

## **Post Doc Association Notes December 1, 2004**

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

Dr. Schwartz began by describing the history of the Post Doc Association, noting that an active group began in 1999. The group at that time requested certain policies across the Division regarding the structuring of Post Doctoral appointments. With that request under consideration, currently post docs are divided into three levels:

- 1) Fellows – those that have an outside source of funding
- 2) Scholars – those covered by a research grant
- 3) Research professional – staff level track

The first two levels are to be considered equal, and are for those who will be going on to academic careers.

They also instituted a benefits packet for Fellows/Scholars which included medical, retirement, disability, and life insurance. They added \$600 to the stipend to cover the taxes on the benefits.

Dr. Schwartz then mentioned the national organization for post docs, the National Postdoctoral Association. She serves on the Advisory Board. She also noted the Lab Management Manual from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (which is downloadable). Previously, OGA gave incoming Post Docs the book *Enhancing the Post Doctoral Experience for Scientist and Engineers* and will acquire more copies of it to give out to current post docs.

Dibyendu has been invited to serve on a panel of Post Docs at the American Society of Cell Biology which will discuss Post Doc issues, especially regarding employment after a post doc and training received during a post doc.

In the past, the PDA had seminars and workshops for fellow post docs. UC and NU put on an employment fair five years ago where 22 employers came for a day, looked at post doc and senior graduate students posters, and had booths in the afternoon. Now CAPS has taken over that function, and they have a person with a PhD dedicated to BSD who will work on a one-on-one basis with individuals. They maintain a database of positions as well. The employment fair is now two days, here and at Northwestern, and held in the spring at the Ida Noyes Hall. CAPS can come to the BSD and talk to a group of Post Docs about their role and the ways they can help a job search.

It was noted that there is a website, but that it probably needs to be updated. The web site would be very helpful to Post Docs if it had links to all the pertinent sites – benefits, career, etc. Also perhaps some kind of “classified” ad section, where post docs needing to use specific equipment could ask other post docs for sharing, etc.

Also discussed was the e-mailing list, and the difficulties surrounding maintaining an accurate list. The current list needs some work. Not all Post Docs are receiving notices. In 2000-2001, when Dr. Schwartz did a study of Post Docs, there were over 400. This past summer, the list had shrunk to 280-290 or so, as PI's shift post docs around to lessen paperwork and cost.

Since Post Docs may start at any time during the year, there is no one entry point where names may be collected or information disbursed. Dr. Schwartz reads all appointment letters however, and is responsible for enforcing the conditions set forth in the letters. The University has set strict standards for Post Doc pay and raises and conditions of training.

OGA has taken over responsibility for Post Doc Affairs (except for appointments), and would serve as staff for a revived Post Doc Association. We would fund some social events, reserve rooms, staff the web site, and buy food/drink for seminars if desired. It was pointed out that networking is part of the transition from post doc to faculty.

Discussion began on how a revived PDA would work: like the Dean's Council for graduate students? At the moment, it is relying on volunteer efforts, though at some point we may want to be sure that each department is represented. A possible structure would be to have a two-tiered system with an "Executive Committee" running the show and a "council" that would need to come to one meeting a month and perhaps help out at events.

There are six areas need some thought: the web site (Imogen), Orientation packets for new post docs (Thelma), Seminars/Social Events (Isaac), Networking (Dibyendu), and Careers (perhaps we can ask the person [Heather Sevener] from CAPS to come).

Dr. Schwartz also noted that NSF held a three-day meeting for advice regarding post docs, inviting faculty, administrators, and post docs to give input. They would like very much to fund more transition awards – perhaps a five-year award that would cover the last two years of a post doc and the first three of a faculty position, to give salary support and support for purchase of lab supplies. They would like to fund 200 of these; currently it is not budgeted however.

It was decided to hold another meeting in January. OGA will come up with a list of current post docs, by dept, with labs and e-mails, by the next meeting. The meeting will be at noontime again, with lunch. On the table will be what we would like to do, and what is feasible here. The URL will be sent to all members for feedback: suggestions can be sent directly to Melissa Lindberg.