

**BSD Postdoctoral Association Committee Meeting  
12 noon, Wednesday November 15, 2006 BSLC 305**

Present: Imogen Hurley (chair), Isaac Skromne, Ayaz Sayeed, Kolla Kristjansdottir, Rifat Hasina, Jason Ward, Cheng Huang

**1. New committee members**

Jason Ward was welcomed into the committee and offered the opportunity to act as secretary or maintain the weekly bulletin as suggested by Judy Cannon (current secretary). He was also invited to think of alternative roles not currently provided by the association. He will consider these options and get back to IH.

**2.a Milwaukee meeting**

IH described the 1 day "Put Your PhD to Work – A Career Symposium for Scientists" on October 28 organized by the Medical College of Wisconsin with support from other Midwest postdoc associations. There were roughly 250 participants: half grad students, half postdocs. Although Northwestern students and postdocs went, the only UofC participants were BSD Postdoctoral Association (PDA) committee members: IH, James McCracken (JM), AS, KK and RH. KK suggested that attendance from UofC might have been low due to the absence of paper fliers or because the PDA already provides seminars on the topics covered.

RH explained the sessions: a mixture of common talks and concurrent sessions on job skills and career options for scientists. The Interviewing session explained what skills PhDs have to offer and was a good source of links and articles. The speaker from sciencecareers.org offered to come to UofC in early 2007. RH and IH both found the role play during the Negotiating Skills talk from a law professor very useful. KK and AS said that the sessions on Biotech and alternative careers provided good ideas for lateral career moves still involving science but not bench work. RH was glad that the Biotech talk included specific details such as salary and an explanation of what to expect such as frequent meetings and report writing. The session attended by IH on the Academic Job Search from the careers service at UCSF was also excellent.

CH asked what lessons could be learned from the symposium for the UofC postdoc seminar series. Bigger companies attended the symposium but KK pointed out that it may be difficult for the association to get them. It was suggested that speakers from the UofC may be easier to recruit. IS said that these talks might therefore be more theoretical in nature. KK has attended a networking class which could be included.

JM and IH went to the postdoc association/office dinner the night before the symposium. It was a very positive and useful evening. Links were made with other associations/offices including a member of the Northwestern Postdoctoral Education Office who was appointed six weeks ago.

IH reported that the UofC had been asked to host the next Midwest symposium. Phil Clifford who ran this year's event offered to come to UofC early next year to talk about what was involved and the responses they received from a survey following the symposium. Dean Nancy Schwartz said that her office would support such an event. Additional help might come from new links with Northwestern and the future appointment of a postdoc officer at UofC. As this would be a major endeavor, it was agreed that the committee would think about it and discuss it at the next meeting.

**2.b National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) Annual Meeting**

IS reminded committee members of the NPA annual meeting in Berkeley next March. The BSD Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs has funded attendance in

the past. RH expressed an interest in attending. The committee agreed to look at the agenda and discuss it at the next meeting.

### **3. Seminar Series update**

The seminars have been well attended with usually around 20-30 people, sometimes more. AS said that the Consultancy seminar included lots of discussion and questions from student and postdocs. There was little overlap in those attending with another recent consultancy event.

The series for next quarter is already almost full. KK is liaising with a contact from Astellas to possibly get a panel of speakers from different companies. RH asked what they would cover. The Astellas representative would discuss the differences between industry and academia, and the panel would discuss the industry. RH suggested Baxter in Chicago but KK thought they were mainly manufacturing. KK also emailed Jerry Coyne who originally said he was too busy to participate, to see if he would be interested in discussing science writing at a later date. IS will be contacting the Core Facilities for talks on nano technology or microscopy. AS has been unable to contact PloS but will continue to try. He has been in touch with the Illinois Department of Commerce to find out what job opportunities they offer. IS suggested asking them about the start-ups that they interact with. AS is also working on a law firm seminar and suggested contacting the CIA/FBI for job opportunities. Michael Stebbins, who is involved in science policy with FASEB in D.C., told IS he is not coming to Chicago soon, so funding from the Dean's office would be required for his visit. IH offered to find out about the UofC office that helps faculty with grant writing.

### **4. Update from the Dean: Mentoring Plan / Library privileges**

Following a recent meeting with the Dean, IH reported that it would not be possible to make the mentoring plan compulsory. The Dean anticipated serious faculty resistance to such a proposal. The committee suggested alternative strategies such as:

- 1) Use existing system within human resources during the reappointment process to circulate the document (CH). KK suggested sending it to faculty but CH and RH were concerned that it would get lost.
- 2) Email the document to postdocs at the time of their reappointment (IS).
- 3) Send out the document to all postdocs each January.

These options were ranked in preference, 1 being the best. It was agreed that even if compliance with the document was not mandatory that it would have merit, for example, acting as a reminder to some PIs to discuss career progression with their postdocs.

Some postdocs reported a recent change in their library privileges. IH suggested that this was due to the library realizing that it had not been treating all postdocs equally. Postdocs who were appointed as Research Associates prior to the postdoc job title changes in 2004 had the same library privileges as faculty. Equalizing all postdocs' privileges meant a reduction in privileges for these older postdocs. However, the Dean has contacted the library and it may be possible to increase postdoc privileges in the future.

### **5. Bulletin Board**

CH explained that the bulletin board would be a resource for postdocs to ask questions and get help. It would be better than FAQs as it would not be fixed. The association has been put on a waiting list with the university's free bulletin board service. Once a bulletin board is set up, CH asked the committee to post questions and answers. JW suggested that this was done prior to an official launch so that postdocs could see it in action. A postdoc social would be used to publicize the launch.

## **6. Information for new postdocs**

The association has put together an orientation pack for new postdocs. IH explained that it was possible to download the pack contents off the postdoc website and that from November 2006 all new postdocs would be mailed a hard copy. It includes: a folder covered in useful links about the university and Hyde Park produced for grad students; a welcome note describing the association's resources; benefits information for postdocs; a Time Out magazine about Chicago. IH will put the packs together this month and Melissa Lindberg will send them out to new postdocs when she receives their names from the Office of Academic Affairs quarterly.

## **7. Date of next committee meeting**

It was agreed that the next committee meeting should be in January 2007 and that the committee should meet with Dean Nancy Schwartz in February for a six month review if possible.