SUMMARY OF MRC ACTIVITIES TO DATE

The Memphis Research Consortium (MRC) was established on January 26, 2010 when Senate Bill 7006 was signed into law. This law created the multi-organization, public/private consortium whose goal is to develop strategies and plans for enhancing opportunities for research and development in key growth industries that support the Memphis and Tennessee economies. Founding members of the consortium include the University of Memphis (UM), the University of Tennessee Health Sciences Center (UTHSC) and St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital (SJCRH) as lead collaborators and conveners, along with FedEx Corporation, Medtronic, Wright Medical Technologies, Smith&Nephew, Baptist Memorial Health Care Corporation, Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare System, and Memphis Bioworks Foundation. The state appropriated $500,000 to the University of Memphis to support initiation of the MRC during fiscal year 2011.

The MRC’s research, corporate and community partners have proposed that initial efforts center on interdisciplinary, collaborative investigation in Computational Life Sciences; Population Health Sciences; and Biomaterials, Biologics, and Biomedical Device Research. These areas are closely tied to the region’s economic development and workforce interests of MRC partners; to existing research expertise at the UM, the UTHSC, and SJCRH; and to national research priorities. Together, these areas hold potential to significantly enhance the region’s reputation as a center for bioscience discovery and innovation and as a living laboratory for studies related to population health.

After initial discussions, a Steering Committee representing all partners began monthly meetings in March, 2010. This group identified an Executive Committee made up of the CEO’s of the three research institutions and a Research Committee representing all partners. Within weeks of the initial Steering Committee meeting, researchers from UM, UTHSC, SJCRH and the corporate and community partners representing the three focus areas began meeting to identify research targets, needed infrastructure and collaboration tools. Simultaneously, the Executive Committee worked to develop a management plan that included the hiring of an Interim Executive Director, Russell Ingram, and an agreement to purchase the Harvard Profiles scientific collaboration software.

In November the research groups submitted proposals for their Year One activities and plans for Years Two and beyond. The Executive Committee is now considering these proposals and is expected to make Year One funding decisions this month. A Year Two proposal to the incoming Governor and Legislature will also be finalized in the next month.