Dear Faculty,

We are announcing a ground-breaking new model for academic/industrial relationships that builds on a long history of collaborative research between Washington University School of Medicine and Pfizer and its legacy companies. The new **2010 Biomedical Research Agreement** (BMA) has been refocused from its prior emphasis on inflammation-related research to a scientific partnership between WU investigators and scientists in Pfizer's Indications Discovery Unit (IDU). The focus of the IDU is on discovering and pre-clinically and clinically validating entirely new uses for compounds that are either currently in Pfizer’s Development portfolio, or have been in the past, across a wide range of therapeutic areas and unmet medical needs. The new agreement with Pfizer will seek to fund research proposals from full-time WU faculty in three broad areas:

- Human studies to evaluate a Pfizer compound for a new indication or for pre-clinical studies which, if successful, would lead to a novel clinical opportunity. These are of highest interest.
- Studies developing scientific insight that advance clinical development of an ongoing IDU project (e.g. translational research, biomarker development, human genetic evidence, patient stratification, etc).
- Screening the Pfizer “Mechanism of Action (MOA) Toolbox” [over 500 proprietary drugs, 200+ mechanisms of action] to uncover new biology in models of human disease.

To harness the breadth and depth of clinical and translational expertise at WU for this new collaboration, the IDU has developed a confidential online portal through which investigators at WU will for the first time be able to access information on a collection of over 500 extensively characterized Pfizer clinical compounds, representing over 200 drug mechanisms (called the “Mechanism of Action (MOA) Toolbox”). Information provided for each mechanism includes the biological target, the number of compounds that have entered development for that target, the indication(s) for which those compounds are/were being studied at Pfizer and the clinical stage of development for each. The goal of making this information available is to stimulate the generation of concept proposals from WU investigators that aim to test or validate (pre-clinically or clinically) a hypothesis for the use of an MOA Toolbox compound(s) in a disease area different from those in which it has been previously studied. The schematic below summarizes how this collaboration will work.
Why would this be of interest to you as a WU investigator? First, this agreement will provide exclusive and unprecedented access to data on a large collection of clinical compounds that could be used to advance your research on human disease or enable you to participate in the drug development process. Second, Pfizer will fund different award types for successful proposals, with up to $4.5M per year available over the next 5 years. There will be no submission deadlines and 1-2 page Concept proposals for both pre-clinical and clinical studies submitted at any time through the portal will be reviewed with ‘rapid response’ – initial feedback will be provided in 4-6 weeks from submission. Concept proposals of interest to the Advisory Committee will be assigned a Pfizer co-author to help develop a Full proposal. Finally, it is anticipated that the identification of the role of targets and pathways in new diseases that emerge from this research could potentially lead to both new NIH funding and to additional studies in humans.

The agreement places particular emphasis on research proposals that are truly collaborative. It is envisioned that the WU investigators who submit concept proposals will interact closely with Pfizer scientists who have expertise in the same area to generate Full proposals that either identify new therapeutic uses for a clinical compound, or develop tools & methodologies that will enable clinical trials. An advisory committee comprised of both Washington University Medical School (WUMS) and Pfizer investigators will evaluate proposals for new research that have been co-authored by both a WU and Pfizer investigator. To further facilitate close collaboration, Pfizer’s IDU group of around 25 scientists is relocating to the Center of Research Technology and Entrepreneurial Expertise (CORTEX) at the heart of St. Louis’ growing biotech corridor and adjacent to WUMS. Furthermore, the IDU will also serve as a means for WU investigators to access the rest of the Pfizer research organization – for example if a
proposal is deemed to be better suited and of interest to one of Pfizer’s other research units.

We urge you to visit the WU/Pfizer website where additional information about the objectives of this agreement, funding opportunities, the grant submission process and access to the Pfizer portal (live on Friday, May 21st) can be gained at:

https://portal.wusm.wustl.edu/wupfizer/default.aspx

This unique new opportunity leverages the complementary strengths and interests of the two institutions. The University seeks to impact global human health through its research and clinical efforts. Pfizer has a tremendous collection of potential new medicines and will avail information to WUMS investigators not previously disclosed. This innovative new framework under which academic and industry researchers can collaborate is expected to be mutually advantageous to the University and the company and beneficial to patients and society.

To learn more about this opportunity, there will be a town hall meeting on June 9, 2010 at 4 pm in Connor Auditorium. The presentation will include a live demonstration of the portal and a Q&A session.

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Co-Directors of the WU/Pfizer Biomedical Research Agreement