

Dear Colleagues:

Since 2005, growth in VCU sponsored research activities has been significant. The Office of Research has worked diligently to support this robust research enterprise which has resulted from the efforts and successes of our outstanding faculty. We have augmented our regulatory board infrastructure by adding new members, by creating a new IRB panel, by developing a recruitment and retention plan for IRB and IACUC members, and by deploying electronic enhancements to protocol and proposal review. We have also deployed a totally electronic database for sponsored awards, and implemented necessary electronic mechanisms for proposal submission to major federal funding agencies. In addition, new staff have been hired to help in delivering research administration services. Throughout this time of new growth, we have been cognizant of our responsibility to monitor and evaluate performance in all phases of our support of VCU research. We have conducted surveys that have allowed investigators to evaluate the performance of our IRB and IACUC. We have surveyed our IRB members to better appreciate the time committed to service on the IRB, reasons why members volunteer, and other measures to assist with recruitment and retention of all IRB members. We have shared survey outcomes with the VCU community and have used the results to improve our administrative services. Results of our recent surveys may be found on-line at:

<https://www.vcu.edu/research/iacuc/Survey-9-10-08-Summary.doc>

<http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/IRB-Member-Survey-Summary-Report-2008.doc>

http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/national_standards_report.pdf

We also have used groups of expert consultants from outside and inside the VCU community to help us improve our support of our research faculty. The reports from groups of external and internal consultants gave rise to both new and revised research policies that provide a contemporary foundation for ethical and compliant research at VCU. Similarly, external consultants have helped us formulate a new policy dealing with the recruitment of human research subjects from community-based health practices and outside facilities, and have provided guidance for review of University institutes and centers.

This month we are embarking on a broad-based evaluation of our research administration services. Recently, the University has contracted with Huron Consulting, a firm with substantial experience in higher education and healthcare, to develop recommendations for enhancing the research administration infrastructure at VCU. Those recommendations are expected to assist VCU with:

- Enhancing operational performance and service levels to faculty and staff;
- Improving administrative and financial management; and
- Mitigating research and fiscal compliance risks for the campus.

VCU has made a number of considerable investments intended to support faculty and research endeavors. We believe the Huron review will build upon these investments and better position the University for continued future growth in sponsored research awards and expenditures.

Huron has been asked to work closely with most every school, college, office, and center at VCU to facilitate its review. The review process is expected to extend over the next three to four months. To help guide the Huron consultants, an Advisory Steering Team has been established and includes representatives from across the VCU community. The following members are serving on the Steering Team:

Quincy Byrdsong, Director of Research Administration and Compliance for Health Sciences, Chair of the Steering Team

Amy Sebring, Associate Dean, Finance and Administration, School of Medicine

Marie Gardner, Assistant Dean for Research and Research Support, School of Nursing

Julian Owens, Department Administrator, Anatomy, School of Medicine

Susan Robb, Assistant Vice President, Research Administration, Office of Sponsored Programs

Teresa Atkinson, Vice President, Academic Finance and Administration, Office of the Provost

Rhonda Bishop, University Compliance Officer, Office of Assurance Services

Michael Newsome, Director of Finance and Administration, Office of Research

Alan Johns, Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Massey Cancer Center

Paul Fawcett, Director Research Resources

Cynthia Earnhardt, Chief Compliance and Privacy Officer, Office of Assurance Services

Margie Booker, Director of Grants and Contracts, Office of the Controller

Pam Currey, Assistant Vice President for Finance, Office of the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration

A significant portion of Huron's work will involve interviews with individuals across our campuses. Interviews are now being arranged. For those of you who will become engaged in this process, I would like to thank you in advance for your time and involvement. Your insight and experience will assist in making valuable recommendations for improvement and capitalizing on existing opportunities.

If you have any questions regarding the interviews or this review, please do not hesitate to contact me (827-2262) or Dr. Quincy Byrdsong (628-3343).

Best wishes,

Francis L. Macrina, Ph.D.
Edward Myers Professor of Dentistry and
Vice President for Research
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