

Meeting minutes 16 May 2022

PDA meeting 16 May 2022

In attendance: Elaine, Yaamini, Svenja, Mike, Maggi, Hannah

Elaine is running the meeting, Hannah is taking notes

Called to order at 10:06ish

Agenda

Start planning all-postdoc meeting (casual discussion) for spring (bring this up to Meg when talking to her about selecting trustee dinner people)

Plan for negotiations/startup event (Elaine and Hannah)

General WHOI issues/housing stuff

Trustee meeting - select attendees

random topics

Some reflection on event from Friday (short-term postdoc strategies): was helpful, reassuring

WHOI increased their childcare subsidy! Nice to see that happen. We should make sure all postdocs see that info since some of us missed it. Seems like the process for getting subsidy is a little opaque/messy?

startup/negotiations event planning

Week of June 27th - specifically, *on* June 27th is the plan. 11am.

Who to invite? Recently hired postdocs? People from outside WHOI, since WHOI startup process is not like other places? Be sure to invite some people who actually needed equipment (not just a desk and a computer)

Svenja knows someone at SUNY Albany who was a WHOI postdoc and needed to negotiate for lab space (Dr. Sujata Murty)

Elaine and Hannah will each think about 2 people to invite and reach out soon - 1 month lead time would be good for invites

There are a lot of people in town for the summer - MBL summer course instructors, GFD summer school people might be good options to ask in case we do this hybrid and can have in-person conversation. Recent MIT hires in EAPS might also be good (e.g. William Frank, Camilla Cattania)

general WHOI issues, especially housing

WCC has had a lot of discussion about this recently. Specifically, idea to join lots of WHOI committees together and organize to talk to Sr Admin about the housing crisis in WH

Scott Loranger and Ben Weiss are leading a working group on housing in CDEI

Sr Admin do know there is an issue and are "working on it" already

Scott and Ben are concerned that we don't have data to share with admin on the issues people are facing; Sheri is concerned that giving administration data will just let them take it and say "thanks, we've got this" and then not have input from community. Sheri also wants this conversation to happen soon, given the state of the housing market and the fact that "crisis" is a fairly accurate descriptor.

PDA signed onto email to Sr Admin about planning WHOI-wide meeting, to be organized/led by Ben and Scott with Sr Admin invited to hear the discussion and participate.

postdoc-specific housing issues to highlight

We want to make sure that in this discussion, it's clear that postdocs have a distinct set of needs compared to, say, JP students: more likely to have families, pets; need to be able to find year-round affordable housing for family groups and can't do the shared-housing thing or winter rentals/move around all the time. Additionally, postdocs are very temporary (1-3 years, mostly) and don't have high salaries (or, often, savings) so we're definitely not in the same boat as assistant scientists who might find it more feasible/logical to buy a home.

Postdocs are also not prioritized at all for WHOI housing - no backup options like JP students have

Housing market here is very opaque and word-of-mouth based. Many new folks coming in rely on websites like craigslist and WHOI housing, but most rentals are not actually found there - they're passed on from students to students, for example, without ever being publicly advertised. People moving from out of town (and/or out of country) have an especially hard time, and that describes most postdocs.

Can we have a more efficient clearing-house for available housing in the area? More transparency? Somehow incentivize people to actually list available rooms/houses?

Note that in our experience, folks who have been here a while seem not to realize just how much rents have gone up recently, and the high percentage of income most of us are paying out of necessity. When some of us have shared what we're paying it has really surprised people who haven't been renters in recent years.

Should we survey postdocs about their housing status/rent/difficulties? Possibly this info will be surveyed over a broader population by the CDEI working group.

surveys and postdocs

Do we send too many surveys? Maybe, but then also it's useful to have info about how postdocs do things eg. getting health insurance, tax prep, rent. Info from past surveys has been very helpful (e.g. compiled documents on taxes and insurance that are fairly recent)

It helps to plead with people to take surveys directly rather than just via mass email, relying on relationships within departments

JP students sent out a housing- and rent-related survey recently that we could borrow questions from, maybe

At 10:41, Elaine, Hannah, and Svenja left the zoom to recuse themselves from discussion re: who should attend the trustee dinner on Thursday

To do:

- Elaine and Hannah communicate with each other and start inviting people for negotiations/startup panel (June 27, 11am)
- Should we update the list of current postdocs on the google drive? Does Janet have that info?
 - Svenja will contact Janet about this and see about maintaining it
- Elaine will check in with Meg about all-postdoc meeting to be held in the near future on zoom - sooner rather than later if possible, there will always be schedule conflicts for some people. Aim for late June
- Mike, Yaamini, and Maggi will figure out priority list for Trustee dinner on Thursday
- Mike will email out about his band playing on Millfield and at Grumpy's, informal opportunity for postdocs to get together
- Svenja will reach out to Eesh about planning for summer postdoc social event/bbq