

BSD-PDA meeting minutes
April 12th, 2006

Present: Imogen Hurley, Andie Ward, Judy Cannon, Nilesh Banavali, Isaac Skromne, Ayaz Sayeed.
Imogen-chair

I. PDA organization-Judy

A. 2005-2006

President-Imogen Hurley
Secretary-Judy Cannon

Chairs:

- Seminar series chair-Isaac Skromne
- Social chair-Andie Ward
- Orientation chair-Thelma Tennant
- Webmaster-Imogen Hurley
- Annual survey-Nilesh Banavali
- Listserve and announcements-Andie Ward
- PDA member-Dibyendu Bhattacharyya

For the 2006-2007 year, we need individuals to fill the following capacities:

Chairs:

- Seminar series chair
- Social chair
- Webmaster
- Foreign post-doc affairs
- Listserve and announcements

All approved the current proposed organization as listed above. For next year, Andie and Nilesh will be off to new jobs (congratulations!) and to fill their slots, we proposed that Judy take over the listserve and announcements. Ayaz will consider either working with Isaac on the seminar series or the social chair, he will reply next meeting. Imogen will continue as webmaster, and we will postpone having anyone serve as foreign post-doc affairs chair until we assess needs.

Ayaz asked about organization, as this was his meeting. We replied that we were informally organized, and that this was our first attempt at further organization.

We all agreed that elections were unnecessary, as we do not have enough individuals to fill current needs. If the situation changes, we will reconsider this option.

II. Postdoc rights and benefits-Imogen

The postdoc benefits page prepared by Imogen is almost ready. Has been cleared with appropriate HR individuals. All commented that this was very well prepared and very helpful. The written explanation of postdoctoral fellows status is still under review and should be ready soon.

III. National PDA meeting-Imogen

Imogen will attend the national PDA meeting and said that any who were interested could attend with financial help from the Dean. She will present a poster there that will demonstrate the achievements of the PDA at the U of Chicago from 1999 to present. She asked permission to use photographs of PDA committee members on the poster, all agreed, even if somewhat embarrassingly.

Imogen presented several possibilities for concurrent sessions to ask for input as to what sessions might be most useful. We agreed that for the first session she would attend career development-lab and time management and the second session, mentoring or individual development plans.

In connection with the workshops, Ayaz and Judy expressed interest in more seminars on career development on the academic track to help those interested in pursuing a career in academia.

IV. Survey-Nilesh

Nilesh prepared a draft of a survey. All commented. Imogen asked what our goals were with the survey, and the main goal is to gather information about what the postdoc life is like at U of C. Armed with these statistics, we can approach the administration with advocacy positions as deemed appropriate.

Imogen expressed a strong desire to get feedback on our role as the PDA committee. She will suggest several questions that will address this. Also, any information we might be able to get from HR directly we should not use valuable space on survey for. Many questions will not be able to be obtained via HR, e.g. family status, housing costs, taxes.

Imogen brought the survey done by the previous PDA, which showed that postdocs mainly wanted the PDA to be an advocate with the Dean's office. All agreed that to advocate appropriately, we needed more information.

Additional suggestions as to what to do with survey: ask about demographic information about postdocs, foreign vs. US, # children, sex. Additional questions about seminar series will be given to Nilesh by Isaac.

Judy suggested the survey should not be too much long answer based, as this turns people off to answering the survey.

Nilesh prefers a web based survey. At Cornell, they emailed out surveys but had low return. Web base may improve response rate. Imogen said there is a template from the previous PDA for this, Nilesh will look and play with it. Nilesh envisions many pull down menus, and possibly only 1 question or a few related questions per page. He will work on it and report back next meeting.

The analysis will be involved, but Nilesh who has done it before at Cornell offered graciously to do it for us.

V. Future:

Ayaz suggested we publicize our activities more, possibly with a newsletter. Imogen remarked that we had the orientation package which we hope will serve a similar function. A newsletter is a lot of work and may be considered when we have more manpower. Imogen had approached the Chronicle for an article about us, Chronicle did not seem interested. Judy has a contact at the Maroon and will pursue whether they are interested in writing something up about the PDA for publicity.

We need to buy a pointer for the seminar series, Judy will ask Melissa Lindberg to handle it. It will be kept in Melissa's office.

Imogen will set up a meeting with Dean Schwartz in the summer to follow up on our previous meeting and to discuss next year. She will email Melissa to set it up.

For the May PDA meeting, we will ask Thelma to come with the orientation packet to prepare to hand out at the fall kickoff. Nilesh will bring a draft of the survey based on comments he received today.

For the June meeting we will discuss what to go over with Dean Schwartz.

The seminar series will end on June 9th with a BBQ on the lawn of the BSLC. Approval is imminent for the space.

JLC 4-13-06