

Postdoc Association Notes

February 20, 2008

Attending: Cheng Huang, Imogen Hurley, Liz Jablonski, Kolla Kristjansdottir, Guoqing Lin, James McCracken, Harold Olivey, Victoria Robinson, Isaac Skromne, Madina Sukhanova, Ben Wolfe, Nancy Schwartz, Melissa Lindberg, and Parag Shah.

Discussion:

PDA Flier/Orientation Packets: Melissa distributed the new version of the PDA flier, printed on flier paper. She will have copies available for distribution at the next meeting, as well as a list of departments with postdocs and HR administrators. James suggested replacing the Orientation packet with the flier: the packets were reviewed by the group, and it was determined there was valuable information there not available from the flier. We will send out Orientation packets, and the flier will be one component of them. Melissa reported she is waiting for Pat Shymanski's OK on the "Guidelines for Postdoctoral Fellows" document as well as the Benefits Chart. She had minor revisions the first time she reviewed it, but on looking at it a second time had some major revisions, and sent it to the University's Legal Counsel for review as well. Both of these documents are included in the Orientation Packet; Harold will update the website as soon as we have the new versions. Also, it was noted that there needed to be disclaimers on the website saying "as of today's date" as sometimes the information is outdated but we don't have current information to post. Postdocs should check with their HR administrators for current information.

Imogen noted that she is part of a group of HR administrators for the Basic Sciences that meets regularly. They've decided the postdoctoral appointment letter needs to be updated, and needs to include more information. They're working on a new draft. They also would like to implement quarterly Orientation sessions for postdocs; the group agreed that this was an excellent idea. Imogen agreed to be a liaison between the working group and the PDA. Nancy pointed out that many of the difficulties come when dealing with clinical departments: perhaps there is a way to include them in this group?

In the Orientation meetings, it would be helpful to have a representative from the PDA Steering Committee, as well as a representative from the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.

Out of this conversation, it was decided to come up with a list of "Frequently Asked Questions" which can be referred to at these meetings, and also could go up on the website. This could be broken down into sections: "For International Postdocs," "Taxes," "Postdoc Scholar/Postdoc Fellow," etc. Harold will collect suggestions and edit them, and bring it to the next meeting.

Seminar Series: The Seminar Committee is asking for new members: Isaac is leaving at the end of this year, and Ayaz has a new job starting in April. Guoqing volunteered. Kolla is currently the head of the committee. The Spring seminar series is mostly planned now. There will be a roundtable with Abbott, but her contact person has been out with family emergencies so has not been able to set it in stone yet. But it looks

hopeful that this can be pulled together for Spring: it will be a lunchtime meeting as we did two years ago, and will be outside the normal series (graduate students will be invited). Graduate students will also be invited to the seminar with Karen Nordell Pearson; with her visit will also be a workshop. There will be a panel on grants: Kolla is looking for one or two more people to join her on the panel with grants other than DOD grants. Judy volunteered, as did Ben.

NPA: Ben and Rifat will go to NPA and present the survey responses. They will apply for NPA Travel Grants (OGPA will cover the cost of half the travel, as we did with Imogen two years ago). The grants are due Feb 25.

Survey: James would like to wait for Rifat's return from Bangladesh to schedule a meeting with Pat Shymanski. There was general agreement that the raw data from the survey should be put up on the web: Ben will check to see if the version he has is complete, or if we need to wait for Rifat's return. There was some concern expressed about the salary data, but it was agreed to put it on the web as is. Its reported data, not actual figures, and is therefore a bit fuzzy.

Website: Harold still needs photos from some committee members; also, we have the e-mail address for complaints/complements for Garnett-Powers, now we need approval for the language for it on the web page. Melissa will send to Nancy for review.

Funds: James talked Surgery into giving \$250 for the Seminar Series. He plans to target other departments with large postdoc populations as well, and wants volunteers to go with him on the ask. There were volunteers from Medicine, MGCB, etc. It was suggested we get vendor sponsors for the picnic (or a Department could sponsor the picnic specifically).

Benefits: One Garnett-Powers issue has come up. Since they have the start and end dates of all PDS & PDFs, they send out automatic letters saying "your benefits will terminate on this date" before the end date – causing some postdocs to wonder if GPA knows something about their employment situation that hasn't been communicated to them yet. Mostly the problem is that the paperwork hasn't been completed yet: in the past, some postdocs got their re-appointment letters retroactively. Academic Affairs and GPA are working to resolve this issue: meanwhile the notices from GPA should be a spur to postdocs to talk to their HR administrators about their re-appointments.