

**MINUTES OF THE
MARYLAND STEM CELL RESEARCH COMMISSION**
Friday, June 28, 2024
Virtual Meeting

Members:

Diane Hoffmann, Chair
Scott Bailey, Co- Vice Chair
Rachel Brewster, Vice Chair
Mary Armanios
Margaret Conn Himelfarb
Mamta Gautam-Basak
Debra Mathews
Barbara Nsiah
Linda Powers
Avram Reisner
Ira Schwartz
Curt Van Tassell

Staff:

Ruchika Nijhara, MSCRF
Ben Antebi, MSCRF
Sabrina Spinner, MSCRF

The Commission meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the May 6, 2024 meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting minutes as submitted. The motion passed unanimously.

II. Report from the Executive Director

Dr. Ruchika Nijhara presented the Executive Director's Report, which focused on the following:

A. FY24 Program Metrics

Dr. Nijhara presented metrics of FY24 MSCRF Grant Awards, highlighting MSCRF awarded funds by awardee, award program, DEI aggregate data, and disease classifications. In addition, Dr. Nijhara provided a brief recap of executed action items/initiatives during FY24.

B. MSCRF Hosted Events

The Maryland Spring Stem Cell Symposium and Workshop was hosted in partnership with the University of Maryland System and Johns Hopkins University. This event was held on May 17, 2024, at the Frankel Lecture Hall located at UMB. The Symposium featured a keynote lecture, many speakers, investment/shark-tank panels, workshops, a poster session, and networking opportunities. The event not only showcased MSCRF funded research, but fostered collaborations between academia, life science professionals, clinicians, and biotech companies, to advance groundbreaking research, and technologies to market.

The 2024 MSCRF Felicitation Ceremony was held June 12, 2024 to honor and highlight the new awardees for FY24. The event featured brief presentations of each funded project and fostered networking opportunities amongst each other and within the community.

Additionally, Dr. Nijhara attended the **2024 BIO International Convention** held June 3-6, 2024, in San Diego, California, on behalf of the Fund and the Commission. She was also an invited panelist at the Association of University Research Park (AURP) conference held in June, where she presented on the Fund and its impact on the advancing stem cell field and on the state of Maryland, bringing visibility to the Fund nationally.

C. Summer Student Internships

MSCRF recently recruited 2 summer interns (effective June 2024 – August 2024) to assist with scientific communications, marketing/outreach projects, and metrics/data analytics. The marketing intern is a senior scholar at Urbana High School, located in MD, and the intern assisting with metrics is a recruit from the Maryland Technology Internship Program (MTIP), studying at UMBC.

D. FY 2025 RFAs (1st Funding Cycle)

The Requests for Applications (RFAs) for 5 funding programs were released (Launch, Commercialization, Manufacturing Assistance, Clinical, and Validation). The application deadline is July 9, 2024. This funding cycle will debut the new MSCRF online application system for both applicants and Scientific Reviewers. The Scientific Review Committee will review the applications in August 2024 and the Commission Review meeting will be held in September 2024.

III. Statement for Closing the Meeting

A motion was made to go into closed session. The motion stated the following:

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO CLOSE SESSION

General Provisions Article §3-108(a)(1)(i):

This subtitle does not apply to . . . a public body when it is carrying out . . . an administrative function.

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED:

The discussion will concern: (i) the performance of the Commission's role in overseeing the operation of the MSCRF; and (ii) the duty to oversee the use of budgeted MSCRF funds, especially indirect costs incurred for various administrative purposes.

REASONS FOR CLOSING:

The Commission believes that the aforementioned administrative matters do not fall within the scope of coverage of the Open Meetings Act.

The motion passed unanimously. The Commission went into a closed session at 3:01 p.m.

During the closed session, a motion was made to delegate authority to a working group comprised of Commissioners: Diane Hoffmann, Rachel Brewster, Margaret Conn Himelfarb, and Debra Mathews, to meet with TEDCO executives to discern the details of the indirect costs TEDCO proposes. The working group will synthesize the details and will develop a recommendation for full Commission feedback and discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting reopened at 3:52 p.m.

IV. Eligibility of Blastocyst/Reproductive Research for MSCRF Funding

Once the meeting reopened, a discussion was held regarding the eligibility of applications centered around Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART), and specifically research involving human blastocysts. After careful discussion, the Commission determined that if all ethical and regulatory concerns are appropriately and sufficiently addressed, this type of research falls within the scope and mission of MSCRF. The Commission tasked the staff with ensuring that applicants fully understand and appreciate the sensitivity surrounding this type of research, including securing all necessary regulatory approvals, adhering to ISSCR guidelines, as well as terminating the research prior to the formation of the primitive streak or 14 days from fertilization, whichever occurs first.

The meeting adjourned at 4.25 p.m.