

WHOI Postdoctoral Association

MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 15

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Caryn House

Committee members present:

Heather Benway, Sébastien Bertrand, Jason Chaytor, Angela Dickens, Henrieta Dulaiova, Ted Durland, Brea Govenar, Phoebe Lam and David Ralston.

Other representatives present:

Janet Fields (Postdoctoral Coordinator/Academic Programs)

1. Meeting opened by Heather

2. Thank you to Janet

We gave a thank-you to Janet for all of her hard work getting a space for postdocs in Caryn House and furnishing the space. It looks gorgeous and very welcoming. We also thanked her for helping get dental insurance for postdoctoral scholars. Great work!

3. Introduction of new PDA members

We have three new members: Sébastien Bertrand is the new MC&G representative, replacing Angie; Jason Chaytor is the new G&G rep, replacing Heather; and Alex Rao is taking Phoebe's place as At-Large Representative.

4. New Information Sheet for new postdocs

Heather updated the information sheet for new postdocs about the PDA and other postdoc resources, and the rest of the PDA reviewed it. The link to the website didn't work because of changes to the WHOI website, and we thought we should highlight how to subscribe to the all-postdocs mailing list because people often don't know about this. We also decided to title the sheet differently to stress that it had information about general resources for postdocs. Heather said she would make these changes and get the revised sheet to Janet and Human Resources.

5. Selection of PDA officers and representatives for committees

The new PDA officers are:

President – Brea

Vice President – Alex

Secretary – Jason

Treasurer/Beer Czar – Ted. This is a new office. He will keep track of donations for drinks and food and make sure we're stocked.

Committee representatives:

Gender Equity – Alex (Dave as alternate)

International – Sébastien

Women's – Henrieta (continuing; with Brea as alternate)

Ed Council – Dave (Ted as alternate); both are continuing

6. *Caryn House*

The opening reception was very successful, and the room is ready for normal use by postdocs. Ted will get a box for donations of money for beer, soda and snacks. We should also post a sign with the suggested donation amounts of \$2 for beer; \$1 for soda, and change for snacks. We'll keep the donations can in the fridge. Janet will get some folding chairs and a grill. The PDA will start gathering books on careers and other issues to be kept in the room as resources.

7. *JP Alumni career panel – June 6*

The panel will feature alums following alternate (non-academic) career paths. On a similar topic, Heather culled the list of postdoc alums, and the continuing PDA members will keep and work with this list.

8. *Education Council Report (Dave, Ted and Janet)*

The last meeting was mostly about JP and postdoc admissions. They also approved new courses, including one on “Communicating Ocean Sciences”. The next time this is offered, postdocs may be able to audit it, but they would need to be actively involved, not just sitting in on the course as it will involve teaching and outreach in schools. The council also approved the revised AOP&E curriculum and is continuing to review a course on Arctic sciences.

9. *International Committee (Phoebe and Janet)*

The committee has a great new website, and is working on getting community helpers together for new international visitors and workers. They are planning a potluck for next Monday.

10. *Women's Committee (Henrieta and Angie)*

The committee just hosted another coffee, but neither Angie nor Henrieta were able to attend, and we've both also missed the last few meetings of the committee because of other conflicts.

11. *Changes in benefits*

The institution will be changing some of its benefits policies in order to crack down on abuses of the sick leave policy.

12. *National Postdoctoral Association Meeting (Phoebe and Janet)*

Phoebe and Janet recently attended the NPA meeting in Berkeley. The first day, PDAs (associations) and PDOs (offices) met separately. Phoebe reported that in general, we have it good, especially compared with NIH-funded postdocs who do get taken advantage of. She did wonder whether we wanted to look into getting retirement while at WHOI. She attended a session on the transfer of institutional memory for PDAs and said we generally function well in this respect. She said the differences in postdoc status were universal, not specific to WHOI. And she got a CD from Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center that has lots of information for postdocs, that she'll leave in the postdoc room as a resource.

Janet reported that she got a handout with a great list of benchmarks for what different PDOs are doing. More training is happening at other institutions (such as how to set up a lab,

writing proposals, ethics, etc), and she thinks we should do more of this here and that it should be postdoc-driven. We discussed having a session on negotiating for jobs, which could involve having postdocs with jobs and alums talk, including giving actual numbers for salaries and startup. Another idea is working on how to advance teaching opportunities for postdocs at WHOI. We may put suggestions and links on the webpage.

From the general NPA meeting, Janet and Phoebe reported that some PDAs/PDOs invite other groups or committees to social events to network and connect. NSF and NIH combined to define for the first time what a postdoctoral scholar/fellow was. NIH has a program to help postdocs pay back college loans, and international postdocs can now apply for the big NIH training grants. Also, the NSF International Research Fellowships now have money for fellows to go abroad for a year and then return to the US for a year. NIH postdoc award proposals have to involve mentoring of those postdocs, and NSF may start putting more emphasis on formalized mentoring of postdocs as well. Janet also has great information on responsible conduct in research. Phoebe said some places have separate career days for traditional and non-traditional careers.

13. TGIF this Friday

We'll host a TGIF this Friday in Caryn House, now that it's all set up.

13. Next meeting

Will be in June some time.

14. Meeting closed by Heather

(Minutes recorded by Angie)