

Postdoc Association Notes
June 19, 2008

Attending: Natacha Bodenhausen, Rifat Hasina, Imogen Hurley, Kolla Kristjansdottir, Guoqing Lin, James McCracken, Harold Olivey, Victoria Robinson, Nancy Schwartz, Melissa Lindberg, and Parag Shah.

Introductions: Everyone introduced themselves to Natacha, who is thinking of joining the Steering Committee.

Discussion:

Supplemental Stipends/Insurance costs for Fellows: Imogen brought up a discrepancy in the way the rule about fellow supplemental stipends are applied: in some cases, even if the amount provided for in the grant is completely inadequate to cover the cost of health insurance, the department/PI still gives the lower stipend rather than the amount needed to cover the difference. Nancy agreed this is a problem, but at this point these issues need to be resolved case-by-case, as there are so many different levels at which grants cover insurance. The ones that don't are clear cut, as are the ones that cover the cost fully – but its been difficult so far to craft a rule to cover the ones which are only partially covered. Nancy does not review supplemental stipend levels, only salaries.

There was a broader discussion about the cost of family/spousal coverage for fellows. For families, it's up to \$1000/month. It was unclear whether this was significantly higher under Garnett-Powers than previously. Melissa encouraged the use of the benefits email for general comments – anything the Administration can later use to negotiate with Garnett-Powers to cut the best deal possible.

Second Postdoc Information Meeting June 9: Approximately 1-12 postdocs attended the second session, including one RPA. Some newer postdocs, many who have come within the last six months. There were fewer questions than at the first. Most questions seem to revolve around financial stuff – taxes, stipends – and there is a fair amount of focus on the transition from scholar to fellow. The administrators group is pleased with the turnout – 10-12 postdocs per month will be a good portion of the postdocs attending the sessions.

Survey: James brought up the fact that we'd like to do the survey again in the fall, see if we can raise the numbers responding by doing at the same time again. Rifat attended the NPA seminar on surveys, and has some ideas on changes. They also had some notes from the last survey on questions they'd like to reword or clarify. Ben will chair the survey committee this year.

NPA Core Competencies: NPA will put out a list of Core Competencies – these are being reviewed. They got feedback on them at the Annual Meeting, and sent them to FASEB for comment. You can complete an online survey about them. They are compiling responses, and will incorporate them in the final document. They will spend 3-4 weeks doing this, and include suggestions from FASEB on including “How-to-implement” and “Resources” section so that institutions have a starting point for achieving the core competencies. The plan is that it will go to the Board in Sept. or Oct., and be ready for general distribution by December.

The Responsible Conduct of Research is one of the Core Competencies. There was discussion about publicizing Julian Solway's seminars over the summer – we can put out notices about

those since the PDA seminar series is on break for the summer. You can decide to go the same day as the seminar, so there's no long term sign-up.

Seminars: The Seminar Committee is on break. They will begin putting together the fall schedule in mid-to-late August. They welcome ideas. Nancy reminded them about wanting to do larger events with Abbott, etc. when possible. Kolla said she had wanted to set one up for Spring, but the contact at Abbott had a family emergency in February and has been unresponsive since. Her boss encourages Kolla to contact her: the contact then does not return calls or emails. The new plan is to have one in the fall, if we can get it set up. We'd like to do a roundtable, similar to the one done two – three years ago. These are extremely popular events: for the first one, there was a panel discussion then an informal lunch – we ordered food for 75, and over 100 showed up.

CAPS: Rifat relayed some concern with CAPS not providing immersion workshops for postdocs. She'd like to see more programming specifically directed to postdocs. However, most of their funding comes from student activity fees, so this may be problematic. It was agreed to invite Heather to the next Steering Committee meeting, so a broader discussion could happen.

NPA: Nancy brought up the NPA Advocacy ARISE Report, which will get sent out to everyone. NPA is trying to advocate investing in early career scientists; they have met with NIH and lobbied Congress, but so far there is no money for anything but Defense. There may be a 1% increase in stipends from NIH next year. There was a lot of discussion about the new parental leave policy for Fellows – 60 days. How will institutions cope with this new requirement, and deal with making the leave policy equitable compared to scholars?

The meeting adjourned at 1 pm.