

WHOI Postdoctoral Association

MINUTES OF MEETING NO 4

Thursday November 3, 2005

Clark 201

Committee members present:

Jed Goldstone, Nancy Grumet Prouty, Rowena Lohman, Beatriz Mouriño Carballido, Anna Nikolopoulos, Luc Rainville, and Tim Verslycke.

Other representatives present:

Janet Fields (Postdoctoral Coordinator/Academic Programs)

• 1 • *Meeting opened by Luc*

• 2 • *Postdoc Symposium Evaluation*

Jed summarized the results from the symposium evaluation forms: most attendees seemed happy with where and how the symposium was conducted, however, there were some suggestions on how to improve the meeting. For example, the introduction of all attendees would make more sense at the beginning of the day. A couple of people suggested that the talks should be grouped by topic in themed sessions, and another input was to add a session on issues related to postdoc life and career (with the Dean or similar).

Our first thoughts about these suggestions were: (1) we should definitely open the meeting with a short introduction of all attendees, (2) the program was deliberately set so as to mix topics and disciplines in order to avoid partly drop-ins/drop-outs of people, (3) our feeling is that we cannot squeeze in more sessions into the program (or take away about four talks from the list in favor for an extra session). We'd rather see that we have separate activities on such issues (see below).

• 3 • *Special sessions and panel discussions*

Our brain-storming on the need of a separate session during at the annual symposium (see above) resulted in tentative plans for a panel discussion on *Grant writing and Funding Possibilities* with people from the WHOI Grants & Contracts and Controller offices, the Dean and dedicated department people. The postdoc time is when the majority of us get involved in proposal writing on different levels, and it would be helpful to talk about the specifics of the whole proposal process, and the do:s and don't:s, with the people involved in it. The format of this event will probably be a two hours afternoon meeting with short introductory presentations by the panel members and a following Questions & Answers session.

Additional themes for future special sessions could be related to job market issues (e.g. how to write CVs and handle job interviews etc), family & career, and women in science. Maybe the best format for these types of discussion would be informal monthly "brown bag" lunch chats hosted by the different departments? (Picking a different place each time would also give an extra opportunity to see other departments!)

- 4 • *Postdoc Breakfast Survey*

The date for the annual postdoc-breakfast, sponsors included, is November 30. With the committee's input Luc will put together the survey to be sent out a couple of days before the breakfast. Janet emphasized the importance of not only asking for plain suggestions on potential changes but also on *ways* to implement them.

- 5 • *Individual development plans*

The policy of the institution is that every postdoc should be reviewed during the fall Annual Reviews in a similar way as the staff members. The way this policy is implemented differs for every department but even if these reviews generally take place the results seldom reach back to the postdocs. Also, there seems to be a need of means for postdocs to make the "reverse review" on the collaboration with their advisors/PI:s.

The Academic Programs office is working on introducing formal individual development plans to be filled out by both postdocs and advisors at the very start of the appointment in order to facilitate follow-ups throughout the time at WHOI. The committee definitely supports and cheers on this initiative; not only would that be helpful for merging the plans and desires of both parts in an early stage, but also for having the initial goals on paper in a pre-defined way as reference. For those interested in how such a plan could look like, see the example given by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB):

<http://www.faseb.org/opa/ppp/educ/idp.html>

- 6 • *Bea's successor*

Bea is leaving by the end of November and we'll need to fill her spot in the committee by an AOP&E representative. Currently there aren't many postdocs at her department but a potential successor would perhaps be newly arrived David Ralston? Bea will look into that matter.

- 7 • *Next meeting*

Tuesday, December 6th at 9:00am, location determined later.

The task for next meeting will be to compile the results from the breakfast survey, and to make further plans for the March panel discussion and the spring career development meeting with T. Schaff.

- 8 • *Meeting closed by Luc*

(Minutes recorded by A. Nikolopoulos)