THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Life Sciences Institute

Meeting Minutes

Date: Friday, November 8, 2024

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Chair: Dr. Leonard Foster

Members: Leonard Foster, Michael Murphy, Edwin Moore, Joerg Gsponer, Sophia Wang, Hilla Weidberg, Reinhild Kappelhoff, Vanessa Auld, Ania Bogoslowski, Andrew Johnson, Elitza Tocheva, Elizabeth Rideout, Hannah Shariati, Edward Conway, Matthew Lorincz, Daniel Graf (Representing Dr. Joy Richman for Faculty of Dentistry)

Regrets: Sharda Muni, Jeff Richards, Pierre Tanguay, John Nomellini, & Joy Richman

1.   Approval of previous Meeting Minutes (September 5, 2024)
Motion moved by Joerg Gsponer; To approve Meeting Minutes (September 5,2024).
Seconded by Ed Moore.
In favour: 17, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0
Motioned passed without dissent

2.   Terms of Reference (TOR)
Motion moved by Vanessa Auld; To approve Terms of Reference.
Seconded by Andrew Johnson.
In favour: 17, Opposed: 0, Abstained: 0
Motioned passed without dissent

Action item 1 – Meeting Minutes and TOR will be published on the LSI website

3.   Core Facility portfolio, including bringing in new ones (Elitza Tocheva & Leonard Foster)

Leonard shared a draft proposal by Elitza for establishing shared services (S2) cores, including potential support services like glassware washing, media preparation, and buffer preparation

Elitza asked if it would be a better idea to bundle the services as shared services under a single core facility instead of offering them as individual services (e.g., Biobank). She noted that implementing such cores would require dedicated lab space and technical staff.

Leonard explained that while the LSI could partially support these cores, additional funding from labs or departments would be necessary. Liz Rideout proposed identifying services that are presently managed at the individual lab level, that can benefit if centralized through a single support core. The costs can be determined based on the number of labs / users involved. (she quoted the example of Biorender) Liz asked whether a portion of CIHR grant can be used to support funding for the core?

Hilla suggested two approaches: a) creating a survey to collect various ideas to gather information about what labs currently use, and b) establishing a small core facility for services like media preparation and dishwashing, then monitoring its growth over time.

Ania pointed out that bulk purchases through a shared services core could save money compared to individual lab purchases, which could incentivize labs to support the creation of shared services.

Reini emphasized that the costs and efforts involved should be considered before setting up new cores. For example, she noted that buying tissue culture media is more practical than the time, effort, and manpower needed to produce it in the lab.

Hannah asked if the committee members were aware of any models used by other buildings on campus to perform common lab services. Leonard shared that the MSL provides services like glass washing, hazardous waste handling, and equipment maintenance and repair, with central funding covering these costs so the labs do not have to contribute. Andrew Johnson (Andy) added that the BRC budget also covers its support costs. Hannah suggested reaching out to other institutes, both within and outside of UBC (e.g., McGill and UofT), to learn about their models.

Joerg proposed that when establishing a shared service core, it could initially be free for smaller labs with limited funding, while larger labs could be charged for these services.

Leonard mentioned that LSI has submitted a proposal for the UBC Phase 3 CFI funding for core facilities, which could potentially replace funding from the President's Office in the future, though he does not have a projection of when this may be implemented.

Leonard also suggested that the committee should evaluate and plan the future of the currently existing core facilities at a future meeting.

Action Item 2: Reach out to other institutes within UBC and outside UBC to understand how they manage and fund lab functions that are common to most labs.

4.   Scientific Advisory Board

Leonard mentioned that he had received 13–14 potential member suggestions from the committee members for formation of the SAB. He evaluated the candidates based on their biological and technical expertise, experience with running research institutes or core facilities, while trying to maintain gender balance, ensure representation of racialized individuals, and geographic diversity. Invitations were sent to six individuals—three men and three women—and four of them, Drs. Gerry Wright, Keith Murai, Elizabeth Wright, and Alexandro Sanchez Alvarado, have responded positively, with Alexandro agreeing to join the board in 2026. Since only three members had been finalized, Leonard sought additional feedback and recommendations from the committee for more members. He emphasized that having the SAB is a requirement for securing Year 2 funding for the GreX. He also noted that UBC mandates the advisory board to meet onsite annually and to produce a brief report.

Ed Conway suggested that six members would be an ideal board size and recommended preparing clear objectives for the SAB, whether strategic, organizational, or scientific, prior to its first meeting. He also stressed the importance of estimating costs in advance. Leonard informed the committee that costs would be covered by LSI through the GREX budget. In response to a query from Ed Moore, Leonard clarified that international members are not required as long as the board provides the necessary input. Leonard further encouraged committee members to propose additional candidates, especially women to have gender balance in the committee. Ed Moore recommended Dr. Anne-Claude Gingras from University of Toronto, whom Leonard confirmed had been contacted but had not yet responded. Matt Lorincz suggested Dr. Cheryl Arrowsmith from the University of Toronto, while Hilla proposed Dr. Sue Biggins from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center.

Action Item 3: Leonard will reach out to Drs. Anne-Claude Gingras, Cheryl Arrowsmith, and Sue Biggins inviting them to become a member of the SAB.

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

Sophia, speaking on behalf of the LSC Operations and Safety Team, shared the following update with the committee and invited members to ask questions or seek clarification.

Upcoming Project:
a.   LSC Center Tower Only - Upcoming Fumehoods Shutdowns for Phoenix Control Upgrade Project – Nov 2024 to Feb 2025 - each fumehood to be shutdown for one week
b.   Elevator Drive Replacement for Elevator #1, #3 & #4 – To be scheduled – each elevator to be shutdown for one week
c.   LSC B3 Standby Power upgrade project (move a few service pumps in B3 mechanical room to EM power) – Jan to Feb 2025 – 2 to 3 power shutdowns to be scheduled.

6.   Miscellaneous
a.   Developing an accessibility strategy for members with different needs (e.g.: mobility devices and sensory spaces) at LSI (Elizabeth Rideout)

Liz Rideout highlighted that individuals using mobility devices currently cannot navigate the elevators or stairs to upper floors and recommended installing accessibility buttons for labs and washrooms. Liz noted that, according to a survey conducted by the Rick Hansen Foundation, the building meets minimum accessibility standards, as individuals can access the main entrance to the building. She further added that while the first-floor labs and washrooms are accessible, it remains unclear whether lecture theatres have similar features. She suggested that funding for these upgrades should come from UBC, potentially as part of the CIF funds, and emphasized that accessibility deficiencies are a widespread issue across campus.

Sophia explained that UBC has two departments dedicated to accessibility—one for students and another for faculty and staff. Currently, accessibility requests must be submitted on a case-by-case basis, and funding is provided once the application is approved. Addressing Liz's query, Sophia clarified that all lecture theatres are wheelchair-accessible but lack automatic door openers. She added that the Faculty of Medicine has been considering installing door openers in teaching spaces and has already received budget estimates for 10 teaching spaces, with each installation costing approximately $40,000. The initiative is ongoing, contingent on securing funding, and future considerations include gender-neutral washrooms and additional accessibility enhancements.

Ania suggested consulting a postdoc who used a wheelchair and crutches at LSC for insights into practical improvements on the accessibility front. On a side note, she inquired about the availability of a nursing room in the building. Leonard confirmed that a nursing room has been identified and the information will be included on the LSI website in a dedicated section soon.

Action Item 4: Include information about the breastfeeding room (Room 1351, Passcode: 5113) and prayer room (1537B) to the LSI website and advertise it through the newsletter.

Leonard suggested that since UBC has a case-by-case approach to accessibility, the LSI could, as a first baby step to promote accessibility, begin with assisting individuals with existing accessibility concerns by guiding them through the administrative process of submitting a case request. Ed Moore suggested that accessibility is a campus-wide issue and recommended forming a coalition with other buildings, such as MSL, BRC, and SBME, to collectively approach the VP/Provost for action. He also proposed consulting the EDI office for statistics on the proportion of UBC students, faculty, and staff with physical disabilities, which could support funding requests.

Liz added that job application data received by faculty could help identify whether accessibility is a factor in recruitment challenges. Hannah mentioned that the Center for Accessibility (CFA) could assist with grant writing and outreach to relevant UBC programs for data and solutions.

Action Item 5: Collaborate with other institutes and departments at UBC, as well as the CFA to identify shared accessibility concerns and collectively approach UBC VP/Provost for funding and support.

b.   **LSI EDI committee**: Leonard informed the committee that LSI is considering establishing its own EDI committee to address gaps not currently served by existing departmental EDI committees. He explained that this initiative aims to provide representation for individuals whose departments currently don't have their own EDI committees. Ed Moore suggested that the LSI EDI committee should include members from departmental EDI committees to ensure alignment and collaboration. Leonard concurred. More information about the committee's structure and implementation will be shared in the future

c.   **Advertising events at LSI**: Elitza raised concerns about the effectiveness of the LSI Friday newsletter for advertising events at LSI. She noted that attendance at some seminars has been affected as members don't always read the newsletter and asked for suggestions to improve event advertising at LSI without it significantly increasing the volume of emails received by members for events. Hilla suggested that the issue may not necessarily be lack of advertising but rather a lack of interest from some individuals. She observed that LSI seminars generally have good attendance, especially because of the social hour and well-suited timing of having it on a Friday evening. Hilla proposed reducing departmental seminars and adding more seminars to become LSI seminars so that higher attendance can be achieved. Elitza added that creating a list of upcoming seminars to post in elevators might help raise awareness.

d.   **Supporting indigenous businesses at LSI.:** Reini brought up the idea of supporting Indigenous businesses at LSI by introducing MSS (Medical, Surgical, and Safety Services), an Indigenous-owned company operating since 1992 in Alberta. MSS has partnered with Primate, a manufacturer of gloves and masks, offering products at a lower price than what is currently being paid. Reini suggested placing an initial order with MSS to test their products, emphasizing that this aligns with a social benefit procurement model dedicated to advancing reconciliation through action.

e.   **Updating LSI website**: Hannah requested that the LSI website be updated, and added that she has received feedback from others about outdated information on the website. Leonard acknowledged this and informed the committee that Olivia Underdah is already working on updating the site, which should be completed soon.

f.   **Data sharing for cores**: Hannah also suggested implementing a data-sharing tool, such as Dropbox, to reduce the use of USBs for file transfers. Leonard added that committee members will soon receive an IT survey, as part of the LSI Med-IT collaboration, where they can share their feedback and suggestions on such matters.

7.   Next meeting

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: January 30 2025