Executive Summary

An all-day Strategic Planning Retreat was held for the faculty of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM) FIU on June 19, 2012. The purpose of the retreat was to review the on-going basic science research at HWCOM and to strategically plan for future basic and translational science research at HWCOM FIU. Participants included tenured, tenure-track and non-tenured basic science and clinical faculty members. The expected outcome of this retreat was to develop a five-year strategic plan that identified existing scientific strengths, areas of potential growth and new directions. This strategic plan will be used to inform faculty recruitment, development of new programs, space allocation and expansion of existing basic research programs.

The current strategic plan, research funding and space were reviewed by HWCOM and FIU leadership. To strengthen areas of research, the need for enhanced collaboration within HWCOM, FIU and with outside partners was emphasized, including a potential collaboration with a National Cancer Institute Basic Science Center, The Wistar Institute. The HWCOM departments will need to jointly recruit and cross-appoint faculty within the medical school and larger university.

Leaders from the basic science departments presented their strategic vision and five-year plans. Each presentation described the departmental research and emphasized the need for growth in faculty to create a critical mass of funded researchers. The Department of Human and Molecular Genetics projected the need to expand the following five areas: (1) reproductive biology; (2) bioinformatics; (3) cancer; (4) neurosciences and; (5) musculo-skeletal science to take advantage of existing strengths in the on-going areas of research and to build on strengths in other departments. The Department of Molecular Microbiology and Infectious Diseases also identified the need for additional funded faculty and to develop a Center for Tropical Medicine given the location of Miami as a gateway to South America. The Department of Immunology described current areas of research, with plans to continue HIV research and to expand the role of nanotechnology in drug delivery in HIV, cancer and other diseases.

In addition to building on existing strengths, including recruiting funded researchers, expanding lab space in reproductive biology and environmental science, future directions for the basic science program should include:

(1) Cancer biology  
(2) Infectious diseases (tropical medicine and expanded research in HIV)  
(3) Neurosciences

The participants identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) of the basic research programs of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine:
1. The diversity of FIU faculty, students, community and patient base is considered one of the major strengths.

2. The potential for growth and collaboration of basic science and clinical faculty is an opportunity.

3. The location of FIU, with a proximity to Central and South America, provides HWCOM with the opportunity to be the leader in international biomedical research.

4. Unfunded research is a weakness. There is a need to increase funding, recruit additional funded researchers and increase philanthropic to support the research program.

5. The existing space is insufficient to support growth. There is a need to have space in the Science and Research Building (AHC 4)

In summary, the HWCOM has the potential to lead the university in its goal of becoming a South Florida powerhouse in biomedical research by adopting a five-year strategic plan that includes strengthening of existing research programs and growth in a small number of new areas through the recruitment of new faculty with strong and funded research programs.