CVMBS Funding Diversification
Summary and Proposed Actions Team F-2
February 27, 2015

Introduction:
Many CVMBS centers, laboratories, and programs have diminishing available capital for existing research activities. In addition, there has been a reduction in “new starts” – fewer proposals are awarded funding in spite of increased numbers of submissions to funding agencies. This is not novel to CSU – but agriculture schools are particularly dependent on Federal funding sources (USDA, HHS), and competition is fierce. All research universities are experiencing cutbacks resulting from federal budget sequestration and the severe economic downturn of the last 6 years that has diminished state, local, commercial, philanthropic monies per common understanding and available statistics (AAAS Science Magazine, September 2013). In fact, there has been a gradual reduction in federal research funding on a percentage basis of the budget for decades just as academic research enterprises have expanded. Consequently economic recovery and restoration of pre-recession federal funding streams is unlikely to resolve financial stress. Intelligent approaches to diversified funding sources appear to be an appropriate response. (Issues in Technology, Fall 2013)

Data gathering efforts for this activity have included interviews with team members, discussions with peer institutions and agencies, and review of Team 1 data.

Team member interviews:
Phone interviews conducted with a sampling of eight Team F-2 members on a voluntary basis revealed thoughts on options for diversification. All interviewees recognized the seriousness of current funding issues. All demonstrated impressive skill sets and deep knowledge of the physical and intellectual assets of their respective departments. Everyone engaged in lively exchanges regarding options to expand technology, diversify applications, and funding access. Opinions varied, some individuals having had more historical experience expanding their funding bases than others. The participants were universally committed full-time to existing responsibilities and were in general agreement that they were unlikely to create new opportunities without additional support.

Recommended Strategies for funding bio-life sciences research:

- Leverage higher funding for human medical research via “One Health” or shared medical approaches
- Cross-disciplinary approaches stand out and are currently in favor
- Cross-institutional projects can result in a superior expertise and funding stability: larger or more celebrated institutions can protect against funding losses
- Monitor trends in financing and current events that can result in large quantities of federal funding
- Create relationships with federal agencies in order to become a go-to lab or institution
- Consider commercial partnerships to enhance application profiles
- Look beyond the usual DHHS and USDA, i.e., DOD, NIST, subcontracts
Challenges:

- Inadequate time to chase new starts (ideas, partners, money)
- Diverse, scattered sources of information about opportunities – “where to look?”
- Lack of support in preparing applications – including some aspects requiring expertise (e.g., Animal Care & Use)
- Entrepreneurial temperaments are not universal
- Decreased funding lines typical across agencies

Recommendations for consideration:

These are starting points for developing organizational/infrastructural support actions to achieve F-2 goals and are only provided to illustrate starting points for our discussions. The desired retreat outcome is to identify 5-10 action items and begin to prioritize these actions.

Faculty buy-in is essential for any new approaches to be effective!

- Should there be a new administrative position created to support grant and contract application efforts? What would this person(s) do and where would they be centered?
- Are internal pre-submission grant review processes adequate? Do applicants need more training, support or peer review to guarantee best possible submissions? How could this be accomplished?
- Are there ways to support, encourage, or incentivize increased proposal submissions? Is this desirable?
- Should we initiate a pilot program for a few individuals for concentrated support to try novel approaches to aggressively pursuit of new opportunities? Successful techniques could be identified before generalized adaptation.
- Funding agencies are encouraging increased collaborations. Can CVMBS provide opportunities or tools for collaboration among other colleges within CSU as well as outside organizations?
- Is it valuable to have opportunities triaged onto a shared database? What would the essential components of such a database be?
- Can programs/communication be developed that would help faculty become aware of changing disciplines and new opportunities? What does this look like and where is it centered?
- What success metrics does the team want to apply to our efforts?