

SUBMITTED BY: STEPHEN M. LANIER, PH.D., VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH

**RECOMMENDATION TO RENEW CHARTER
INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board of Governors renew the charter for the Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (IEHS) through January 2023, as recommended by the Center and Institute Advisory Committee-II (CIAC-II). The Vice President for Research concurs with this six-year charter renewal recommendation, as does the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate. The CIAC-II also recommends that the request by IEHS leadership to change the name to IEHS/CURES (Institute of Environmental Health Sciences/Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors) be adopted and the Vice President for Research supports this recommendation.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Melissa Runge-Morris became director of IEHS in December 2008. The institute was last reviewed in 2012 and re-chartered for 4.5 years. Since the last review, the Institute has made excellent progress and is on sound footing. All of the strengths identified in the 2012 review are present, and nearly all of the weaknesses have been resolved or are on a trajectory for resolution. In 2014, the institute was awarded a three-year center grant “Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors (CURES)” (P30 ES020957) from the National Institute of Environmental Sciences (NIEHS) of the National Institutes of Health. The renewal application for this center grant (\$7,696,800 total, \$4,992,190 direct costs, 2017-2022) was submitted last year and received an outstanding score and will likely be approved for five years of funding when NIEHS council meets this February 2017.

REVIEW

In accordance with the Board of Governors Wayne State University Statute 2.23.01 *Centers and Institutes: Policy on Creation, Operation, Review, and Discontinuance*, the Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (IEHS) underwent a formal review by the Center and Institute Advisory Committee-II (CIAC-II) in fall of 2016.

The CIAC-II subcommittee review process included a) the institute’s self-study, b) additional materials requested by the CIAC-II related to grant submissions and publications and c) a site visit at which CIAC-II subcommittee members met with the director, key personnel and students at the institute. The subcommittee report recommending that the charter for this Institute be renewed for a period of six years was submitted to and approved by the full CIAC-II committee. The full committee submitted a final report to the Vice President for Research and

to the Policy Committee of the Academic Senate. The Policy Committee of the Academic Senate received the report and prepared a recommendation for a six-year renewal also.

The CIAC-II subcommittee was impressed, as noted below under strengths, with the progress of the Institute under the leadership of Dr. Runge-Morris, highlighted by the receipt of the NIEHS P30 center grant in 2014 and anticipated renewal in 2016 given the high score the grant proposal received. The CIAC-II subcommittee noted a palpable sense of purpose and resolve among the members of the institute and the subcommittee's impressions of IEHS were very positive and indicated that the Institute is fulfilling its particular mission and objectives. The major areas for improvement are outlined below and were not felt to be insurmountable. The subcommittee supported charter renewal for six years and the name change to IEHS/CURES.

STRENGTHS OF THE INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES INDICATED BY CIAC-II

- IEHS/CURES has a strong leadership team, inspired by Melissa Runge-Morris. Her effectiveness was highly praised, in terms of creating cohesion within IEHS/CURES, as well as leveraging the limited resources available. The change in deputy director position from Bengt Arnetz to Christine Cole Johnson is perceived to have gone well, and Christine is regarded as an effective co-leader.
- IEHS/CURES has very supportive internal and external advisory boards, a factor that was also highlighted by the 2012 review. One EAB member felt that the WSU institute was perceived by those outside of WSU as having undergone a strong “restart”, and that it was on track to have the same profile as established P30 programs within 5-10 years. The program is perceived to be “punching above its weight”, given its size and financial resources.
- There is a notable increase in the submission of competitive grants, founded on the 2014 Center grant and its renewal (of special note are the funded ECHO and proposed CLEAR grant). Since the last review of IEHS, average funding has increased by nearly 200% (from an average of \$788k per year to \$2.33M per year - this does not include the recent renewal [*sic* – anticipated] of the P30 Center Grant or the likely funding of the NIH ECHO Grant). Even though the average number of grants submitted per year has declined, quality of the submissions has increased (based on total funding received). There is the prospect of additional grant applications, building on feedback from reviews and new initiatives, including plans to submit a Superfund grant. The funded grants as well as the proposed applications are strong evidence of the interdisciplinary action of institute members. The research is directly tied to the stated mission.
- IEHS/CURES faculty has been strengthened by the addition of new faculty. The Pilot Project program, catalyzed by the P30 grant, has reinvigorated existing faculty, who feel supported by the center, and it has contributed to their successes in grant funding, collaboration, and publications.

- Outreach by the institute has grown in many areas. One interviewee noted that IEHS/CURES has taken researchers from “vertical silos” and is building communities of researchers around common themes. This can be seen in the strong collaborations with researchers within WSU as well as outside, such as the strong alliance with Henry Ford Hospital.
- A vibrant community outreach program has been developed that is engaging IEHS/CURES at many levels. This was cited by a new faculty hire as a deciding factor in selecting WSU over other offers. It was also cited by internal and external faculty as one of the strongest and most valuable parts of the center.
- Career development initiatives within the institute are also to be noted, which are deemed to be important for the continued growth of the institute.
- New course development and new educational initiatives, including a T32 proposal are well underway. The inclusion of students from outside of IEHS/CURES, such as Nursing and other units, has been encouraged and successful. These opportunities offer clear benefits for faculty and students affiliated with the center and enhance the missions of involved programs.

Recommendations for the Institute of Environmental Health Sciences by CIAC-II

- While the leadership in the institute is strong and highly regarded, there are some concerns that the viability of IEHS/CURES is too dependent on too few people. IEHS/CURES should work with their advisory boards to address this issue.
- The 2012 review noted that the student headcount is very small, and it appears that this is still the case. IEHS/CURES should conduct a strategic planning exercise around this topic and decide on target enrollment numbers.
- Students felt that courses were somewhat limited in terms of variety, especially in the area of toxicology course choice.
- There appears to be an absence of a strategic faculty hiring plan and difficulty with recruitment of new faculty. This may be due to hiring being tied to the Integrative Biosciences Center recruitment initiative.
- The issue of some tenured full-professors with low productivity and 100% salary coverage by IEHS noted by the 2012 review persists.