

**Empire State Stem Cell Board  
Funding Committee Meeting Minutes  
October 31, 2014**

The Funding Committee of the Empire State Stem Cell Board held a meeting on Friday, October 31, 2014, at the offices of the Department of Health, 90 Church Street, New York, New York. Janet Cohn presided as Chair Designee.

**Funding Committee Members Present:**

Ms. Janet Cohn, Chair Designee  
Mr. Robin Elliott  
Dr. David Hohn\*  
Ms. Fonda Kubiak  
Dr. Donald Landry  
Dr. Norma Nowak  
Dr. Allen Spiegel, Vice Chair  
Dr. Melissa Wasserstein  
Dr. Madelyn Wils

**Funding Committee Members Absent:**

Dr. Bradford Berk

**Ethics Committee Members Present:**

Ms. Janet Cohn, Chair Designee  
Dr. Richard Dees  
Dr. Inmaculada de Melo-Martin  
Dr. Samuel Gorovitz  
Dr. Robert Klitzman  
Dr. Donald Landry  
Rev. Hugh Maynard-Reid  
Dr. Allen Spiegel, Vice Chair  
Dr. Camille Wicher

**Ethics Committee Members Absent:**

Ms. Jann Armantrout  
Ms. Nancy Dubler

**Department of Health Staff Present:**

Ms. Bonnie Brautigam  
Dr. Kathy Chou  
Dr. Matthew Kohn

\*participated via video-conference

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Cohn called the meeting to order and welcomed members, staff and the public to the meeting of the Funding Committee and invited Ethics Committee members to participate. She then asked board members and staff to introduce themselves.

## **Approval of Minutes of February 9, 2014, Funding Committee Meeting**

Ms. Cohn directed Funding Committee members to the draft minutes of their February 13, 2014, meeting and asked for a motion to approve them. Before the vote took place, Dr. Chou observed that there were important updates to the topic she had discussed at the February meeting, namely, that the new method she had described for creating induced pluripotent stem cells had been challenged, and the papers describing it had been retracted.

Dr. Wasserstein moved to approve the minutes of the February 13, 2014, meeting and Dr. Spiegel seconded. The motion passed.

## **Executive Session**

Ms. Cohn asked committee members for a motion to go to executive session to discuss the evaluations of applications submitted in response to three Requests for Applications (RFAs): Consortia to Accelerate Therapeutic Applications of Stem Cells, Round 2; Stem Cell Research Experience for Pre-College Teachers; and Informal Stem Cell Science Education Programs (Museums). Ms. Kubiak so moved and Dr. Wasserstein seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Brautigam reminded members of the evaluation criteria set forth in each RFA and described the peer review evaluation and scoring processes. The Committee was then provided with information relating to individual applications while members with a potential conflict of interest left the room.

During the discussion of the Consortia applications, Funding Committee members reaffirmed the high priority they place on the Consortia-type projects, as well as their duty to protect state funds. The Committee called on NYSTEM staff for assurance that any awarded Consortium's failure to meet early milestones would result in that award's cancellation, and that any funds made available as a result be reallocated to other similar translational and clinical mechanisms, subject to future Funding Committee agreement.

Ms. Cohn then asked for a motion to adjourn the executive session and reconvene in public. Dr. Wasserstein so moved and Ms. Kubiak seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## **Public Session**

### **Recommendations for Stem Cell Research for Pre-College Teachers**

Ms. Cohn advised the Committee that the next order of business would be to vote on applications for Stem Cell Research for Pre-College Teachers. Proceeding in score order, Ms. Cohn announced the application number, the name of the sponsoring institution and the recommended funding amount for each application.

Dr. Landry recused himself from consideration of the first application and left the room. Dr. Klitzman, a member of the Ethics Committee, left the room as well.

Mr. Elliott then moved to recommend approval of Application Number N14T-007, in the amount of \$672,408, from Columbia University. Dr. Spiegel seconded the motion. The motion passed.

The second application was Number N14T-004 from Cornell University in the amount of \$756,000. There were no recusals. Ms. Kubiak moved to recommend approval of the award and Dr. Spiegel seconded. The motion passed.

The Committee then considered the third application, Number N14T-003, in the amount of \$498,420, from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. There were no recusals. Mr. Elliott moved to recommend approval. Dr. Nowak seconded the motion. The motion passed.

### **Recommendations for Informal Stem Cells Science Education Programs**

Ms. Cohn asked members to consider the single application received for funding under this RFA, Number N14M-001 from the American Museum of Natural History, with the New York Stem Cell Foundation as sub-applicant. Dr. Wasserstein moved to approve the application in the recommended amount of \$250,000, Mr. Elliott seconded, and it passed unanimously.

### **Proposal to Amend the Graphic Novel Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Ms. Brautigam explained to the Funding Committee that staff had concluded that the RFP as currently drafted would be unworkable. She explained that they had determined that 1,111 schools in the state of New York would be eligible to participate, potentially overwhelming both the ultimate contractor selected and NYSYSTEM staff. She suggested that the school contest component of the project be eliminated and that the contract be limited to creating and disseminating the single graphic novel and teaching guide.

Several board members, including Dr. Gorovitz, Dr. Hohn, Mr. Elliott and Dr. Klitzman, voiced concern about limiting the RFP in this way. They reminded staff and fellow board

members that the initial intent had been to energize and engage the students, something that simply reading the work of the professional contractor might not sufficiently achieve.

Ms. Cohn asked for a motion to amend the plan for the proposal, noting that if it failed to carry the Committee could go on to discuss alternatives. Dr. Landry so moved and Dr. Wasserstein seconded. There were too few votes on either side to constitute an affirmative action of the Committee, however, and the motion was tabled.

Ms. Brautigam summed up the Committee's discussion, saying that staff would develop one or more alternatives and bring it back to the Funding Committee. Dr. Hohn expressed his support for the concept and suggested that any expertise lacking currently be solicited so that the original idea could go forward. Ms. Cohn agreed to work with staff and interested board members to develop further ideas and present them in the future.

### **Recommendations for Consortia to Accelerate Therapeutic Applications of Stem Cells, Round Two**

Ms. Brautigam reminded members that this was the second round of these 4-year milestone-based awards, designed to accelerate development of clinical treatments. She told the members that eight applications had been received and forwarded to the program's external peer review contractor, which convened an expert panel in August 2014. She noted that the Committee had set the cutoff for applications it would consider at a score of 3.9, resulting in five applications to review today.

Ms. Cohn told the board that \$32 million had been set aside to support two awards. Proceeding in score order the first application was N14C-010 from Weill Cornell Medical College. There were no recusals.

Dr. Hohn moved to recommend its approval in the amount recommended, which was \$15,717,575. Dr. Spiegel seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

In response to a request from Mr. Elliott, Ms. Cohn summarized for the record the discussion held in Executive Session. She stated that the board had expressed its strong desire that there be diligent and appropriate oversight to ensure that each Consortium meet its milestones; and that in the event of a failure to do so, the contract be promptly cancelled and the money be redirected to a new RFA for additional consortia or other translational projects.

Ms. Cohn noted that Dr. Hohn and Dr. Nowak had recused themselves from consideration of the next application and asked them to leave the room. Dr. Wicher from the Ethics Committee stepped out as well. Ms. Cohn then asked for a motion to approve the second application, N14C-002 from Roswell Park Cancer Institute, in the amount of \$11,922,885. Ms. Kubiak moved and Dr. Spiegel seconded. The motion passed.

After the recused members returned, Ms. Brautigam noted that the two Consortia recommended so far totaled \$27,640,460, leaving \$4,359,540 uncommitted. Ms. Cohn stated that the next application would require the uncommitted balance plus approximately \$4.5 million to fund. Anticipating a possible request from the Funding Committee, staff had taken the rare step of requesting advance approval for the additional amount. Because that request was pending, she asked for a motion to approve contingently the next application, N14C-003 from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Wasserstein had recused herself and she left the room.

Ms. Kubiak moved to approve the application and Dr. Spiegel seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Mr. Elliott asked whether the Funding Committee could consider the remaining applications as approved but not funded to take the place of any of the three that were ended early should they fail to meet milestones. Ms. Cohn clarified that a new RFA would be required in that circumstance.

Ms. Cohn next asked for a motion to raise the total funding for the Consortia RFA to \$36.5 million, in the event that approval to do so is given. Dr. Wasserstein so moved and Ms. Kubiak seconded. The motion passed.

### **Proposal to Fund Previously Awarded Investigator Initiated Research Projects (IIRPs) and Innovative, Developmental or Exploratory Activities (IDEAs)**

Ms. Brautigam explained that with the fiscal year coming to a close there was an opportunity to fund seven applications that had been approved but not funded in the fourth round of IIRPs and IDEAs, for a total of \$7.3 million. Again, staff was waiting for approval on its request, but in the interest of expedience she requested the Funding Committee's approval at this time. Ms. Cohn asked for a motion to do so, Dr. Spiegel so moved, and Dr. Nowak seconded, and the motion passed.

### **Approval to Raise Total Funding on Fifth Round Request for Applications for IDEAs and IIRPs**

Ms. Brautigam told members that based on the number and quality of applications for IIRPs and IDEAs received in the last round, staff was requesting that the total funding be raised from \$25 million to \$35 million. Ms. Cohn asked for a motion, reminding members that \$35 million had been the original amount set aside for these RFAs. Dr. Spiegel so moved, Ms. Kubiak seconded, and the motion passed.

## **Motion to Adjourn Funding Committee Meeting**

Mr. Elliott moved to adjourn the meeting. All Funding Committee members voted affirmatively.

*s/ Janet Cohn  
Executive Secretary to the  
Empire State Stem Cell Board  
Approved: January 30, 2015*