

**WEST AFRICA CENTRE FOR CELL BIOLOGY OF INFECTIOUS PATHOGENS (WACCBIP)
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THE CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
13TH APRIL, 2022 IN THE WACCBIP BOARD ROOM AT 2:00P.M.**

Present:

Prof. Gordon Awandare	-	Director, WACCBIP (Chairman)
Dr. Lydia Mosi	-	Deputy Director (Administration)
Dr. Peter Quashie	-	Deputy Director (Research)
Prof. David Dodoo-Arhin	-	Representative of the Vice Chancellor
Prof. Neils Ben Quashie	-	Representative, College of Health Sciences
Prof. Anderson Mon	-	Representative of the Provost, College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS)
Prof. Kwadwo Koram	-	Member, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research
Rev. Prof. W.S.K Gbewonyo	-	Mentorship Coordinator
Dr. Lucas Amenga-Etego	-	Representative of Research Fellows
Dr. Theresa Manful Gwira	-	Head of Research Training
Dr. Yaw Bediako	-	Head, Advancement
Dr. Anastasia R. Aikins	-	Coordinator of Graduate Admissions and Examinations
Dr. Yaw Aniweh	-	Head of Technology
Mrs. Constance Kocke	-	Representative, Logistics Directorate
Ms. Henrietta Ashiabor	-	Assistant Registrar/Secretary

Absent:

Prof. Osbourne Quaye	-	Head, Department of Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology (Apologies)
Mr. Anthony Hofe	-	Accountant, ORID

In Attendance

Ms. Sika Menka	-	Grants Manager
Mr. Felix Kyei	-	Senior Administrative Assistant
Ms. Marian Nanor	-	Accounts Officer
Mr. Andrew Nantogmah	-	Communications Manager
Ms. Sarah Ofori Ntim	-	Procurement Officer
Mr. Anthony Gassinu	-	Accounts Officer
Mr. Eric Afful	-	Logistics Assistant
Mr. Francis Dzabeng	-	Data Manager
Ms. Kyerewaa A. Boateng	-	Public Engagement Officer
Mr. Theophilus Dugan	-	Head, ICT
Mr. Srinivasan S. Balapangu	-	Laboratory Technologist
Mr. Simon Donkoh	-	Administrative Assistant

1. Opening

**1.1 Reserved Business - Paper CMC2(1)2021-2022
Application for the position of Adjunct Professor - Professor Francisca Mutapi**

A pre-meeting of members of the Sub-Committee on Appointments and Promotions was held to consider an application by Professor Francisca Mutapi, for the position of an Adjunct Professor.

The Chairperson, Prof. Gordon Awandare gave a summary of her educational, work and research background and invited members to comment on the application.

Prof. Mutapi's rich experience in her field of expertise was worthy of note. Members acknowledged that having her will promote a lot of knowledge sharing to the benefit of the Centre. The application was recommended to the College Appointments and Promotions Committee for further action.

1.2 Introduction

Prof. Awandare warmly welcomed members and those in attendance to the meeting. He further introduced new members as well as old ones who had assumed new positions. They are:

- Dr. Lydia Mosi (formerly in charge of Logistics and Procurement), and Dr. Peter Quashie, who were both appointed to the positions of Deputy Directors of Administration and Research respectively.
- Dr. Theresa Gwira, who previously coordinated Graduate Admissions and Examinations, has become the Head, Research Training.
- Dr. Anastasia Aikins assumed the position of Coordinator for Admissions and Examinations
- Dr. Yaw Aniweh, Head of Technology

These appointments were made at the Management Committee Meeting held on 26th January, 2022.

He mentioned that the Vice-Chancellor had regularized the appointment of Dr. Lydia Mosi and Dr. Peter Quashie as Deputy Directors of the Centre. Furthermore, the World Bank has also been notified of the changes in the management structure and they have no objections to the new arrangements.

The Chairman also informed members that the Nature Communications Scientific Journal had accepted WACCBIP's paper on Genetic Diversity of SARS Cov2.

2.0 Confirmation of Minutes

Confirmation and adoption of the Minutes of meeting of December 9, 2021 (Minutes CMC4/2020-2021) was moved on a motion by Dr. Lydia Mosi and seconded by Prof. Dodoo-Arhin subject to all the necessary amendments.

The Minutes of the meeting of 26th January, 2021 (CMC1/2021-2022) was also moved for acceptance by Dr. Yaw Bediako, seconded by Dr. Peter Quashie subject to all amendments/corrections.

3.0 MAIN BUSINESS

3.1 Update on plans for the 2022 WACCBIP Research Conference (WRC)

The proposed date for the Conference was 20th to 22nd July, 2022. Two committees - Logistics and Scientific - were formed headed by the two Deputy Directors (Drs. Mosi and Quashie). They were invited to brief members on plans and preparations in place for the upcoming conference.

3.1.1 Logistics Committee

Dr. Mosi outlined the plans and work carried out by some key individuals who were assisting with the planning process. The team had also identified those who would play major roles in the Conference.

Apart from the Sub-themes that were yet to be chosen, preparatory work had been done, and the decisions were as follows:

- Preparation of Conference Budget.
- The Conference would be in hybrid mode (in-person and virtual), with IT support from the University of Ghana Computing Systems (UGCS)
- Fellows and collaborators had been notified via social media and on the Centre's website to reserve the date for the conference.
- Artwork for flyer had been done awaiting final approval by Director.
- Call for Abstracts had been delayed because the team had intended to include the names of the keynote speakers. However, it would proceed with publicity without the names of the keynote speakers since the theme had already been selected.
- Creation of a link, on various social media platforms, to the Centre's website for participants to register.
- Notices had been sent to Advisory Board members and all other collaborators who might want to attend in-person for visa arrangements to be initiated.
- Abstracts were to be submitted in word format.

Nature of Conference

- There would be 3/5 plenary sessions and 25 talks.
- 15/18 students would be allowed to present.
- Time allotted for poster presentation sessions had been increased to 1 hour.
- The Chairperson commented that the plenary sessions should be assigned to those who have presented their abstracts.
- There would be awards and dinner on the final day.

Dr. Mosi was hopeful that with past experiences in organising the Conference, challenges would be minimal.

3.1.2 Scientific Committee

Dr. Peter Quashie, Deputy Director for Research reported that the Committee had held two meetings and proposed: **“Building forward: Elevating African Research Innovation and Output”** as the Conference theme. This, he said, was appropriate for the post-covid era and was a sequel to the theme for the previous year.

He also reported that:

Three (3) keynote speakers had been identified with Prof. Tulio de Oliveira from South Africa chosen to deliver the 1st Keynote address. Prof. Thumbi Ndungu, also from South Africa, would serve as his potential replacement.

- Supporting the keynote speakers would be Dr. Bismarck Dinko and Nadia Sam-Agudu from Nigeria/Ghana.
- Letters had been sent out to those who will give the Keynote Address, awaiting their responses.
- There would be 14 speakers (7 slots).
- Previous sub-themes would be used.
- Panel discussions would be centred on Biotechnology, innovation and start-ups, and vaccine development to be supported by MPharma, Yemachi and the Country Director for UNICEF

Prof Awandare mentioned that those to deliver the plenaries should be selected from those who had submitted abstracts.

3.2 Proposal to invest in UG Guest Centre – Director

The chairperson introduced the proposal for WACCBIP to invest in the UG Guest Centre. He said the idea was long conceived, and he believed the time was ripe to pursue the interest.

The facility, he said, which is now under the management of University of Ghana Enterprises Limited (UGEL) is in a deplorable condition and in need of refurbishment. Since UGEL lacked the

financial resources to do so WACCBIP could provide the needed financial support and own a stake in the facility.

He hinted that he had met an investor in hotel business who was willing to partner with WACCBIP to renovate and run the facility.

Members were asked to share their views on the matter.

A member proposed that the position of WACCBIP being a UG entity with interest in another UG facility and opined that WACCBIP's position needed to be clearly defined in the new arrangement - be it as stakeholders, managers or both.

Concerns, suggestions, and issues raised among others were:

How secure would the investment be in the future? Whether the restaurant was part of the investment? How would this arrangement contribute to the core mandate of research, capacity building and learning?

- a) In response, the Chairperson indicated that this arrangement was not new to UG. He cited Yiri Lodge as an example, which is a UG facility but was refurbished and managed by the Institute of African Studies.
- b) Even though the proposal was not directly related to the mandate of the Centre, it would be a long-term investment, and proceeds would go into awarding fellowships in future in case there were no grants for that purpose.
- c) The restaurant would also be revamped and added to the income streams. The practice where units in the University were given credit facility would be minimised as the opportunity given was abused, contributing to the current financial crises being faced. WACCBIP must be fully involved in managing the facility because of its vested interest, so the performance of its investments can be monitored.

Other investment alternatives proposed were a pharmaceutical business, laboratory services, student accommodation or provide the funds needed as loan with interest for refurbishment of the facility.

Prof. Awandare cautioned that there might be difficulties in investing and managing a pharmaceutical business, especially when it is located outside of campus. Building a well-equipped laboratory is cost-intensive. About \$10m would be needed to put up hostel facilities for students, with its attendant high cost of maintenance which might not be profitable in the end.

The Chairperson gave a breakdown of renovation costs which is about GHS5 million. The hotel investor, he said, was ready to inject GHS1 million, leaving the difference for WACCBIP to absorb. The facility will be valued and added to the cost of renovation to determine the current value and the stake WACCBIP will hold.

The Accounts Unit was tasked to prepare the Proposal which would go through the University's Investment processes for consideration.

4. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS

Various Unit heads presented their Reports on activities for the 1st quarter, January to March 2022, highlights of which are noted below.

Full details are presented in Papers CMC2(1- 9)/2021-2022.

4.1 CMC2(1)/2021-2022 - Mentorship

Rev. Prof. Gbewonyo said a needs assessment was carried out prior to the assignment of mentees to their various mentors and the response was good.

Two (2) separate workshops were held for Mentors and Mentees. The workshop for Mentees exposed them to various areas of mental health challenges they could face as students. Patronage was low for the workshop held for mentors/supervisors. The poor attendance was traced to communication challenges.

Overall, the interactions were good. The Coordinator indicated that the recording of the workshop was available for interested faculty to access. More workshops would be held in future with improved content during the year. There would also be a package for WACCBIP/BCMB staff as well.

4.2 CMC2(2)/2021-2022 - Grants Management

Highlights as reported by Ms. Sika Menka were:

- Programme accreditation of PhD Biochemistry, internships, students and research publications have all been verified under the ACE Impact project and will earn the Centre some amount.
- For the DELTAS Project, a 4-month no-extension was requested but month 10 months was granted by the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. The report would be due by 31st July, 2022.
- An NIH grant was awarded to investigate the models of public engagement and preparedness for big data genomics medicine.
- Activities lined up under the World Bank African Centre of Excellence (ACE) Project for the next quarter are, country review meeting to be held in April, a regional workshop, submission of new results, disbursement of funds for verified results, and advertisement for graduate internship programmes.

Ms. Menka mentioned that the joint recruitment (BCMB/WACCBIP) of graduate interns last year was problematic and suggested it be done separately. She also informed the meeting that some of the interns have failed to submit their reports because they completed their service ahead of the scheduled period.

It was noted that because they were not being paid, they were reluctant to submit the reports. Prof. Koram suggested that payment be delinked from the submission of reports as the essence of the national service was to train them.

4.3 CMC2(3)/2021-2022 - Data Management and HPC

Mr. Francis Dzabeng reported that some drives had crashed and had to be replaced. The Unit provided data analytics support to students and researchers, set, and maintained database for ongoing projects, and provided technical support for HIV cohort study.

He also stated that Mr. Vincent Appiah, the HPC manager provided support remotely even though he is on leave

For the next quarter, in addition to the regular support provided, the unit would:

- Provide routine maintenance of all project data systems on WACCBIP servers located at the University of Ghana Computing Systems (UGCS).
- Co-facilitate FDCO COVID-19 sequencing bioinformatics workshops for Ghana Health Service (CHS) and Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) staff.
- Co-author manuscript, using data from COVID-19 seroprevalence and acute febrile illness

The Chairperson asked the team to state the specific projects supported in subsequent reports.

4.4 CMC2(4)/2021-2022 - Accounts/Finance

Below is a summary of the accounting/financial affairs as presented by Ms. Marian Nanor during the period.

- Project disbursements totalled US \$2.2m from December 6, 2021 to April 16, 2022.
- The Centre received a total of USD 2,234,699.81 from grant disbursements.
- Internally generated funds amounted to USD432,601.51. The amount included fellowship commitments of ACE Impact. Prof. Awandare indicated that going forward the fellowship amounts should be separated from other IGFs.
- There were no issues with grant compliance. All funder requirements have been met. The ACE Impact projects were audited by the external auditors BakerTilly Andah & Andah. Concerns noted in the reports have duly been addressed.
- A draft report has also been issued by the Internal Auditors. The main query raised had to do with various sums that were not pre-audited before disbursement. This, Miss Nanor explained, was solely the responsibility of ORID. The Accountant at ORID had therefore been charged with that responsibility. The final draft of the report will be sent to the Director of WACCBIP
- Investments made with Ideal Group have been retrieved and the amount be paid into the Centre's account.

- There was orientation for new students to familiarise themselves with the conditions of their fellowship and another one for staff members on some policies of the University. Staff were also taken through the Risk Assessment Policy for the Centre.
- The Centre received a donation of a Toyota Landcruiser from FCDO for its research activities. All the necessary documentation for change of ownership have been carried out.
- Some challenges with payment to Carramore, a major supplier to the Centre, which was reported at the last meeting had since been resolved.

Outstanding activities were:

The company that won the bid to supply accounting software had lost its license to sell the software. The bidding process was to be re-initiated

4.5 CMC2(5)/2021-2022 - Communications and Public Engagement

An in-house retreat was held to draw up work plan and strategies for the year. There was an upgrade of the Website. Mr. Nantogmah reported an increase in social media visibility over the last quarter. In addition, a LinkedIn page had been created, which attracted visitors from diverse backgrounds.

In the areas of Publicity and Brand management, the Unit was in the process of developing a WACCBIP generic brochure, got a contract for branded pins, mugs etc. as souvenirs for the Research conference, visitors and guests.

The Unit had over the period engaged in activities to support COVID-19 seroprevalence outreaches all over the country.

Mr. Nantogmah also reported that the Docu-drama on hearing impairment was aired on BBC Focus on Africa. The UK Minister's visit was also published on myjoyonline.com. The Unit hopes to continue with ongoing work in support of media engagement.

The team was commended for all their initiatives and innovation.

4.6 CMC2(6)/2021-2022 - Training and Research

A summary of M.Phil and PhD admissions and graduation statistics from inception to date were as follows:

- 50 students of the 1st and 2nd Cohorts of M.Phil students (2014 –2016) have successfully graduated. Out of 88 students from the 3rd to 6th Cohorts (2016-2020), 52 graduated, 1 deferred, 28 have submitted their theses/awaiting correction and 7 have not submitted their theses. 43 students of the remaining 2 cohorts were at the proposal presentation and coursework stages of their programmes.
- 8 cohorts of 102 PhD students have so far been admitted, from this figure, 26 have graduated, 23 have submitted their theses with some referred. 30 were at the experiential

learning stage, and the remaining 23 students were making progress with their coursework.

- A total of 103 Graduate interns were so far engaged.

Dr. Gwira, Head of Research Training mentioned that workshops would be held for the M.Phil/PhD students. A meeting would also be held with the Graduate Interns to discuss their projects and reports in the ensuing quarter.

4.7 CMC2(7)/2021-2022 - Procurement and Logistics

The unit procured reagents, consumables computers and accessories, furniture items for students, laboratories and Fellows under the framework agreement contract, and refurbishments of swivel chairs. The main challenge the Unit continued to encounter was delays in meeting procurement requests.

Outstanding activities include acquisition of cabinets, freezers, renovation of laboratories, the delivery and mounting of two 20-footer containers.

Madam Constance Kocke reported the price variations of 41% and 28% in the initial cost of the -80°C freezer and Class B2 Biosafety cabinet due to the new tax regime and dollar rate. Since the contract for procurement was awarded through a National Tender Committee, the Vice-Chancellor had set up a committee to negotiate the cost with the supplier.

She complained of the late submission of the annual procurement plan by the Centre and indicated that the document should be submitted by 31st December of every year.

Mr. Srinivasan Balapangu said it was possible to acquire equipment directly from the manufacturer. It was decided that he obtains quotations from the manufacturer which would be sent to the Public Procurement Authority (PPA) through the Logistics Directorate for sole sourcing to be done. The request to PPA must have all other charges inclusive.

Mr. Balapangu also reported challenges with Quantstudio 5 Real Time PCR equipment. Even though it was fixed it continued to give error feedback. The decision was to have the equipment replaced. The Chairperson advised that procurement process be initiated to acquire a new one.

Dr. Aniweh, Head of Technology hinted that he was in discussions with Association of Biomolecular Resource Facilities (ABRF) for technologists to be trained in equipment maintenance. He also stated the possibility of training technologists in Biobase equipment being procured.

4.8 CMC2(8)/2021-2022 - Administration

Various appointments were made to the positions of Research Assistants, Research Associate, Field Workers for some projects.

An online workshop was held for laboratory scientists.

Two (2) Onsite residential workshops would be held for CHAG and GHS laboratory scientists.

4.9 CMC2(9)/2021-2022 - Graduate Admissions and Examinations

The Coordinator, Dr. Anastasia Aikins reported that newly admitted students have started attending lectures. 9 out of the 10 PhD students had passed the doctoral qualifying exams. The first years were preparing for their comprehensive examinations.

The portal for entry applications was yet to be opened for the next academic year.

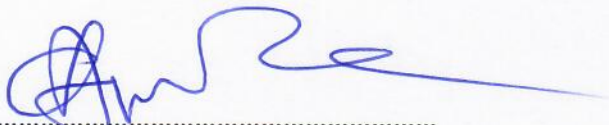
5. Any Other Business

Mr. Andrew Nantogmah, Communications Manager, expressed concern over the lack of a strong social media presence on the various platforms on the part of staff and students of WACCBIP. This, he said, was revealed in the of Self-assessment reports for the World Bank.

The Chairman encouraged member/staff to open various social media accounts and also seize the opportunity to publicize the upcoming research conference using this platform.

6. Closing

The meeting ended at 6:19p.m. on a motion proposed by Dr. Lucas Amenga-Etego, seconded by Dr. Lydia Mosi.



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Prof. Gordon Awandare
Chairperson



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Ms. Henrietta Ashiabor
Secretary