

North Carolina Policy Collaboratory Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes November 11, 2021 Via Zoom

Advisory Board members on the video conference: Al Segars (chair), Anita Brown-Graham, Jaye Cable, Greg Characklis, Don Hobart, Mark Little, Rick Luettich, and Mike Piehler.

Collaboratory staff and students in attendance: Jeff Warren, Laurie Farrar, Steve Wall, Gabbi Schust, Rebecca Rice, Irene Manning, Janis Arrojado, Lucy Gray, Sascha Medina, and Taylor Fitzgerald.

Al Segars began the meeting at 3:00. Segars began the meeting by noting the UNC Conflict of Interest policy which the Collaboratory adheres to. Segars encouraged members of the Board to participate in projects and noted that the Chair is the only member ineligible to receive funding for research projects.

Segars asked for and received approval of the July 2021 meeting minutes.

Project Reports

PFAS Removal Technology

UNC Chemistry Professor Frank Leibfarth presented to the Board about his work on the development of PFAS removal technology. He introduced his graduate student Irene Manning and recognized her valuable work on this project. Leibfarth also referenced that the research he was presenting on was done in partnership with UNC professor Orlando Coronell's lab.

Leibfarth described the development of the resin gel. The resin mimics PFAS by including fluorine in its structure, as well as charged ions to capture PFAS molecules, which pulls them out of water. He discussed testing a number of different kinds of PFAS with the resin and the successful results of these tests. He concluded by outlining the next steps for the project and the opportunity to scale up this work from the lab.

Jeff Warren noted the importance of this project and the interest in it from legislators. Warren also noted the recent awards received by Leibfarth for the development of this resin. Segars inquired about the challenges of scaling up the project. Don Hobart asked about how the resin could be deployed. Leibfarth responded that the gel could be used at the household level and at the level of water treatment plants.

CORVASEQ

Rebecca Rice provided an update on the Coronavirus Variant Sequencing (CORVASEQ) project. She described the partnership aspect of the project with the NC Department of Health and Human Services. Rice also outlined the project leadership team at UNC and noted that more than 6000 sequences have taken place since the start of the project.

Rick Luettich asked about the implications of the project. Rice responded that surveillance was the focus of the project and making this information accessible to health agencies. Segars stated that this partnership with NC DHHS was a new frontier for the Collaboratory. Hobart suggested other opportunities for research partnerships with the CDC.

COVID-19 Publications

Gabbi Schust provided the Board with an update on the academic publications resulting from the COVID-19 Collaboratory research portfolio. Schust discussed her review process and noted that a large number of the publications were from the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. She highlighted the publication of articles in prestigious journals.

Segars commented that these results indicate the high level of science conducted with Collaboratory support.

Director's Report

Warren began his report by discussing staffing changes. He congratulated Laurie Farrar in her new role as Financial Analyst for the Collaboratory. Warren discussed the upcoming postings of the Research Director position and Communications Specialist.

Warren stated that conversations were underway related to UNC paying for some portion of the Collaboratory operations expenses to allow more funds for research. He discussed the potential for the Collaboratory to have additional space in the Genome Sciences Building.

Warren stated that over the last five years the Collaboratory has received over \$62 million from the legislature and supported 300 projects. These projects have been on sixteen of the seventeen campuses.

Warren detailed new projects likely to be in the 2021 budget bill. He estimated more than \$70 million would be appropriated to the Collaboratory, including projects related to COVID-19, PFAS, fisheries studies and research capacity grants.

Warren also noted that the Collaboratory would be made permanent in statute and have its scope expanded.

Financial Report

Laurie Farrar provided an overview of the current state of Collaboratory accounts, including the Research Reserve account.

Board Discussion

Luetlich asked about the development of a project repository. Warren responded about the need for a data management plan. Anita Brown-Graham gave an overview of her presentation to an NCGA committee.

Segars adjourned the meeting at 4:35.