

Core Facility Directors/Managers/Administrators

## **Brown Bag Luncheon Meeting Notes**

December 3, 2013

Moderator: Phil Hockberger, Director of Core Facilities, Office for Research

**Welcome** – today we initiate a new forum for enhancing communication between campuses on topics related to core facilities: “Brown Bag Luncheon” meetings. These meetings will take place *quarterly* on both campuses, and they will provide an opportunity for open dialog about issues that matter to you. It will also provide a forum for communicating changes and special opportunities related to core facilities. Today’s meeting will have some of both.

At the Fall “Town Hall” meeting on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013, there was open discussion about issues affecting core facilities. Senior administrators attended that meeting and listened to your concerns. Subsequently, they met on several occasions to address these concerns. Today, I’m happy to report that those meetings resulted in a consensus on how to address many of them. I will present several new programs and opportunities that will be followed by a Q&A session.

- **Concern #1: Duplication of Annual Reports for FSM and OR**
  - Changes in instructions for the OR Annual Report can be found on our website - <https://facilities.research.northwestern.edu/management-cores>
  - *New submission deadline: May 1* (same for FSM); usage data will be for April 1 thru March 31; budget data same as previous years (projections for current FY)
  - *New Operating Support section* (see below)
  - FSM’s Annual Report format has been modified to bring it into alignment with OR’s; *if you choose, you may submit the FSM Report to OR starting May ‘14*
  
- **Concern #2: Lack of support for activities that cannot be included in the cost study**
  - *New OR operating support program*
  - requests will be made in the Annual Report for the following fiscal year
  - requests will be restricted to core facilities serving WCAS and McCormick researchers; FSM has its own operating support program (aimed at reducing user rates)
  - requests are not intended for deficit reduction, nor are they intended to alter the pricing of services established by an approved cost study. This differs from FSM operating costs requests that are intended to lower pricing and are included in the cost study.
  - requests are designed to encourage activities that enhance the research enterprise (e.g., new staff, grant writing, outreach, professional development, webpage development)
  - requests are capped at 10% of the operating costs of the facility
  - requests must not duplicate support already being provided by OR
  - requests must provide a rationale for each activity and explain why higher user fees would not be appropriate for paying for the activity
  - requests for renovation of space or educational initiatives should be directed to the relevant school administrator
  
- **Concern #3: Need for IT support**
  - *New IT support program on Evanston campus*; FSM has program for Chicago campus
  - Two Work Study Students will start January ‘14
    - Winter ‘14: will begin training by IT staff in WCAS; survey needs of core facilities; inventory computers; develop to-do list
    - Spring ‘14: will begin working in core facilities following to-do list
    - Summer ‘14: may be available for more complex tasks

- **Concern #4: Need for Professional Development**
  - *New Financial Planning Workshops*: Jan. 7 (Evanston), Jan. 10 (Chicago) – led by Aaron Rosen and Jennifer Wei – will cover best practices (pricing, sustainable rates, how to apply subsidies), managing different accounts (160, 171, 172 etc), compliance issues/audit findings, NUcore tips and tricks
  - *New travel support for attending regional and national meetings*: MWACD, ABRF, etc. (Note: many such meetings have Travel Awards available that should be considered before asking for OR support)
  - Kellogg Certificate Courses:
    - *Business for Scientists & Engineers* - June '14 – on-going; 13 directors and managers of core facilities have taken this course, and their feedback indicates that it was well-worth the time and cost
    - *New Kellogg Certificate Course: Business Skills for Core Facility Directors & Managers* – Dec. '14 – under development; designed specifically for directors and managers of core facilities; no prerequisite course required
    - *New HR Benefit*: This fiscal year there is a new tuition benefit available to all NU employees wanting to enroll in certificate courses at NU (Kellogg or otherwise). The benefit is \$2,500 per calendar year (approx.. half the cost of tuition for the above Kellogg courses). You may request additional support (up to \$1,500) from OR through the operating support program. The remaining cost will be the responsibility of the employee.
  
- **Update: Business Continuity Planning** – this plan is a sequel to the University's *Emergency Response Framework* that includes guidelines for managing threats, incidents, disasters and associated events - <http://www.northwestern.edu/up/docs/EmergencyResponseFrameworkBasePlan.pdf> ). The Business Continuity Plan begins after people and facilities have been stabilized and business is ready to resume. It is focused on what needs to be done to get your core facility back in service. Please begin working with your department, school and/or center to develop a Business Continuity Plan in the coming year aimed and having one in place by Fall '14. There are templates available through your home department or school. The goal is to have a set of procedures in place that anticipate what you will have to do without being told (in case all electronic communication is lost). A year from now, OR will collect these Plans to incorporate them into the University master plan. If you don't have a home department or center, please let me know, so we can work together to get you the help you need to complete your Plan.

### Q&A session

#### **1. May a core request operating support from OR if they are also requesting operating support from FSM?**

**Phil:** Yes. Receiving operating support from OR isn't contingent on whether or not a core receives operating support from FSM. The FSM and OR programs are complementary. FSM's support is intended to lower the price of services, whereas OR's support is intended to encourage activities that are not appropriate to fund through recharge (160) accounts (this program will have the added benefit of enticing cores to better understand what are appropriate costs on recharge accounts). OR will *not* provide operating support to a core that is already receiving OR support due to a previous commitment. OR has been supporting operating costs for a number of years on a strategic basis (e.g., new cores), but OR is now shifting this type of support to existing cores.

#### **2. The OR website shows the deadline for next year's Annual Report as May 1-; is that correct?**

**Phil:** Yes. The Annual Report deadline for both OR and FSM is now May 1<sup>st</sup>, starting this coming year. The usage data will be for April 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>. The budget data will be the same as previous years.

**Jeffrey Weiss:** The Annual User Survey will come out early in January this year using a new software tool (Qualtrix) and a new scoring system (Likert scale). The latter is intended to spread out the scoring better. Questions won't change.

**3. If a core facility needs operating support this fiscal year for grant writing, is there a way to request such support?**

**Phil:** Yes. Although the formal program will not begin until next fiscal year, I'm willing to consider special grant opportunities that involve core facilities, e.g., P30 or center grants. If you think your facility would be able to put a strong proposal together to support your core in some direct way, contact me.

**4. Will you provide an update on the Open Access Initiative?**

**Phil:** Yes. NU signed the MOU in January 2013; UIC signed it in April 2013. This is an opt-in program by individual cores. If you choose to accept customers from UIC, then you must charge them the same rate as NU customers (i.e., no F&A). You may choose to not take customers for UIC and therefore opt-out of the program. U of Chicago has not yet signed the MOU. Katie Stallcup (Executive Director, CBC) and Shohei Koide (CBC Scientific Director, UofC) are meeting with the UofC Provost on December 19<sup>th</sup>. I'm hoping the Provost will sign the MOU then. If he does, then I will make an announcement through the COREFACILITIES listserv.

**5. What rate should we charge our affiliated institutions (e.g., NMH, Lurie Children's Hospital, Rehab. Institute)?**

**Jeff:** FSM has a policy in place that any researcher from an affiliated institution gets the same rate as other FSM researchers (same base rate and no F&A charge).

**Phil:** OR has no policy on this and recommends following the FSM policy. Non-affiliated academic institutions should be charged the base rate plus F&A. If you aren't charging them the F&A rate, then you are subsidizing them. Please check with your home department, school or center to get their input before deciding how to proceed.

**6. Are there any plans to expand the MOU to include other local universities (e.g., Loyola, Rush)?**

**Phil:** No. Part of the reason that we partnered with UIC and UofC is that they are peer institutions (based upon the size of their research portfolios) AND because we were already using each others' facilities. There is a formal inter-institutional core advisory committee that oversees the Open Access Initiative (<https://www.facilities.research.northwestern.edu/committees>), and they are tracking its activity and value to each institution. Expanding the initiative in the next year would only confuse the issue whether the current program is working effectively. Once we get the current program operating effectively, then the committee will consider the possibility of expansion.

**Andy Ott:** One of the reasons I think it is a good idea is from a grant competitiveness standpoint. If you have the student body of the other schools included in your user base, you dramatically

increase the level of support for under-represented groups, and so you can help people get their instruments funded.

**Phil:** That is something we could do separately from the Open Access Initiative, on a case-by-case basis. If you are considering developing a program specifically targeting another school and grant mechanism, then we should discuss this after this meeting.

**7. Will OR send out reminders of the OR Equipment Proposal deadlines?**

**Phil:** Yes, but the deadlines are the same as previous years: October 15<sup>th</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup>. There is no plan to change them or how that program is operated.

**8. Has the problem of moving animals between institutions been resolved? Currently animals sent from one university facility to another must be quarantined for several days even if there is no intention of putting them behind the barrier. This has created an obstacle for some cores, e.g., Behavioral Phenotyping Core.**

**Jeff:** Any animal that arrives at NU (other than those from commercial breeders and certain NIH facilities) must undergo quarantine or re-derivation. This is standard practice. The length of time may range from 4-8 weeks, long enough for a round of sentinel animals to be tested.

**9. Will it be possible to get IT support before Spring '14 for webpage development?**

**Phil:** At least initially, the new IT support program is not intended to help with webpage development. My assistant Leah Seiffert will help those who are using the WordPress template developed by NUAMPS specifically for core facilities. If you are using a different software program to manage your website, then you must bear the cost of supporting that system.

**10. How is the Wordpress website being backed up?**

**Phil:** Websites using the WordPress template are backed up nightly by NUAMPS' server. NUAMPS is in the process of moving to a new hosting platform, and there will be some loss of function during the migration. OR will bear the cost of this migration and associated upgrades, and we will work with cores during this process to ensure that any loss of function has been resolved. NUAMPS will continue to back-up those sites.

**11. What is the source of the core facility data in NU Scholars?**

**Phil:** As of January 2013, NU Scholars is getting the .xml feed from our new website. Prior to January, the .xml feed was coming from our old website. The old website contained information that each core facility put in (e.g., personnel, equipment, services). When we created the new website, we exported all of that information into the new website and asked all core facilities to check the content for accuracy. Since January, information in the new website is now uploaded regularly to both NU Scholars and the Vermont Genetics Networks (national database of core facilities). We are one of the few Universities within the US that has a standard xml feed. [**Note:**

**PLEASE keep your resources up to date on our website:**

**<https://www.facilities.research.northwestern.edu/>** Editing resources on your page is easy to do. If you have questions, please contact Leah Seiffert ([l-seiffert@northwestern.edu](mailto:l-seiffert@northwestern.edu) ). The website is currently undergoing an upgrade (v. 2), and should be finished by the end of December.