Centre for Gene Research

26 February 2004

Notes from the Committee Meeting

Present: Jo-Ann Stanton, James Kalmakoff, Andy Mercer, Clive Ronson, Chris Brown, Kevin Farnden, Paul Hessian, Craig Marshall

Apologies: Anthony Reeve

In attendance: David Jones

1. The CEQ8000 – David Jones gave a brief update of the discussions with Linda Holloway and Ian Smith. The decision to move the sequencer to Christchurch has been made. Below is a copy of the letter from the Ian Smith giving the details.

A discussion followed as to what course of action should we take regarding providing a sequencing service at Otago. There seem to be 3 possibilities considered:

1. Stop now — Thi would solve the staffing problems and users would have to make arrangements to have sequencing done elsewhere.

2. Carry on regardless with the ABI377 and attempt to find replacement parts as required – a rebuilt argon laser, etc

3. Continue providing a sequencing service with the view to upgrading to a small capacity capillary sequencer.

There was a general feeling that not having an in-house DNA sequencing facility would not be a 'good look' for the research profile of the University both from a prestige point of view and from a convenience factor for the users. The Committee was asked to mull over the situation with option 3 being the likely one. JK to provide information on the cost of new equipment and prices that other centres were charging, etc. (These are given below)

2. Staffing changes— This item was put 'on hold' until some decision on the future of sequencing was made. It may be possible to employ Tracee on a further fixed term basis -- although from speaking to Grant Hay (HR) after the Meeting he did not think this was an option from the AUS point of view.

3. Poster Night-- ".The Museum Foyer is booked for June 24th and the Research Themes have made commitments to supporting the event and offering poster prizes. If we fail to obtain corporate sponsorship from Beckman or anyone else, the CGR may have to meet a potential shortfall of $2,000.

Possible Speakers:

1) David Wells, AgResearch: Stem Cells and Cloning

2) David Saul, Auckland: microbial biodiversity in extreme environments - from the desiccated, sub-zero Dry Valleys of Antarctica to geothermal and hydrothermal vents

3) Brigit Schrage, Auckland: use of superantigens to improve vaccine responses

4) Lance Jennings, ChCh Clinical School: SARS and influenza

David Jones was to explore whether this event could be part of the International Science Festival. (Subsequently it was noted that the Festival will be held July 2nd – July 11th)

Information regarding Item 1

Cost of ABI Capillary Sequencers

ABI3100 4 capillaries	$240,000	-- can do about 4 runs a day
ABI3100 16 capillaries	$370,000	-- can do about 4 runs a day
ABI3750 48 capillaries	$700,000	
ABI3750 96 capillaries	>$1M	

(The ABI3100 with 16 capillaries would be the choice)

Sequencing Prices

- Allan Wilson Centre $18.00 per sequence -- $10.00 run only
- Waikato $24.00 for 20 or more reactions
- CGR $30.00 per sequence -- $12.00 run only

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Below is a copy of the letter to AVC Professor Linda Holloway from Ian Smith

UNIVERSITY of OTAGO

Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo

25 February 2004

Professor Linda Holloway
Assistant Vice-Chancellor
Division of Health Sciences

Dear Linda,

Re: Beckman Coulter CEQ8OOO DNA Sequencer

As you are aware, the Equipment Advisory Committee met yesterday and discussed, amongst other things, the Beckrnan Coulter CEQ8000 DNA Sequencer which was funded in 2002 for the Centre for Gene Research.

I advised the Committee that I had discussed this matter with Professor David Jones who told me that he had instigated a survey of users of the Centre for Gene Research. Of the approximately 50 research user groups, 40% had indicated that they would send their work outside the University in the event of breakdown of the ABI377. I discussed with Professor Jones information on the Centre' s web site which stated, amongst other things, that "the only change required to sample preparation is to resuspend your DNA in water". In response to Professor Jones' observation that the ABI377 technology tolerated a degree of latitude in sample preparation that the CEQ8000 did not tolerate, I had said that if the CEQ8000 were moved to Christchurch it would only be used by two groups. Technique precision would therefore be unlikely to prove an issue in view of the expertise of the Christchurch users. Professor Jones agreed with my view that the best solution was that the equipment be moved to Christchurch. Although Professor Green was in attendance at yesterday's meeting at your request, he had nothing to say about the fate of the equipment, noting that he had chosen to cease his involvement as soon as he had received a copy of information from the Centre's web site.

In addition to talking to Professor Jones about this equipment, I talked to members of the Christchurch group last week. They are genuinely

enthusiastic about the possibility of receiving the CEQ8000 and say that it will increase their research outputs including in clinically-related research.

In view of the above and earlier discussions and correspondence about which you have been kept fully informed, the Committee has agreed that the Beckrnan Coulter CEQ8000 be moved to Christchurch so that at least part of the University' s investment is realised.

I therefore request that you facilitate the move of this equipment to the Christchurch School of Medicine & Health Sciences at the earliest possible opportunity, plus the transfer of the asset from the Otago School of Medical Sciences to the Christchurch School of Medicine & Health Sciences.

In addition to deciding the fate of the CEQ8000, the Committee discussed whether a contingency plan could be put in place for eventual breakdown of the currently used ABI377 DNA Sequencer. In light of the current usage of the ABI377 it is likely that a four lane sequencer (as opposed to the CEQ's eight lane capacity) would suffice were it decided to purchase a new sequencer. The Committee also noted that at current prices it is possible that the cost of such a sequencer would be less than the lower limit that the Committee is able to fund. Finally, Professor Green repeated his previous assertion that there is an over-capacity of sequencing in New Zealand.

In view of the above, the Committee recommended that, in the event of a breakdown, relevant members of the Division of Health Sciences carefully consider the requirements of all users including those requiring a sequencer for teaching purposes. This, along with a re-appraisal at that time of national sequencing capacity, would enable the Division to decide between the alternatives of purchasing an appropriately sized replacement sequencer or of sending work to outside laboratories.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ian O Smith
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Research, Enterprise and International