

■ FROM THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

The CCR Advisory Board

The CCR Advisory Board (CAB) was established in 2005 as a mechanism through which the CCR Director, Robert Wiltrot, PhD, the Scientific Director for Clinical Research, Lee Helman, MD, and senior staff could consult CCR scientists on a variety of topics. Approximately 15 intramural scientists, including tenured, tenure-track, clinical, and basic investigators, are appointed by Drs. Wiltrot and Helman to serve on the Board for 2- to 3-year terms. The CAB meets monthly to discuss issues, give advice, and act on initiatives proposed by CCR leadership and Board members. Larry Samelson, MD, served as the first Chairperson of the CAB. He was followed by Susan Gottesman, PhD. Ron Gress, MD, will assume the role in May 2007. This article reviews several of the Board's past and present areas of focus.

Career Progress within the CCR

The first action of the Board was to update site visit guidelines, clarify the site visit process, and better inform reviewers about how the NIH differs from a university and how the site visit process differs from the grant application process. Based on recommendations by CCR leadership, changes were made in such areas as the definition of success within the Intramural Research Program, including how to evaluate participation in multidisciplinary research teams. The guidelines are now in use for CCR site visits and can be found at http://ccrintra.cancer.gov/research/site_visits.

Another concern identified through CAB discussions was how to prepare for scientific evaluations/reviews and successfully advance through the tenure-track process. Some of the challenges raised included receipt of the appropriate mentoring and awareness of NCI/CCR resources designed to help investigators with their studies. Based on CAB discussions, coupled with recommendations from tenure-track scientists, CCR has developed new guidelines and processes for tenure-track investigators, including (1) holding an annual tenure-track faculty retreat, with the next scheduled for May 11, 2007; (2) assignment of a CCR Office of the Director (OD) contact for each tenure-track scientist to help with overall orientation, development of timelines for site visits, Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC) reviews, and other activities; and (3) establishment of a 2-year review of all tenure-track investigators to ensure identification of additional mentors who could provide advice on process as well as science.

Keeping CCR Science Vibrant and Scientist Morale High

To remain at the leading edge of scientific advancement, the Board has made several recommendations for areas to which future tenure-track investigators should be recruited. In addition, the CAB has developed a one-page information sheet that outlines the benefits of working in the intramural program, including logistics and funding information for potential recruits. This important information can be included in mailings that advertise positions or used for more general purposes. The Board also suggested including current CCR and NIH scientists during interviews and recruitment visits to provide a better view of the range of scientific interactions possible at the NIH, beyond the members of the search committee.

The CAB was asked for its advice in maintaining and improving morale among CCR scientists as the NCI struggles with flat budgets, new ethics guidelines, and conflict-of-interest rules. Morale is improved significantly when investigators have access to information that will directly affect their careers and research programs. Although lab chiefs meet on a regular basis with CCR leadership, direct communication between the leadership and investigators is less frequent. The CAB strongly encouraged CCR leadership to establish a forum for interaction with investigators. This suggestion is being implemented in the form of lunch meetings with Drs. Wiltout and Helman and the CCR deputies. Small groups of investigators from different labs will meet an average of once per year for informal discussions. The Board hopes that this will provide investigators an opportunity to meet other scientists within the CCR and establish closer ties with the CCR leadership.

The CAB welcomes input from the CCR community. Please feel free to seek out or send an email to a CAB member to find out more about what the Board does and/or to suggest topics for the group's consideration. A list of current members of the Board can be found at <http://ccrintra.cancer.gov/CAB>.

Susan Gottesman, PhD

CCR Advisory Board Chair

Laboratory of Molecular Biology
