

Post Doc Association Notes

February 23, 2004

Attending: Dibyendu Bhattacharyya, Thelma Tennant, Imogen Hurley, Isaac Skromme, , Nancy Schwartz, Parag Shah, Melissa Lindberg **Absent:** Randall Dahn, Arun Roy

Announcements: Heather Sevenser, from CAPS, could not attend the meeting due to illness. She will be invited back to a later meeting.

Dr. Schwartz will be attending the NPA annual meeting in San Diego the weekend of March 11-12. She invited others to join her there, with OGA picking up the cost; I. Hurley and T. Tennant expressed an interest.

Discussion: I. Skromme began by discussing the proposed seminar series. He proposed meeting every week, late Friday afternoon (4 pm was suggested), and having two speakers per week to diversify the audience. A tentative monthly schedule would be to have two weeks with post-doc speakers, one week with a faculty speaker on a general topic, and then the final week of the month would be a social event. Dr. Schwartz agreed that the Office of Graduate Affairs would underwrite the activities of the seminar series. Those present agreed that the plan seemed feasible.

Imogen Hurley then went over her work on the Post Doc web site, reviewing it page by page. Her starting basis was making it a place for information rather than policy. She wanted a web site that provided quick links to useful information, and geared it to new Post Docs. She noted gaps which will be filled in later as the information is available. D. Bhattacharyya asked if there would be some sort of classified listing, where post docs could communicate with each other about needs – equipment needs, etc. – and there was consensus that a series of message boards might work. It was agreed that it was desirable to use the mailing list for limited communications.

There was a discussion about the policies which apply to Post Docs; currently the policies in use are those given by NIH. Cases are decided on an individual basis, applying student or staff/faculty policies as applicable on an individual basis. There is no grievance policy, nor a policy covering maternity leave, at the present time. These policies, as well as others that the group sees a need for, will need to be developed over time. The Provost handles all things regarding disabilities; and the Office of Minority Student Affairs (OMSA) is expanding its purview to post docs as well.

The website will need a flow chart for “what is the BSD,” as well as a listing of the three types of Post Docs. Dr. Schwartz noted that the appointments for Post Doctoral Fellow and Post Doctoral Scholar come through Academic Affairs, but for Research Professional the appointments are made through Human Resources. There was discussion about whether the needs of the Research Professional category were the same as the other two, and where they overlap and are distinct. D. Bhattacharyya noted that many foreign post docs seem to settle in the Research Professional category, often for visa reasons. There are no time/term limits on Research Professionals, but they are not expected to move forward in an academic career. Fellows and Scholars are expected to receive further training as academics, have a limited time period working with their sponsor, and then

move on in their careers, either to faculty positions in academia or to the biotech industry. Approximately five years is appropriate for the post doctoral experience. It was decided to acquire the list of Research Professionals, reach out once, and see what the response was, if any.

There will be a page of funding opportunities; hopefully, with a “subscribe” form so e-mail announcements of new opportunities can go out to a list of interested people. Also, a listing of Journal Clubs and Lectures that meet regularly; contact with the Cluster Administrators will be needed to get a complete list. There are many pages to link to for information about careers.

The question of post doc’s and teaching opportunities came up: they are available on a case-by-case basis. Many PIs are reluctant to allow their post docs time away from the lab; also, there is the question of remuneration, as they are already being paid as a full-time employee and cannot be paid extra for teaching. Dr. Schwartz brought up the Pew Consortium, which is a group of 14 midwest liberal arts colleges which band together to hold teaching workshops (open to post docs) and through which an opportunities arise for replacing faculty on sabbatical.

There was some discussion about how to generate interest in the Post Doctoral Association; hopefully, both the web site and the seminar series will be a good starting point. The first seminar could be a launch party for the web site. Posters can be distributed, cluster administrators and faculty made aware of the series. The steering committee would like to grow into a larger group.

To that end, T. Tennant spoke about the Orientation Packet: in her view, it would be a loose-leaf binder with indexes for information. This would ideally be distributed to new post docs by a member of a welcome committee of post docs, thereby allowing a personal contact and exchange of information. This may duplicate information on the web site, but it is often handy to have the information in more than one place. The idea is the web site would be updated regularly but the Orientation Packet may only be updated once a year. Information on new post docs would come from Academic Affairs.

D. Bhattacharyya reported on the Post Doc Panel at ASCB (American Society of Cell Biology). The group was divided into smaller groups, with faculty members sitting with each group. At the end, each group presented their concerns. Job concerns were the highest, with 98% of Post Docs aiming for academic careers, and a smaller percentage interested in going into biotech or bioethics/science reporting. Many of the post docs present were foreign-born, and so immigration issues were prominent as well, as well as funding restrictions favoring citizens and permanent residents.

Some grants are available for senior Post Docs, for transitional times: five years, with 2 years for completing the post doc and three years salary support as a new faculty. There’s a joint committee of the NPA and NIH working to increase these opportunities.

The next meeting will be in March, after the NPA conference.