

University of Massachusetts Boston (UMB) - Dana Farber/Harvard Cancer Center (DF/HCC) Partnership

UMass Boston PIs:

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DF/HCC PIs:

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Strategies in Facilitating Excellence in Research

- Building a climate for networking and collaboration between partnering institutions
 - e.g. Monthly Scientific Meetings, Cancer Symposia, Summer Research Symposia, and community newsletter- The Partnership Post
- Encouraging and help “match” collaborations between “senior” and “junior” investigators
- LOIs are reviewed and feedback is provided before groups submit a proposal for internal U54 funding
 - Feedback is written, or oral if groups presentation to the IAC
- Implemented an NIH-style review process, using NIH criteria and having both internal and external reviewers

Strategies in Facilitating Excellence in Research

- Once funded, projects are reviewed at multiple levels, including formal presentations to the IAC and PSC, mid-year and end of year reports, and end of the project conversations with PIs
- The Partnership requires a 2-year waiting period to re-apply for U54 funding
 - Since 2010, we've funded 70 different investigators in 36 joint cross-institutional projects (approximately 50% of the project were in populations sciences, %50 from basic sciences)
 - This requirement has encouraged new investigators to become involved in the Partnership
- As the Partnership has matured, we have seen prior trainees/ESIs later become project PIs (e.g.: Odejide), and we have even had a pilot project PI become an MPI of the whole Partnership (Abel).

Sustaining Collaborations and Research

- The Partnership has had significant impact on both partners
 - Both institutions has seen an increase in cancer research and/or cancer health disparities research
 - Project investigators have received 167 grants totaling over \$56M from NIH, NCI, DOD and other funding agencies to support their research
 - UMass Boston has received \$8.5M in federal funding for cancer research, representing nearly 30% of all NIH funding to UMass Boston during the 2015-2020 period
 - Establishment of the Center for Personalized Cancer Therapy (CPCT) at UMass Boston, facilitating faculty hires (Macoska, Cai, and Pathania)
 - Establishment and management of the Center for Translational Health Communication Science (CTraHCS) at DF/HCC and collaboration with the DF/HCC's Center for Cancer Equity and Engagement (CCEE)

Sustaining Collaborations and Research

- Participation in, or collaboration with, > 60 community-based events or health-focused activities
- Enhancing training opportunities support research projects. (e.g. two NCI-funded training grants, SPARC and YES for CURE, for undergraduate student training)
- Promoting faculty diversity across the Partnership. (e.g. Acquiring an NSF ADVANCE Catalyst grant (Colón-Carmona) to conduct an institutional self-assessment of inequities among STEM faculty at UMass Boston)
- Provided critical support to the Dana-Farber Inclusion Diversity & Equity (ID&E) Executive Council to determine priorities for disparities research. The Council has now committed \$10 million over five years for four Presidential Priorities in Cancer Disparities Research.

Challenges that Remain

- Difficult to maintain collaboration long-term between project PIs (Flip-side, project PIs will tend to develop related externally funded projects)
- Tracking of project outcomes, to show collaborations are working (during and after the funded project period)
- Reminding projects to utilize the Partnership Cores (those projects that do, the collaborations flourish)
- Maintaining strong mentoring activities (between PIs, PIs and trainees, etc.)