IT team will provide day-to-day support for all networking-related matters, such as new equipment, lab setups, Wi-Fi issues, and more.

For **Core facilities**, the DS team will handle day-to-day IT support and troubleshooting, develop and implement a data storage solution, and establish a robust data-sharing platform.

To conclude the presentation, Gurm added that the next steps would involve implementation of recommendations for **Networking** and **Core Facilities** over the next 6 to 8 months. The other component would be an analysis of the **End-user support environment**, followed by recommendations and exploration of a future support model.

Elitza posed a question to Gurm and Anna regarding recommendations for hardware upgrades related to networking and data transfer. She also inquired about involving ARC (Advanced Research Computing) for data storage, as many researchers are considering storage and cloud computing options.

Gurm responded that they will not duplicate services already provided by ARC. Instead, they plan to leverage ARC's services as much as possible. They will focus on ensuring the ability to transfer data to ARC is robust and will address any gaps between the processing side and the large storage side that ARC supports. Additionally, they will consider support for lab equipment and unique applications and databases within the wet lab environment. The goal is to avoid duplication and make use of resources from MED-IT, as they are freely available.

Elitza also asked if MED-IT had any plans to upgrade the 1-gigabyte data transfer limit. Gurm mentioned that they have received early indications that an upgrade may be necessary and will ensure it happens. The details regarding the payment for the upgrades are still to be discussed, but they emphasized that the costs should not fall on individual researchers.

Update: The slidedeck from FoM DS has been circulated to committee members via email.

3. **Update on Action Items from the Last LSI Executive Committee Meeting Held on November 8, 2024**

Leonard briefly reviewed the action item updates from the meeting held on November 8th in an informational manner.

4. **Update – LSI SAB Members**

The members of the SAB Committee are as follows:

Dr. Gerry Wright (McMaster University)

Dr. Cheryl Arrowsmith (University of Toronto)

Dr. Keith Murai (McGill University)

Dr. Sue Biggins (Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center)

Dr. Elizabeth Wright (University of Wisconsin – Madison)

The finalized date for the first SAB meeting is **April 29th, 2025.**

Leonard mentioned that Dr. Gerry Wright, Dr. Arrowsmith, Dr. Biggins, and Dr. Murai have confirmed their attendance at the meeting. The report from this meeting is expected to be completed by the end of June, to align with the Senate meeting, at which the extension of GREX funding will be approved. Leonard added that, depending on guest schedules, there might be some meetings scheduled with SAB members, with April 29th being the prime day for these discussions. Leonard asked committee members for their recommendations on items that should be placed on the agenda during the SAB committee's visit.

Ed suggested including finances/budget as an agenda item, requesting the committee's input on finances and whether the budget is sustainable. Leonard confirmed that the SAB review would address the budget.

Matt noted that the last SAB reviews were conducted in 2013 and 2023. He highlighted that the SAB had provided a long list of recommendations, but very few were implemented, as they were mostly advisory in nature. He asked if there is a plan to ensure the SAB recommendations are leveraged so that the process is not an exercise in futility. Leonard clarified that this visit is more intended to be an expectation and requirement of the GREX than a review. He stated that the primary focus would be to extend and increase GREX funding. Matt suggested that

recommendations from 2013 and 2023 SAB reviews that overlap could be revisited to determine which should be brought up during the SAB visit.

<mark>**Action Item 2: Review the 2023 SAB recommendations to identify which should be brought forward to the SAB committee at the upcoming meeting.**</mark>

Leonard further shared that, from his experience with similar external visits that he was invited to, having presentations from trainees had been impactful.

Liz recommended that priority should be given to UBC's expectations of the SAB review and suggested that planning should be made accordingly. Leonard mentioned that he has yet to approach Gail Murphy (Vice President, Research and Innovation), but he has tried contacting other members from VPRI and has not received a substantial response, except that a report from the SAB is anticipated. Liz recommended that LSI could partner with the Faculty of Science and Medicine to gauge which critical strategic plans are in place and leverage those. Leonard agreed that it was a good suggestion and said he would bring it up at the next quarterly meeting with the Dean of Science and Medicine.

Leonard also mentioned that he would arrange for the SAB to meet with different groups, including department heads, new recruits, core managers, cluster directors, and operations staff such as Sophia and Pierre.

Ed added that, since GREX was based on the Biological Resilience Initiative, it should also be included in the SAB agenda.

5. **LSC Operations and Safety Update (Pierre Tanguay & Sophia Wang)**

Upcoming Project:
- LSC B3 Standby Power upgrade project (move a few service pumps in B3 mechanical room to EM power) – Feb 2025 – 2 to 3 emergency power shutdowns to be scheduled
- Friendly reminder: advanced notifications for incoming/departing Labs

To address the above points, Sophia mentioned that the building operations team will be conducting 2 or 3 emergency power shutdowns. However, they have not yet communicated the dates or the impact of these shutdowns on users. Sophia stated that she would request Building Operations to provide at least a 2-month advance notice before these shutdowns, allowing users and labs to plan accordingly without disrupting essential functions.

Sophia and Pierre also requested that advance notice be given to them about departing and incoming labs. Pierre added that they would like to be notified a few months ahead of time when labs are departing, so that research supplies and other lab belongings can be cleared and organized. They also expressed interest in being invited to meet new PIs to learn about their work and to get to know them. This would be a great way to start building a relationship with the operations team and to give new PIs a heads-up on what the building usage entails. Leonard agreed that a robust onboarding and offboarding process is necessary.

6. **Miscellaneous**

a. **Restructuring Research Clusters:** Vanessa spoke about how research clusters operated in the past, noting that there was once a stronger sense of community and engagement. However, she observed that this has diminished over time and questioned whether the research cluster model should be revisited. Leonard agreed and stated that the next meeting would include this as an agenda item to discuss the restructuring of research clusters. He added that one key lesson he has learned is that participation in a cluster cannot be forced if individuals are not interested. Vanessa emphasized that proactive leadership from cluster leaders is essential for fostering engagement, citing the past success of the neurobiology cluster as an example.

b. **Shipment of Deliveries to Labs from LSI Stores:** Hilla inquired whether LSI Stores could resume its pre-COVID delivery model for lab shipments.

Action Item 3: To determine whether LSI Stores should resume lab deliveries and establish conditions for doing so, including handling perishables and instances where recipients are unavailable.

Update: According to an email from Rod Hanning (Stores Facility Manager), LSI Stores resumed lab deliveries effective February 24th. The email stated that one delivery attempt would be made. If unsuccessful, labs would be notified to pick up their delivery from Receiving on B2.

c. **Adding BRI's Mention to Seminars:** Matt suggested incorporating the Biological Resilience Initiative (BRI) into the LSI Seminar Series. Hilla recommended updating the seminar notices to include BRI in the advertisements.

Agenda Item 4: **Add BRI's name to LSI Joint Seminar notices.**

Update: The LSI Joint Seminar template has been updated to include BRI, effective from the seminar held on February 14th.

7. **Next meeting**

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 at 12 p.m.