

GPC Meeting Minutes

Chaired by Mike Fuerstman (fuerstm@fas) & Melissa Grachan (grachan@fas)
October 31, 2005

Safety & Waste Management

Due to the general perception that the current safety and waste management training in the department is inadequate, a faculty subcommittee has been formed to consider the issue. Four short-term recommendations have been adopted by the faculty. First, the number of required safety representatives will scale with research group size, increasing the number of representatives in larger groups. Second, Jerry Conners will accompany group safety officers and PIs on walkthroughs of group lab spaces and make recommendations. Third, the faculty are trying to organize a town hall meeting to address community concerns before Christmas. Finally, an IT professional will be hired to create an online safety database and exam system. In the long term, the faculty would like to hire a Ph.D. to serve as a department safety officer (a full time position), through no funding has been approved to date.

Budget

The process of this organization assuming control of its budget has begun. Chris Neumann will be modifying the existing Activity Request Form for our use. For existing budget items, these forms should be submitted to Chris or one of the two Co-Chairs for approval. After the event, any receipts and a copy of the approved request form should be submitted to the department financial office or front office for reimbursement. The expense information should also be conveyed to Chris, so he can keep separate records that can be reconciled monthly with the department's figures. Initiatives for new expenditures should be brought up at a GPC meeting.

Chris reminded the committee of the hard cap of \$20 per person for funded lunches. It was noted that this seems to exclude the faculty club, a popular choice which has been used frequently (and recently) for lunches with speakers. This discrepancy will be investigated.

Department-Wide Buffets

The general efficacy of department buffets was discussed. Questions were raised about whether these buffets were the best use of our money and whether the selections of dishes have been well chosen. In the past, the specifics of these events have been handled by Helen in the front office; confusion about responsibilities led to the late announcements of previous buffets. Mary Rozenman will work with Helen to choose themes and dishes while keeping our budgetary concerns in mind.

The next buffet will be on November 15 following Josh Finkelstein's talk.

Graduate Student Council

Tom Baker will be our new representative on the Graduate Student Council. Representation is required for members of the department to be eligible for the conference grant program.

Surveys

The status of the RHR International Survey is unknown. Mike will be putting together a survey for the G4's to gather their opinions of the new advising system.

Student Invited Seminar Speakers

Upcoming events:

- November 15, 4:15pm, Pfizer lecture hall: Josh Finkelstein, editor at Nature.
- May 10, Pfizer lecture Hall: Prof. Graham Felming, UC Berkeley
- Undetermined future date: Prof. Doug Rees, Caltech

Academic Speakers:

Due to a lack of alternative suggestions, Prof. Shibasaki of the U. of Tokyo was again considered as a possible organic speaker. John Rearick will work with some former Shibasaki group members to investigate whether the professor will be in the US at any other point such that we could split the travel cost with another organization. We will also attempt to get a copy of the results from the organic speaker survey administered by the faculty earlier this year to review for ideas.

Career Speakers:

Attempts to contact Ira Flatow and Craig Venter have continued to prove unsuccessful and will be abandoned. Mary R. has been in contact with Alton Brown's publicist; though the initial correspondence seemed promising all contact ceased when Mary suggested that we could not pay a high speaker fee. Mary will reestablish contact and find out how high the speaking fee is. Ernie Chang, a former post-doc at Biogen, has agreed to give a presentation in the Spring.

Due to the loss of Ira Flatow and Craig Venter as options, we have space for one or two more speakers this spring. Suggestions would be appreciated.

Academic Career Development:

Carol Chao and Melissa have been discussing the possibility of holding Q&A seminars to address the specifics of landing an academic job, such as what is expected in a proposal or chalk talk and what to expect in an interview. Similar events held annually in the Medical School and at MIT have been heavily attended. Two general seminars were proposed. First, sometime in the late summer three profs at different points in their careers would serve as panelists. A second seminar in the spring could be headed by post-docs who successfully landed jobs that season; professors would not be present. The possibility of scheduling this around the existing grant writing seminars was discussed.

In this vein, on December 4th HWIC will be hosting an academic career panel with post-doc panelists followed by a CV and resume workshop given by representatives from the Career Center.

Post-Doc and G1,2 Involvement

Attendance of both post-docs and younger graduate students is still low. The limited nature of the current post-doc email list (post-docs must sign up, only ~30% have) may be somewhat to blame; a new comprehensive post-doc mailing list is being established. Tailored appeals for attendance will be sent before the next meeting to both post-docs and younger graduate students, highlighting the issues that each group may be interested in.