

BSD Postdoctoral Association Committee Meeting
12 noon, Thursday January 18, 2007 BSLC 008

Present: James McCracken (chair), Isaac Skromne, Ayaz Sayeed, Kolla Kristjansdottir, Rifat Hasina, Jason Ward, Cheng Huang, Harold Olivey, Judy Cannon

1. Seminar Series Progress

There was concern about low attendance at the first few seminars of this quarter. Despite the low attendance, there has been good discussion at the seminars. To increase attendance, AS will post the seminar series onto the university calendar. IS thought that in the past the first few seminars after the break are always poorly attended. In the future it may be better to postpone the start of the seminar series a week or two. IS and KK updated about the seminar series which is booked for this quarter, and have already begun working on the seminar series for next quarter. They already have some slots filled and many ideas for the other timeslots. A few were mentioned: Jeffery Estelles and another individual from Eli Lilly talking about making the transition to industry, an editor from Nature Publishing group, and JC suggested a friend who recently began an assistant editor position at Cell Publishing (this would be a future seminar-next year possibly).

JW asked about possible teaching positions on campus. IS suggested contacting professors, which may lead to covering one or two lectures. Other suggestions were to contact community colleges or Chicago State University about the possibility of teaching an entire class. Another good resource is the Center for Teaching Preparation on UofC campus. It was suggested that some of these resources or other helpful websites should be added to our website.

2. Mentoring Plan

A mentoring plan has been set up for postdoc and we have been working with Dean Nancy Schwartz to implement this plan. The postdoctoral committee is proposing to use the existing system within human resources during the reappointment process to circulate the document. JM has been trying to set up a meeting with the Dean to implement this plan. Additionally IS suggested that the mentoring plan document be added to the PDA website and also in the post doc welcoming packet. KK suggested that we attempt to distribute the document to faculty via a faculty list serve.

Welcoming packet update: Melissa has the packets completed, and is in the process of identifying the “newer” postdocs to begin distributing the packets.

3. Internet Presence

HO has taken over the website, and any additions, errors, mistakes, etc. should be sent to him.

CH updated the group on the state of the message board. This message board will be a resource for postdocs to ask questions and get answers and other help. The association is on the waiting list with the university’s free bulletin board service. HO is going to contact them to see why there is a wait and how much longer it will be. He will also contact the university bulletin board service to determine the best way to integrate this message board with the Association’s website.

4. Survey Possibilities for 2007

JM wanted to determine if another postdoc survey should be completed this year or should it be done the following year. The committee discussed the issue focusing on the time commitment, the aims, and goals of performing a survey this year. The main focus of last year’s survey was to provide salary information and making sure that all postdocs were being paid at least the minimum salary required by UofC. The

overall feeling of the committee is that the survey is a good thing, and it should be continued for the following reasons:

1. The committee has the needed personnel to do the survey this year.
2. It is desirable to have a yearly record to evaluate progress or lack of progress.
3. The sampling population may be significantly different from last year (arrivals, departures, and those that did not participate last year).

The committee thought it may be better to have a more focused survey this year, possibly with more questions relating to granting information or other issues that were not well represented on last years survey. RH and JW agreed to look at last years survey and think about additional questions or topics that could be addressed with this year's survey. RH also agreed to begin looking into using SurveyMonkey to perform the survey for us again. Finally, it was suggested that survey participation might increase if the survey is taken at the beginning of the Fall semester, instead of during the summer. The analysis would presumably be complete by the end of the fall quarter.

5. National PDA Meeting, Berkeley CA

KK and RH have expressed interest in representing our association at the National PDA Meeting, which is being held at the end of March in Berkeley, CA. JM informed the association of a travel grant award which will pay for travel to and lodging for the meeting. This award is for existing postdoc associations who are interested in mentoring new postdoc associations. If awarded, there must be monthly teleconferences between the associations to answer questions, deal with problems, etc. RH agreed to apply for this award.

6. Hosting of Career Symposium

Last year there was a career symposium in Milwaukee called "Put your PhD to Work". This symposium was attended by KK, RH, AS, Imogen Hurley, and JM. At this meeting it was suggested that the University of Chicago and Northwestern University co-host this year's event. The association discussed the level of interest in hosting this event. Overall it was thought that the event would be well attended by postdocs on campus, and would be of value. JM has contacted the Northwestern Postdoctoral office staff member, and they are also interested in co-hosting this event. It was decided that the association was interested in being involved in the planning of the event. The capacity of this involvement would be limited to the planning of workshops, inviting speakers, etc. The association is not interested in organizing sponsors, fund-raising, and logistical arrangements (hotels, food, ect.). We thought it would be better to have someone in a "staff" position at the UofC or Northwestern acting as a point person and delegating smaller portions of the planning to the association and others. This point person may be someone from the postdoctoral association office at Northwestern. JM is contacting them to see what type of involvement they want to have in hosting the event. Another possibility is Heather Sevenser or someone else at CAPS. IS is going to contact CAPS to determine if they are interested in participating in the planning of the event.