



Queen's Cancer Research Institute
Faculty of Health Sciences
Report of the Advisory Review Committee
July 25, 2011

The Queen's Cancer Research Institute (QCRI) was established within the Faculty of Health Sciences in 2001 for an initial period of five years following approval by Senate and ratification by the Board of Trustees. A review of the QCRI was conducted in 2005/06 which resulted in its renewal for a further five-year period from 2006 to 2011. In accordance with the Senate Policy on the "Procedures Governing the Establishment, Reporting and Review of Research Centres, Institutes and Other Entities at Queen's University" as last revised in June 2010, a Review Committee was appointed to provide advice on the viability of the Institute and to recommend whether it should be authorized for a further period of up to five years or be phased out of existence. The Committee is also tasked to review the organizational structure of the Institute, to assess its accomplishments, to make recommendations that will strengthen its operations, and to make a recommendation concerning the renewal of the Director.

The membership of the Committee included:

- John Bell Senior Scientist, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute
- James J. Biagi Assistant Professor and Acting Head, Oncology
- Bruce J. Hutchinson (chair) former Associate Vice-Principal (Research)
- Susan M. Marlin Associate Vice-Principal (Research)
- Graeme N. Smith Professor, Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- Victor A. Tron Professor and Head, Pathology and Molecular Medicine

Administrative support was provided by Gail Knutson, Senior Staffing Officer in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Documents provided to the Committee by Roger Deeley, Director of the QCRI, included the Institute's constitution, annual reports and meeting notes, a summary of the highlights from the past five years, data on research funding and publications, an overview of the Institute's academic contributions and research plans, and a summary of the status of the Transdisciplinary Training Program in Cancer Research. The Committee also requested that Dr. Deeley provide a five-year budget for the Institute, a plan describing the goals and objectives for the Institute as a whole over the next five years, and a copy of his *curriculum vitae*.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The QCRI houses three strong divisions, each with their own unique research programs – Cancer Biology and Genetics, Cancer Care and Epidemiology, and Cancer Clinical Trials. Having three strong independent Divisions, each of which has its own governance and research planning structures, is a great strength but presents a challenge in developing a strategic vision and governance structure for the QCRI as a whole. The current Advisory Board, including membership from outside Queen's University, has not met for several years. It is recognized the Constitution, which was approved when the QCRI was initially established in 2001, requires revision. An amended Constitution has recently been drafted to include an Institute Advisory Board consisting of the Director and the Division Heads, the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences (or delegate), the Vice-Principal Research for Queen's (or delegate), the Assistant Dean for Operations and Finance for the Faculty of Health Sciences, one trainee who could be a graduate student, postdoctoral MD or PhD fellow, and two members who are external to Queen's. There is also an issue that needs to be resolved with regard to a specific governance structure between the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute and the Clinical Trials Group. The Management Committee will continue to consist of the three Division Heads plus one additional member from each of the Divisions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE QCRI

There is no doubt that the existence of the QCRI has increased the visibility of cancer research at Queen's. The facility itself is not only a great physical environment in which to expand and develop further collaborations with the Clinical Trials Group, it has provided dedicated research space to attract students and researchers; in fact, the recruitment of a number of highly skilled faculty to Queen's would not have been successful without the existence of the Institute and the facility. The physical proximity of the three units has produced a link that has made it possible for a very successful integrated approach to postgraduate education programs that involves clinicians, basic scientists, statisticians, and others.

Over the past five years, a significant number of the QCRI members have received national recognition for their contributions to research. These include Level 1 and Level 2 Cancer Care Ontario Chairs, Tier 1 and 2 Canada Research Chairs, a Kingston General Hospital Research Chair, New Investigator Awards from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, a variety of endowed chairs, and many other awards and acknowledgements for outstanding accomplishments.

The QCRI has two training programs– the Transdisciplinary Training Program in Cancer Research and the Collaborative Graduate Program in Cancer Research. The former has recently been successful in renewing its funding with support from the Terry Fox Foundation in partnership with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. The latter is a relatively new graduate program, approved by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies, that involves seven participating departments. These cross-disciplinary graduate training programs are a major achievement and benefit derived from the existence of QCRI.

ADEQUACY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The lack of infrastructure funding for the QCRI continues to be of concern. Each of the three Divisions generate their own funding from which each contributes to the administrative operation of the Institute. In addition, each of the Divisions are taxed to support the maintenance and repair of the building's security system as well as some other maintenance costs. A small number of departments, in particular the Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine, have provided some degree of financial assistance to the QCRI, but this is not a long-term solution. Withdrawal of some significant infrastructure/administrative funding from Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) was a great disappointment. This was due to a province-wide change in CCO policy to discontinue funding for fundamental cancer research. This left QCRI without a source for 'seed' funding, administrative support, and emergency funds that are critical to maintaining a vibrant and interactive research program. Despite this, the QCRI used a combination of innovative financing and 'good will' to thrive and build. While the Advisory Review Committee acknowledges the excellent progress that the QCRI has made, there is a strong sense of unrealized potential. The Institute could be an even greater asset to Queen's University and achieve a stronger international profile if it received support similar to that which comparable groups across the country have access.

ADEQUACY OF HUMAN RESOURCES

With regard to funding for administrative support, the QCRI receives funding from the School of Medicine to support a 0.5 FTE administrative assistant and a small stipend for the Director.

LEADERSHIP OF THE QCRI

When the QCRI was initially established, it was expected that a full-time Director would be hired. Due to budgetary reasons, this did not occur. Initially, Dr. Joseph Pater was appointed as Acting Interim Director between 2001 to 2003. Subsequently, Dr. Deeley was appointed as Director and has continued in this role since that time. Based on the submitted documentation and the interaction with Dr. Deeley, committee members were of the collective opinion that he has provided outstanding leadership during his role as Director. However, given that he is also the Vice-Dean of Research for the Faculty of Health Sciences and Vice-Principal of Health Sciences Research at Kingston General Hospital, there are times when the demands on his time have not left enough time to do all that he would like to have done. Furthermore, Dr. Deeley was first appointed to this role in August 2003 and the revised Senate policy specifies that the Director is eligible to hold the position for a maximum period of ten years. While Dr. Deeley has indicated that he is willing to continue in this role until a new Director is identified, he would prefer to have his successor named sooner rather than later.

Without an injection of resources, the only option appears to be for the Heads of the Divisions to fill the role of Director on a rotating basis. However, the Director's job would become very challenging if the three units were not each so well organized within themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Authorization (Renewal) of the Centre

The QCRI is considered to be a tremendous asset to the University and the Advisory Review Committee recommends unanimously that it be authorized for renewal for a further five-year period.

Organizational Structure

The Advisory Review Committee endorses the proposed changes to the Constitution and suggests that it be implemented concurrent with the recommended renewal of the Institute. It is suggested that the function of the Advisory Board be to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration and potential fundraising. The Board should also advise the QCRI on ways in which it can be better marketed so as to attract funds for building teaching programs and establishing fellowship programs.

Financial Resources

The Advisory Review Committee strongly recommends that the University give serious consideration to committing central resources to supporting the initiatives of the QCRI. It is recommended that the next leader of the QCRI be provided with a full-time administrative assistant and a minimum of 0.2 FTE for academic leadership. Flexible funding in the amount of up to \$200,000 per year for support of interdisciplinary research initiatives would bring the activity of the Institute to a new level. It is recommended that the small costs associated with the building, such as security and PA systems, be assigned to the regular building maintenance program rather than to the QCRI.

Leadership

It is recommended that a search for Dr. Deeley's successor commence immediately and that Dr. Deeley be reappointed as Director of the Queen's Cancer Research Institute until such time as the new Director is in place or until June 30, 2013, whichever should come first. Although the Committee is supportive of the concept of rotating the leadership amongst the Heads of the Divisions, in order to identify the best candidate for this position, it recommends that the search not be limited only to the current Heads of the Divisions.



Submitted by
Bruce J. Hutchinson
Chair, Advisory Review Committee
Queen's Cancer Research Institute