

Minutes of GPC meeting, Wednesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> 2006  
Chaired by Mike Fuerstman ([fuerstm@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:fuerstm@fas.harvard.edu)) and Elizabeth Hulme  
([hulme@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:hulme@fas.harvard.edu))

G2 Proposal Practices:

Daina Graybosch explained that last year HWIC organized proposal practices for G2 women who were interested. This involved finding volunteer graduate students and postdocs, whose work was related to the proposal topic or who worked for members of the proposal committee, to listen to a 1-2 hour mock proposal defense and offer advice to the G2. HWIC also scheduled rooms and organized food for these events.

The GPC will take over the organization of these events for the coming year and will expand it to all interested G2s. Luisa Gronenberg has volunteered to head this program. Once interested G2s have signed up and provided their proposal topic the GPC will have a meeting designated to finding potential mock-committee members. Luisa, with the help of a committee, will then ask these people to participate and organize rooms and food. The department has allocated funds to pay for this program.

Feedback for G2 Proposal Defense:

Andy Myers asked for suggestions/criticism and general comments about the G2 proposal and defense to pass on to the faculty at their next meeting. One problem that was discussed is that the guidelines are vague and were interpreted differently by faculty members. Students were given varying amounts of time for their presentation and in some cases were asked not to give their prepared presentation at all, but rather answer questions. Another issue that was raised was that it was not entirely clear if the "original research" proposed had to be work that could reasonably be completed in the time frame of a Ph. D. and if it had to be fundable. Should the student's advisor be required to read the proposal and consult with the student? In MCB advisors have to read and sign the proposal. Andy Myers raised the concern that this also gives the advisor the chance to reject a proposal that he/she does not agree with.

It was also brought up that the proposal requirements were different for physical and organic students. Physical students have their advisor present during their defense, organic students do not. Should these two systems stay so different? These matters will be discussed at the next faculty meeting.

Most organic students who had defended a proposal in the last year thought this was a good program and that they had benefited from the experience, some of the older students said that they had enjoyed taking cumes but agreed that this new system was more valuable in terms of what students learned.

Mary Rozenman asked if it was possible to have a seminar course for organic students similar to the one that physical students now have to take, where faculty members give seminar classes about their research area.

### Graduate Student Seminar Series:

Tobias Ritter is interested in starting, or improving the existing, student seminar series in the department. Melissa Grachan described that, in the past, student seminars have been given every month or two by a student volunteer who was about to graduate or had interesting results to present. Melissa has been in charge of organizing this seminar series and said that it has been very hard to find volunteers to give talks. GPC representatives are supposed to find people in their labs to present. It is not clear why so few students volunteer. Chris Neumann mentioned that a lack of time might be an issue for people. It might help to offer students gift certificates as an incentive to give a talk. Harvard Integrated Life Sciences (HILS) offers incentives to students for giving poster presentations. A more attractive name for the seminars might help – could be listed on CV. Andy Myers will solicit suggestions for a new name from faculty members.

Sarah Reisman and Adam Wasserman are in charge of organizing a seminar series for postdocs and have signed up four speakers so far.

### Visiting Faculty Office Hours:

Helen Schwickrath has had a hard time filling the office hour slots of visiting professors with interested students. Andy Myers pointed out that this lack of interest is bad and asks why this is the case. The term “office hour” might not be very inviting; students think they have to come prepared with specific questions as opposed to coming for an informal conversation. The announcements for office hours might be sent out too late so that students don’t have time to arrange their schedule around office hours.

### New Co-chair and Treasurer Found:

Mike Fuerstman asked for volunteers to take over for him as GPC co-chair with Elizabeth Hulme next fiscal year. Gerard Hilinski (Jerry), a G3 in the Verdine group, volunteered for the position and will be the new co-chair once Mike Fuerstman graduates. Since last GPC meeting Shu Sin Chng, a G3 from the Kahne lab, has volunteered to replace Chris Neumann as treasurer. He has since taken over Chris’s responsibilities.

### Student-Invited Speakers:

Doug Reese will be the first student-invited speaker of this school year. He is coming to speak on October 24<sup>th</sup>. A reception with drinks and snacks will be organized in the library following his talk.

Mary Rozenmann suggested inviting Ben Davis, a carbohydrate chemist from Oxford University as our next speaker. It was suggested that someone from the Kahne lab, which has similar research interests, contact him. Any suggestions for a physical chemistry student invited speaker would be appreciated.

A volunteer was needed to organize a student lunch with Professor Motomu Kanai. Karen Ruff volunteered.