

Minutes from PDA Steering Committee Meeting – 9/18/08

Attendees: James McCracken (chair), Madina Sukhanova, Kolla Kristansdottir, Harold Olivey, Cheng Huang, Victoria Robinson, Guoqing Lin, Natacha Bodenhausen, Parag Shah, Melissa Lindberg, Judy Cannon, Nancy Schwartz, and Ben Wolfe

Agenda Topics:

1.) Survey 2008: Ben reported that the timeline for the BSD-PDA survey 2008 was on schedule, with the exception that the survey will not be loaded onto Survey Monkey for the committee's test-run by 9/19/08 as originally set. Instead, Ben requested that he have the weekend to load the survey onto Survey Monkey, after which he will send out the link to test-run the survey. The launch date of 9/29/08 still stands, and Ben passed around flyers to be posted by the committee advertising the upcoming survey. Natacha also brought up whether or not questions related to the Postdoctoral Information Sessions should be on the survey. The consensus was that we should survey on this, just not too exhaustively.

2.) Website Update: James, Harold, Kolla, and Melissa have met with Sara Borrell-Burrough (sp.?) from NSIT regarding redesign of our website. Although NSIT does not support the "wiki" system for content management that was previously discussed, they do support a system whereby multiple users (requiring login IDs) could access and alter the content of certain pages, but still require approval of the webmaster. Parag and Melissa will get back in touch with the NSIT representative for another round of discussions. Apparently, the NSIT schedule is booked about 3 months ahead, so any alterations are still several months away. James will seek volunteers at a later date for the editing and redesign of the website.

3.) General Studies Classes: Victoria mentioned that a postdoctoral fellow (NRSA) had sent her an email inquiring as to how to register for courses and whether or not they would be eligible for the tuition benefit as a fellow. The conclusion was that as a fellow, this individual will not be eligible for the tuition benefit but that they should register for courses through the Graham School. The addition of this information on the website as part of the FAQ section was also discussed. Melissa mentioned that there is already information on taking classes on the website with a link to the Graham School.

4.) Benefits Issues: James has received a few benefits-related questions from postdocs regarding visits to the OBGYN and dermatologist that are no longer being billed as office visits. Melissa is in discussion with GPA to try to clear up what the difference might be here. We concluded that GPA may either not be recognizing these as standard office visits or the way that UCH is billing these visits may have changed. The committee agreed that a request should go out in the bulletin for postdoc feedback on GPA and whether or not they have had any problems. Victoria will write and seek approval of the message prior to its disbursement. Cheng raised the issue that we might want to know how to give advice to postdoc insurance problems. We decided that postdocs should first contact GPA about their specific problem. If this does not resolve the issue, postdocs should

email PDA-benefit-report@bsd.uchicago.edu to get the problem on record. If the problem is still not resolved, they should contact Melissa directly.

5.) Other discussions:

-Kolla mentioned that the seminar next Friday (9/26) is cancelled due to Heather Sevenser being on bed-rest. James mentioned that he might have someone to fill the slot. There was a discussion about James Evans (U of C) filling the slot, but it was decided that this was not the best week for his seminar.

-Nancy suggested that we request GPA to make a trip back out to the U of C for a Q and A session. It was suggested that the Provost's office is renegotiating GPA's services for 2009. She will find out about the terms of this and whether or not it will be feasible to have them come out. It was also mentioned that we would have the survey results documenting the satisfaction of postdocs with GPA.

-Judy asked about the possibility of extending the tuition benefit to fellows. Nancy responded that we have previously brought this up with Academic Affairs to no avail. Fellows are a BSD-specific situation, and they represent a very small percentage of the overall employees.

-Nancy said that the BSD was developing a new postdoc program, the Chicago Postdoctoral Program. This will be an endowed 3-year fellowship. She said that information about this will be up on the website shortly.