

BNL Council Commentary

February 2003

The BNL Council is a group of 16 tenured scientists elected by the scientific staff to consider issues that affect scientists at BNL. It also advises the Director on issues of scientific policy. A major role of the Council is to evaluate tenure cases for the Director. We considered eleven tenure cases this past fall, which reaffirmed to us the strength and breadth of exciting science being performed in all areas at BNL. Carefully reviewing these eleven cases for tenure at BNL was also exhausting, and dominated the Council's agenda for nearly half of the year.

Following the reinstatement of a newsletter from Council to all Scientific Staff by last year's chair, J. Shanklin, this is the second issue of *Council Commentary* in the new millennium and summarizes the issues BNL Council has worked on during the past year.

Meetings with BNL Directorate

This year, BNL Council completed the first round of individual meetings with Associate Laboratory Directors by meeting with the ALD for Basic Energy Sciences in April and the ALD for Energy, Environment, and National Security in June. The Council meetings with all of the ALDs over the past two years were quite worthwhile, and provided an opportunity to discuss not only the present status and future outlook of the departments/divisions within each ALD's directorate, but also his/her vision for the future of BNL as a laboratory. We also met twice with Interim Director P. Paul to discuss lab-wide scientific staff and policy issues. These meetings were both timely and a critical means for Council to perform its advisory role to the Directorate.

Director search

The announcement of the next BNL Director in January 2003 culminated an 18+-month search process involving two distinct search committees. BNL Council appreciated the opportunity offered by Brookhaven Science Associates to be involved in both stages, as a member of the *ad hoc* first search committee and then as one of the groups that interviewed the two candidates who made official interview visits to BNL in October 2002. Fourteen or more of our 16 members were able to attend both meetings, which were open and frank interviews with each candidate regarding his answers to a detailed list of prepared questions. Most importantly, we were able to reach consensus on our collective thoughts regarding each candidate, which we communicated to the (second) search committee. We trust that our input was able to contribute to the selection process in a meaningful way. Council recognizes and thanks the BNL Scientific staff for their (sometimes vociferous) input throughout the Director search process.

LDRD process

The topic of how to improve the LDRD process at BNL is always a lively one, as it must be at all of the DOE laboratories. Much discussion of this subject took place in the April, May, and June 2002 Council meetings, ranging from understanding the LDRD "rules" to timing issues (in order to be able to hire new staff by the time LDRD funding begins) as well as more philosophical discussions. In the end, one concrete proposal from Council was accepted by Interim Director Peter Paul: the number of representatives

from BNL Council on the LDRD selection committee will increase from two to four. This will permit Council to provide one member per ALD.

Goldhaber fellowships

BNL Council now nominates a subcommittee, which sits on the Laboratory Goldhaber Fellowship selection committee. Following an initial screening of applications by the Scientific Director for LDRD, L. Newman, the committee ranks the candidates on the remaining short list and submits its recommendation to the Director. The committee was gratified to see such a strong number of highly qualified applicants this year, and noted the great difficulty it had in ranking them. The committee emphasizes the crucial role in the selection process played by the letter of support from the candidate's BNL mentor.

Council role as ombudsman

In addition to involvement in policy issues, BNL Council also acted in its role as ombudsman regarding one case of termination of a member of scientific staff for reasons of financial exigency. This case proved to be controversial with regard to whether or not BNL scientific staff policy had been followed. Meetings on this subject were held with Human Resources, the Department Chair, the ALD, and Interim Director P. Paul. In the end, it was determined that all possible avenues had been explored. More importantly, it was concluded by all involved that a renewed commitment to following due process regarding termination of Continuing Scientific staff will be made at all levels: department, ALD, and the Directorate.

Budget review process

Owing to its impact on each of us as individual BNL employees, there was much discussion at BNL generally during fall 2002 regarding cuts on fringe (i.e. employee benefits), but not on support functions. We strongly recommended to Interim Director P. Paul that budget reviews need to look not only at fringe benefits but also the costs of all the support functions. Council discussed the possible reasons why the scientific staff is not currently involved in the budget review process, as they had in the past, and concluded that this representation *should* exist. It was also concluded that this subject should be a topic of discussion with the new BNL Director at our earliest opportunity.

Council representation

A number of proposals were made to amend the Council Bylaws to alter the apportionment of Council membership to the various BNL Departments/Divisions. After lengthy discussion, the Council Bylaws were left unchanged, proving that they stand on rather firm ground. The Council Bylaws and the departmental/divisional representation can be found on the BNL Council web page at the link given below.

Your involvement in BNL Council

While BNL Council tries to identify issues that are important to scientific staff, it is important for scientific staff to bring items of concern to BNL Council. To learn more about BNL Council, or to identify your department or division representatives, please see link: <http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/Admin/council.html>.

Steven Hulbert, Chair, BNL Council (2002-2003).