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THE BOARD OF SCIENTIFIC COUNSELORS

COMPUTATIONAL TOXICOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE
CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY

Friday, May 20, 2005
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. EDT

COMPUTATIONAL TOXICOLOGY PROGRAM

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Research and Development

July 26, 2005

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Office of Research and Development

BOARD OF SCIENTIFIC COUNSELORS
COMPUTATIONAL TOXICOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE CONFERENCE CALL SUMMARY

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10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. EDT

Welcome and Overview

Dr. George P. Daston, Miami Valley Laboratories, The Proctor & Gamble Company
Chair, Computational Toxicology Subcommittee

Dr. George Daston, Chair of the Computational Toxicology Subcommittee, welcomed participants and thanked them for joining the call. The purpose of the call was to review the draft Letter Report to the Board of Scientific Counselors (BOSC) Executive Committee. The Letter Report has been circulated and posted on e-docket. Changes to the document were discussed during the call and will be incorporated into the Letter Report prior to its submission to the BOSC for final approval.

Time was to be set aside for public comment; however, no members of the public requested time to speak and none participated on the call.

Designated Federal Officer Remarks

Ms. Lorelei Kowalski, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the BOSC Executive Committee, Office of Research and Development (ORD), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Dr. Daston asked Ms. Lorelei Kowalski, DFO for the BOSC Executive Committee, to proceed with the requisite DFO remarks. Ms. Kowalski introduced herself and identified the subcommittee members on the call, including Dr. Daston, Dr. James Clark (Exxon Mobile Research and Engineering Company), and Dr. Richard Di Giulio (Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences, Duke University, Levine Science Research Center).

Dr. Robert Kavlock, National Center for Computational Toxicology (NCCT), EPA, participated on the call and introduced several his NCCT colleagues who also were present, including Jerry Blancato, Elaine Cohen-Hubal, Karen Dean, Melissa Pasquinelli, James Rabinowitz, and Mike Zager. Angela Cross of The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc., was present to take notes and record the meeting minutes.

Ms. Kowalski described the objectives of the subcommittee and its charge, and reviewed the basic Federal Advisory Committee Act process. The BOSC was chartered as a Federal Advisory Committee. Its meetings and deliberations are public, and the public is provided an opportunity to comment at each meeting. Additionally, meeting minutes are posted on the BOSC Web Site after they are certified by the BOSC Chair and made available to the public. Ms. Kowalski published a notice of this meeting in the *Federal Register*. The Docket number of the meeting is ORD-2005-0013. Ms. Kowalski also works with EPA officials to insure that all appropriate

ethics regulations are satisfied. The subcommittee members were reminded that they must inform her of any conflict of interest or if the topic under discussion draws upon their research.

Ms. Kowalski reviewed the context of this meeting for the record. The Computational Toxicology Subcommittee was charged with reviewing the progress of the new NCCT. A public face-to-face meeting was held on April 25-56, 2005, in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Based on input from that meeting, Dr. Daston prepared a draft Letter Report that responded to the charge questions. This Letter Report was the subject of the teleconference. The next steps are to finalize the draft Letter Report, based on input from the subcommittee, and submit it to the BOSC Executive Committee for review at the June 2-3, 2005, meeting.

Subcommittee Draft Letter Report—Overview

The purpose of the Letter Report is to present the subcommittee's findings from the initial review of the NCCT. The Letter Report focuses on the strategic goals of the new Center, unlike most of the other BOSC reviews. Given that the NCCT is new, the report is much more prospective, rather than retrospective, in nature.

Dr. Daston asked for comments or concerns from the subcommittee members pertaining to the draft as a whole. Dr. Di Guilio responded that he thought Dr. Daston had captured the essence of the subcommittee's findings and had articulated them well in the draft. Dr. Clark agreed that the report conveyed the subcommittee's findings; however, he had one comment regarding the use of the term "housing" in the statement, "Housing these people together allows them to synergize and..." Some confusion may arise if the term "housing" is taken in a literal sense. Later in the report, it states "most of its business can be conducted via electronic media, with occasional meetings." Dr. Clark suggested that the term "core" be inserted for clarification (i.e., "a core group of individuals will work cooperatively with many partners"). Dr. Daston agreed that a core group should be emphasized and indicated that he would make the change and reiterate that individuals would be virtually organized into a Center.

Dr. Daston then requested feedback for each of the responses to the charge questions.

Draft Responses to Charge Questions

- **Question 1: Success of the NCCT will depend upon establishing effective collaborations with the other ORD laboratories and centers. What advice can you provide to ensure that operations remain integrated with the other laboratories and centers within ORD?**

Dr. Daston stated that the response to the first question was meant to communicate five or six ways that the Center can effectively collaborate. He noted that the text was meant to endorse some of the Center's ongoing activities (e.g., appointing adjunct faculty and working with outside groups). The subcommittee's intent also was to recognize some of the Center's activities that currently are underway, such as the development of a communications plan. The Subcommittee had no suggestions for additions or changes to the text. Subcommittee members agreed that Dr. Daston captured the important points of their findings.

- **Question 2: In terms of anticipated staffing, are there particular areas that should receive greater or lesser attention?**

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Dr. Di Guilio stated that the NCCT indicated a need for additional staff in the area of bioinformatics. Although this need had been established, he asked that it be reemphasized in the subcommittee's response. The Letter Report also discusses the need for scientists in the field of ecological modeling. A suggestion was made to reverse the order of the response paragraphs regarding additional staff, to correspond to the priorities of the Center. In addition, a comment was made that the lengthy list of targeted competencies needs to be clarified. The subcommittee, in its response, does not mean to imply that additional staff is necessary for each of the listed areas. Rather, the list is provided from which additional expertise could be selected. They suggested that this point be clarified.

- **Question 3: Can the BOSC provide any suggestions on how to best keep apace with new technologies and methodologies?**

No changes to the draft were deemed necessary.

- **Question 4: Has the Center articulated a clear rationale for each topic area, and has it provided evidence that the contemplated approaches will be able to address the major goals stated in *A Framework for a Computational Toxicology Research Program?***

Although the response to this question is very concise, the subcommittee members agreed that it captured the basic elements of their findings. No suggestions for changes were made.

- **Question 5: To be successful in addressing the Concept Topics, can you help identify potentially fruitful partnerships with others outside the Agency?**

Dr. Daston asked if there were any suggestions for changes to this response. Subcommittee members indicated that the response accurately reflected their opinions.

- **Question 6: Given the mission, staffing, and resources of the Center, what is your view of the depth and breadth of the areas currently selected for emphasis? Are there additional areas that should be considered?**

Dr. Daston stated that most of the comments pertained to the Center's job as a "hub" of individuals in various aspects of modeling to provide breadth, but allowing the depth to come from the laboratories and programs that serve as collaborators. Dr. Di Guilio said that the proof-of-concept endocrine disruptors studies were important to include in the text, and that the point to expand beyond them was worded effectively.

Dr. Daston solicited comments from EPA staff. Dr. Kavlock asked if the Report had mentioned ToxCast. As a followup, he noted that the Center had presented ToxCast as a concept with the clear understanding that its incorporation had serious resource implications. Although the Subcommittee had not addressed ToxCast in the Report, Dr. Daston suggested that in one of its initial paragraphs, the Subcommittee could mention development of ToxCast as a strategic choice.

Public Comment

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No members of the public were in attendance, so there were no public comments.

Final Draft Letter Report—Next Steps

Due to the minor nature of the changes, Dr. Daston agreed to make the changes within the hour and send them to Ms. Kowalski. She, in turn, agreed to copy the Letter Report and distribute it to the other members and to post it on e-docket. The final report will be presented to the BOSC Executive Committee at the June 2-3, 2005, meeting. Open telephone lines will be available to allow EPA staff to participate remotely. Ms. Kowalski indicated that the same call-in number and access code could be used.

Dr. Rabinowitz noted that the draft language on the issue of staffing listed many areas of expertise along with some specific and general recommendations regarding additional staff. The language, however, did not indicate the total number of additional staff being recommended. Drs. Daston and Clark noted that in the Report, the Subcommittee had identified a range of expertise from which the NCCT might select additional staff, but it was not suggesting a specific number of new staff members. All agreed that the expertise of any new staff members should span two or more of the suggested areas of expertise whenever possible.

Adjourn

Dr. Daston thanked the subcommittee members for their work on the report. He stated that the subcommittee was pleased with the Center's progress and hoped that the Letter Report reflected this. He adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

Action Items

- Dr. Daston will make the necessary changes to the text and forward the revised Letter Report to Ms. Kowalski.
- Ms. Kowalski will distribute the Letter Report to the other subcommittee members and post it on the BOSC Web Site.
- EPA staff may submit comments to Ms. Kowalski, who will forward them to Dr. Daston for consideration.

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List of Participants

Subcommittee Members

George P. Daston, Ph.D., Chair
Miami Valley Laboratories
The Proctor & Gamble Company

James R. Clark, Ph.D.
Exxon Mobil Research and Engineering Company

Richard T. Di Giulio, Ph.D.
Professor
Nicholas School of the Environment
and Earth Sciences, Duke University

Designated Federal Officer

Ms. Lorelei Kowalski
Designated Federal Officer for the
Executive Committee
Office of Research and Development
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Attendees

Jerry Blancato
NCCT
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Elaine Cohen-Hubal
NCCT
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Karen Dean
NCCT
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Robert Kavlock
NCCT
U.S. Environmental Protection
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Melissa Pasquinelli
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James Rabinowitz
NCCT
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Michael Zager
NCCT
U.S. Environmental Protection
Agency

Contractor Support

Angela Cross
The Scientific Consulting Group, Inc.

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APPENDIX

Conference Call Agenda
May 20, 2005
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. EDT

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BOARD OF SCIENTIFIC COUNSELORS
COMPUTATIONAL TOXICOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
AGENDA

Friday, May 20, 2005
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Eastern

CONFERENCE CALL
Participation by Teleconference Only

10:00-10:05 a.m.	Welcome and Overview - Purpose of Teleconference Call	Dr. George Daston, Chair Computational Toxicology Subcommittee
10:05-10:10 a.m.	DFO Remarks	Lori Kowalski, Office of Research and Development
10:10-10:25 a.m.	Subcommittee Draft Letter Report - Overview - Draft responses to charge questions	Dr. George Daston, Chair, Computational Toxicology Subcommittee
10:25-10:35 a.m.	Public Comment	
10:35-10:50 a.m.	Discussion	Computational Toxicology Subcommittee
10:50-11:00 a.m.	Final Draft Letter Report - Next steps	Dr. George Daston, Chair, Computational Toxicology Subcommittee
11:00 a.m.	Adjourn	

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