



Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

Promoting Health Equity & Social Justice

July 12, 2013

TO: Lloyd Michener, Chair, CTSA Community Engagement Conference Planning Committee

CC: Co-Chairs, CTSA Community Engagement Key Function Committee
Co-Chairs, CTSA Steering Committee
Christopher Austin, Director, NCATS
Meryl Sufian, Coordinator, CTSA Community Engagement Key Function Committee, NCATS

FROM: Members of the CCPH-CTSA Member Interest Group

We are writing as members of the CCPH-CTSA member interest group who are committed to strengthening community engagement in the CTSA program.¹ The annual national CTSA community engagement conferences have the potential to be an important venue for advancing the theory and practice of community engagement in clinical and translational research by engaging community partners as co-presenters and co-learners. We are concerned, however, that as currently designed and funded the CTSA community engagement conferences are not encouraging community partner participation. Indeed, we are aware of community partners who have decided not to attend because the content has not been relevant to them and/or because there are no funds to support their attendance. It is in the spirit of improving this situation that we are writing today with concrete, practical recommendations. We realize it may be too late to implement all of these this year, but hope to work with you to fully implement them for the 2014 conference. Our recommendations are even more salient given the strong endorsement of community engagement in the CTSA program in the Institute of Medicine's June 25, 2013 report and Dr. Austin's decision to implement them.

1. Create a balanced planning committee, comprised of half academics and half community members – greater community participation in the conference planning process will result in a conference that is more inviting and responsive to community members. From the recent inventory conducted by the CTSA community partner integration workgroup, it is evident that most CTSA community partners are not adequately compensated for their time and expertise.

¹ Founded in 1997, CCPH is a national membership organization that promotes health equity and social justice through partnerships between communities and academic institutions. A CCPH-CTSA member interest group was established in 2010 to provide a space for CCPH members involved in CTSA (from community and academic settings) to meet regularly. The group is comprised of 80 people from 32 CTSA and 2 CTSA applicants. For more information about CCPH, visit <http://ccph.info>

- Community-based committee members – for whom serving on the committee is not usually part of their “day job” – should be compensated in some way for their time and expertise.
2. Ensure transparency in communications throughout the conference planning process – it is unclear how the planning committee members are chosen and who they are, how the theme and content of the conference is decided, and whether input from CTSA and their community partners is sought or valued. These should be clearly explained on the conference website along with the list of committee members and their bios.
 3. Require that each CTSA budget for travel expenses for at least two community partners to attend the conference. For this year’s conference, CTSA should be strongly encouraged to provide this support and in future years, NIH should require that CTSA budget for it.
 4. Make as many conference sessions as possible freely available via webcast in real time and archived for later viewing.
 5. Waive the conference registration fee for CTSA community partners – charging a registration fee poses a financial barrier to community partner participation.
 6. Support efforts to raise funds for community partner participation at the conference – we understand that the provisions of the NIH grant that supports the conference does not permit the fiscal agent to raise scholarship funds, but there is nothing precluding CCPH, individual CTSA or others from raising and offering such funds.²
 7. Provide an opportunity for CTSA community partners to meet during the conference – there is great value in bringing CTSA community partners together to learn from each other and network as a group.
 8. If the number of conference participants must be limited because of space limitations, this should not disproportionately affect community participants. Community participation should not be reduced in order to accommodate academics.
 9. Track and publicly report on the extent and value of community participation at the conference over time by routinely collecting demographic information on the registration and evaluation forms (e.g., asking about their organizational affiliation and whether they are academic partners, community partners, etc.)

Last but not least, we would also like to draw your attention to an important gathering of CTSA community partners next year. As you may know, Community-Campus Partnerships for Health and the Center for Community Health Education Research and Service co-sponsored National Community Partner Forums on Community-Engaged Research in 2011 and 2012 with R13 funding from NIMHD, NIEHS and NICHD. CTSA community partners actively participated in both forums and had opportunities to informally meet as a group. The next forum will take place on April 29-30, 2014 in Chicago, in conjunction with the CCPH conference that runs through May 3, 2014. The forum is designed “by and for” community partners and will have session tracks designed both for novices and those who are more experienced with community-engaged research. CTSA community partners will be meeting twice during the forum to learn from one another and formalize a peer network. We encourage CTSA to budget now to support the attendance of their community partners at the forum. Proceedings from past forums are posted online at <http://depts.washington.edu/ccph/cps.html>

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience and welcome the opportunity to discuss them with you by phone. We

² We have not seen this policy in writing – could you provide a link to it?

can be reached through CCPH-CTSA Member Interest Group Chair Gail Newton at gail_newton@urmc.rochester.edu

Sincerely,

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