



Centre for Research in
Reproduction and Development
Centre de recherche en
reproduction et développement

Annual General Meeting
RI-MUHC, Glen Site, room D-S1.1427
June 19, 2017 at 2:00 PM
MINUTES

Present: Daniel Bernard, Barbara Hales, Jacquetta Trasler, Jessica Head, Hugh Clarke, Greg FitzHarris, Makoto Nagano, Cristian O’Flaherty, Yojiro Yamanaka, Loydie Jerome-Majewska, Rose Ghemrawi, Janice Ou, Anne-Sophie Pepin, Gauthier Schang, Aaron Kwong, Deepak Tanwar, Charlotte McCaffrey

Regrets: Aimee Ryan, Sarah Kimmins, Rima Slim, Simon Wing, Bernard Robaire, Teruko Taketo

1. Welcome

Dan explained that we are having this meeting as mandated by the bylaws. He apologized for the late agenda. He further explained that, while the meeting would be mostly informational, there would be a few points of discussion.

2. Review of major CRRD activities in 2016-2017

Dan reminded the members that we had a limited budget last year because of the cuts to RQR and less carry-over from previous years, which limited our number of activities.

2.1 Funding activities

• Fellowships

We held two fellowship competitions – fall and spring. We awarded three trainees with \$5000 ea. in the fall and two trainees with \$10,000 ea. in the spring. When Makoto became Chair of the Awards Sub-Committee, he questioned whether we were awarding the types of students we want to support (i.e., those committed to the profession). As a result, we changed the format of the competition in the spring to a more elaborate process. Nine trainees applied and wrote an exam, which was reviewed by the awards sub-committee. The top four rated applicants were interviewed by Makoto, Dan, and Simon. The four trainees were interviewed on the same day and were asked the same

questions. Based on the written answers and interviews, two trainees were chosen unanimously as the winners.

Barbara asked what the exam tested them on and Dan explained that there were two sections, one on general knowledge of scientific approach and one on data interpretation. There was a choice of questions in each section and the trainees were asked to answer one question from each section.

Dan further reported that, in addition to increasing the amount of the award, only MSc students fast-tracking into the PhD program, PhD students, and Postdoctoral Fellows were eligible.

In response to Hugh's question, Dan confirmed that students receiving any other award of \$10,000 or more must return the balance of their CRRD Fellowship. This has happened twice in the last year, which is why we have extra rollover for the 2017-2018 budget.

Dan reported that the new process was quite revealing but the Exec will need to discuss whether to continue this method as the new RQR funding may put restrictions on how we award funds and to whom.

Greg and Jacquetta, who both had trainees apply but not receive a fellowship in the spring competition, expressed that they found it very transparent and fair, and the feedback excellent and very helpful. Makoto provided extensive written feedback to all applicants.

- **Travel Stipends**

Dan reminded the members that travel stipends used to be capped at \$250, but we now give up to \$500. He further explained that, in addition to travel to conferences, the stipends can now support the further development of students' careers through a workshop or course, as long as they can justify how the workshop/course will benefit their profession development. Examples of applicable workshops/courses are FIR and a bioinformatics workshop. We budgeted for 20 travel stipends and have awarded 19 so far this year (2016-2017). We still have a limit of 2 stipends/lab/year limit but this may increase with more funding availability.

2.2 Sponsored Lectures

This year we co-sponsored two lectures, paying a portion of the expenses for Stephen Hammes (with Pharmacology) and Sergey Moskvovtsev (with Sarah Kimmins). One of Dan's goals, with increased funding, is to sponsor more speakers, in full or in part, each year. The Exec will discuss the possibility of sponsoring up to 4 lectures per year.

2.3 Social activities

- **Trivia Night**

Dan reported that Gauthier and Aaron were instrumental in coordinating the Trivia Night held in March, which aimed at building comradery among members. There were four teams that answered questions in various categories and a good time was had by all.

- **Science Share and Social**

Dan thanked everyone who participated in the Science Share in April by giving 3+ minute presentations of their research. The resulting videos are now available online (<https://www.mcgill.ca/crrd/research/videos> and <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCskGb526D-CQrOOW1gG9IEA>). Charlotte is currently featuring a video each week on Facebook and Twitter.

Charlotte reported that the cost of recording/editing the videos was \$677, which all agreed was reasonable. Makoto suggested recording more videos next year.

2.4 Clothing Sales

We are still pushing the CRRD clothing! Charlotte is accepting orders through the weekend. It was suggested that it would be a good idea to add a little more information on the clothing so people can more readily discern what CRRD means. Loydie suggested including a barcode on the clothing that links to our website.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Charlotte will look into creating a QR code to add to the clothing before placing the new order.

2.5 New Members

Dan welcomed our newest members, Hope Weiler and Greg FitzHarris, to the CRRD and reported that Anna Naumova left the Centre, feeling that her research goals no longer fit those of the Centre. That said, she was very active, particularly in the review of fellowship competitions, and we thank her for her participation!

2.6 Executive Committee Election

Dan reported that, following the elections in April, Jacquetta and Loydie will be replacing Aimee and Rima on the executive starting July 1st. At this time, Cristian will also replace Sarah Kimmins as Associate Director. The process for choosing the associate director, past and future, was discussed further under 3.6 Proposed Amendments to Bylaws. Dan thanked

Aimee, Rima and Sarah, who are rotating off, for their active participation. Their service is greatly appreciated.

2.7 Trainee Rep

Dan thanked Aaron and Gauthier for their participation on the executive as co-trainee reps this past year. The process by which trainee reps are elected was further discussed under 3.6 Proposed Amendments to Bylaws.

2.8 Research Day 2017

Dan reported that it was a great day with about 140 participants, slightly down from last year, but some staple participants (Bernard, Barb, Sarah) were out of town and unable to attend. Liliana Attisano, Marisa Bartolomei, and Marjorie Dixon were the guest speakers. While there were some mixed responses to Dr. Dixon's talk, most people enjoyed it. As follow-up, we want her to support the Centre and Dan will be meeting with her in Toronto to discuss how, in the near future.

This was the first year we asked for external sponsors for Research Day and we received two – PeproTech and IDT – who both had booths. They were both very happy with the traffic they got and asked to be invited again next year.

We had only 6 trainee talks (because with 3 speakers we did not have time for more) but there were 42 posters and we gave 4 awards - 1 for best oral and three for best posters (MSc, PhD, PDF).

We received constructive feedback in the follow-up survey. The main complaint being that people would like a better balance of reproduction and development talks. Dan suggested that next year we could have 2 outside speakers and 9 trainee talks. We also discussed possibly changing how we solicit trainees to talk, in order to get a more balanced repertoire.

2.9 RQR Renewal

Dan reported that the successful RQR renewal was the big news this year. Derek Boerboom is the PI and he was the primary author of the application. The RQR is receiving twice the previous budget for 6 additional years. Part of the renewal process was the agreement that the leadership will rotate three times, but the administration will remain at UdeM. There are now three axes within the RQR and Yojiro is the leader of Axis 3. Dan pointed out that it is important that CRRD Faculty Members apply for regular membership to the RQR. Regular members must now fit in with one of the themes of the axes and inclusion is more restricted than it was under Bruce's leadership. While it will still be a large group, certain criteria must be met to fit in. This is important for Fellowships, as certain criteria must be met to be eligible for fellowships from the CRRD that are funded by the RQR. This was discussed further under 3.2 Proposed 2017-2018 Budget.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Charlotte will send information about RQR membership to CRRD PIs in case they have not received it.

3. Outlook for 2017-2018

3.1 Review 2016-2017 budget

Dan did not say too much about the 2016-2017 budget as it was already covered under 2. Review of major CRRD activities in 2015-2016. No one had any questions.

3.2 Proposed 2017-2018 budget

Dan reported that we can anticipate \$55K from McGill, up from \$41K. The \$35,000 from VP-RIR is a set amount because we are a partner in RQR (if a McGill investigator was PI, we would get \$65K). The other \$20K is from the Faculty of Medicine, up from \$6K, which is what they agreed to in the RQR application.

The last two years, we received \$45K from RQR and we will now receive \$72.5K but \$27.5K of this is restricted. Dan reported that there was a lively discussion between the universities about how to spend these restricted funds. Initially, they wanted to administer fellowship competitions centrally (as was done in the past), but they finally agreed that each Centre would hold its own competition, deciding who to award and how much, but the money will come from RQR directly and they will have the final say. It was further decided that eligible applicants must be new trainees who are co-supervised, on a new collaboration, by two or more regular members of the RQR, preferably investigators from 2 universities.

Dan assured the membership that we will also have money for our own internal fellowship competitions but this particular \$27.5K will be controlled by the RQR. They still need to figure out how the competitions will be administered and whether we will have two separate competitions or just one per year.

Hugh pointed out that it will be important to figure out when to hold the competition to capture people in their first year, in order to meet the eligibility criteria. Dan agreed there are some logistical problems to be sorted out, but explained that some of the other institutions were concerned that McGill would get all the money if the competition was run centrally by the RQR.

Makoto asked how many trainees we currently have and Charlotte reported that we have 73 grad students and 23 postdocs in CRRD. Our internal fellowships will still be open to any member of the CRRD.

Greg voiced concern about the restrictions on new collaborations, saying they tried something like this at UdeM that didn't really work. He pointed out that new collaborations work best when there's a need but here we're creating an artificial need. Dan agreed that it seems unnatural and expects that we'll see how it works (and doesn't) over the first year and then make changes as needed. He pointed out that Derek is thinking about the renewal, even though it's six years away, as one of the previous critiques of the network is that there weren't enough new collaborations, which was something we promised in our initial application.

There was some concern that additional money is needed to support new collaborations, beyond the amount the trainee will receive from the competition. Dan reported that there will be additional money given to the Axis leaders and new collaborators will be encouraged to solicit funding for their projects from this pool of money. Dan doesn't think there is anything restricting those funds, as long as the project falls under one of the themes of the Axis.

Going back to the CRRD budget as a whole, Dan pointed out that the Exec is ultimately in charge of deciding how to spend the money in the best interest of all members but he asked for suggestions from the membership.

One idea includes reinstating the Seed Grants (\$10K each) but Dan's not sure we want to give 8% of our budget to one lab. Perhaps there could be seed grants for collaborations only.

ACTION ITEMS

1. The Executive will solidify the 2017-18 budget at their next meeting in July or August.

3.3 Clermont Lectureship

Dan reported that our fundraising efforts for an endowment fund in Clermont's name was nowhere close to the \$50K needed. We've raised just over \$7K and the University Advancement Office is instructing us to start spending this money to show donors that we're doing something with their contributions. We will therefore hold an inaugural lecture on October 4th at the Faculty Club with Bernard Robaire speaking. The lecture will be attached to further fundraising and we hope to raise enough to have at least 3-4 Clermont Lectures, as it seems unlikely we will raise enough for an ongoing endowed lectureship.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Charlotte will work with Sarah and Bernard to contact donors with information about the lecture in October, identify other invitees, and advertise.

3.4 Workshops/seminars

Dan reported that we did not host any workshops this past year and it may be time to do spermatogenesis again. We are open to ideas for other workshops as well. They will be done in conjunction with the RQR, so we will get funding support from them.

Dan would like to see more invited speakers and would like suggestions from the membership. He wants to budget \$2K/speaker with 2 in the fall and 2 in the spring. He thinks this would help increase visibility, with the speakers meeting new people, talking about the Centre, and possibly inviting us back to their institutions.

3.5 Research Day 2018

Dan reported that Research Day 2018 will be on or around May 15th, after his return from FIR. He recommended decreasing the outside speakers – to 1 repro and 1 development talk – and increasing the trainee talks to 9 (from 6) oral presentations.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Charlotte will book the NRH and solicit speaker suggestions shortly, including the list of past speakers.

3.6 Proposed Amendments to Bylaws

Dan explained that, as stated in the current bylaws, if we want to change the bylaws in any way, the Executive is required to make recommendations at the AGM, where they can be discussed, with specific items going to the Faculty for an electronic vote at a later date. A 2/3 majority is required for the proposals to pass. Due to some inconsistencies/problems found in the bylaws, the Executive made four proposals to be discussed.

- **Proposal 1:** “The External Member position will be determined by the Executive Committee.”

Dan pointed out that the external member - someone who is not a member of the Centre - is a requirement of McGill. The current bylaws state that the External Member will be nominated and elected following the same process as other Executive Members. The Exec proposes removing the voting process for the external member and instead having him/her determined by the Exec, due to the difficulty in nominating and voting for someone external.

Greg asked, if the point of the external member is to make sure we aren't doing anything untoward, whether the Exec should be choosing as it creates a potential COI. While he recognizes the difficulty in electing the person, he wonders if it's in the spirit of the requirement to have the Exec choose.

Barbara asked whether the external member should not be external to McGill, perhaps someone from a fertility clinic, while acknowledging that it could be difficult to find someone to participate actively.

Someone (?) suggested asking the Dean or Vice Dean to nominate someone.

Dan concluded that this proposal needs to go back to the Exec for further discussion based on feedback received at the AGM.

- **Proposal 2:** “The Director and Elected Members will be elected by majority vote of Faculty members by electronic polling. Nominees for Director must have previous experience on the Executive. The Associate Director will be named, by the Executive, from the Elected Members.”

Dan explained that this is where there are some inconsistencies in the current bylaws. In one case, they state that the Faculty will vote on the Director, in another case they state that the Exec will decide, and elsewhere they state that the Associate Director will assume the role of Director. The Exec proposes having the Director and the Members elected. Then, once the Exec is formed, they will decide internally who will be the Associate Director and there will be no automatic ascension to directorship. However, anyone nominated for Director must have previous experience on the Executive.

There were no comments or questions in relation to this proposal.

- **Proposal 3:** “Elections will be held only if there are at least two Faculty members willing to run, otherwise the current Member will remain until two or more Faculty members are willing to be nominated.”

Dan explained that there is currently nothing in the bylaws addressing what to do when there is only one (or no) nominee. This proposal would do away with elections by acclamation and would require the executive to keep calling for nominations until we have enough nominees to have a proper vote.

Loydie voiced concern, as we want a flourishing committee with renewal and new ideas, not the same Exec for all eternity. Dan agreed and said we need to actively encourage people to rotate through; he has been involved since 2011 and, so far, there's been

good turnover. Hopefully we can keep that up! We need to convince people that the CRRD Exec is a good place to spend their time/energy. Increased funding may help.

Someone (?) pointed out that eventually everyone will be qualified for the position of Director!

- **Proposal 4:** “The Trainee Representative will be elected for a 1-year term, renewable up to 3 years, by CRRD trainees by electronic polling. Calls for nominations and voting will occur in the months of June and July.”

Dan explained that the current bylaws have the trainee elections following the same timeline as that of other members but that this is not what we have been doing, so the bylaws need to be modified to reflect what we actually do!

Gauthier is interested in serving again, but Aaron is finishing his MSc and moving on.

[Note: after the meeting, Aaron and Gauthier strongly recommended we amend for co-trainee reps as this allowed them to each focus on one sub-committee (Awards and Finance) and their own interests (Spotlight Videos and Mentorship Program).]

ACTION ITEMS

1. Charlotte will take proposal 1 back to the Exec to come up with a process for determining the External Member that is at a greater arms' length from the Exec.
2. Once the proposals are solidified by the Exec, Charlotte will hold an electronic vote for Faculty Members.
3. Charlotte will solicit nominations for trainee rep shortly and hold the election in July, with the new trainee rep(s) taking over in August.

4. New business/Other

4.1 Hot Topics

Dan thanked Hugh for his organization of Hot Topics this past year and Hugh volunteered to continue booking the rooms and scheduling with Charlotte, who will notify participants of the meeting dates and host labs.

4.2 Upcoming Seminar

Dan advertised Keith Siklenka's seminar on Monday at noon. While most people have heard him speak before, this might be a good time to say good-bye and wish him luck as he starts his postdoctoral position, likely in the fall.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:05pm.

Minutes submitted by Charlotte McCaffrey June 23, 2017.