

BNL Council Commentary

February 2002

As you may be aware, BNL Council is a body of scientists elected by the scientific staff to consider issues that affect the scientists at BNL. It also serves as an advisor to the Director on issues of scientific policy. A major role of the Council is to evaluate Tenure cases for the Director. It was inspiring this year, as always, to discover the apparently limitless creativity and passion for science that exists in all areas of BNL.

There was a major effort this year to increase communication between BNL Council and the Director, first, Jack Marburger and more recently Interim Director Peter Paul. These efforts have been successful and produced regular and productive exchanges. As a body we have struggled to identify ways to increase communication with the scientific staff. In this regard, we directed Human Resources to establish an email list for all scientific staff. Now that this is in place, we have a vehicle with which to communicate directly to our electorate. At a Council meeting recently it was proposed that we prepare a newsletter. On doing some research we found that BNL Council used to publish a periodic newsletter in the '70s and 80's called: Council Commentary. Following is a summary of issues BNL Council has been working on over the past year.

Meetings with ALDs.

This year, BNL Council met with Associate Laboratory Directors individually to understand better the opportunities and obstacles to success for their directorates in addition to their personal vision for the future of BNL.

Director search.

At the present time BNL is facing the issue of identifying a new Director. Because Dr. Marburger left for a political appointment, the search committee for the new Director was initially restricted to a small group consisting of Dr. Marburger, Dr. Madia from Battelle and Dr. McGrath from Stony Brook. While the input of scientific staff was solicited, no ongoing input was incorporated. As the search is entering a new phase, and several trustees were added to the committee, BNL Council requested that the scientific staff have more direct input in the process by having the chair of BNL Council, the elected body of the scientific staff, participate in the search. As a result, Stony Brook Provost McGrath has invited incoming Council chair, Steven Hulbert, to participate with the search committee.

Tenure evaluation process.

The Council proposed changes to the rules under which letters of review were selected for tenure case evaluation. Interim Director Peter Paul accepted the changes.

Office of scientific staff.

The Council discussed changes to the Office of Scientific Staff with W. Hempfling. These discussions resulted in a clarification in the role of Bonnie Hulse as contact person in Human Resources for scientific staff issues. An article was presented in the bulletin to convey the new organization to scientific staff. Copies of the article will be given to new scientific staff hires so that they will know to whom to bring their concerns.

DOE scientific misconduct policy.

DOE, along with all federal agencies, was required this year to formulate a policy for dealing with cases of alleged scientific misconduct. Members of BNL Council worked productively with BNL's general counsel Gregory Fess in meeting with DOE officials and in discussions to generate recommendations for the DOE response.

Diversity of scientific staff.

The Council met with Merdon and White and Kipperman from Human Resources to discuss strategies for improving minority hiring and retention.

Goldhaber fellowships.

BNL Council also provided help to Dr. Newman in screening candidates for the first round of Goldhaber Fellowships and made recommendations to improve the process for future rounds of selection. In particular we requested that the initial candidates be considered from all of the programs at the Laboratory rather than the initially proposed three restricted ones. Laboratory management agreed with our recommendation and broadened the competition.

Council role as ombudsman.

In addition to involvement in policy issues, BNL Council also acted in its role as ombudsman regarding several cases of termination of members of scientific staff for reasons of financial exigency. In all cases it was determined that all possible avenues had been explored before any termination actions proceeded.

Human Resources annual report.

The council recommended that Human Resources continue the older practice of issuing an annual report to the scientific staff about the current staffing levels and rough salary data. These reports that had been annual for many years had not been issued for the last three years. Human Resources agreed to resume issuing the reports.

Scientists involvement in Laboratory reorganizations.

We recommended that before major reorganizations in the scientific areas are implemented, that scientific staff in those areas be informed and be given the opportunity to comment on the impact that it would have on program areas.

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>

John Shanklin, Chair, BNL Council (2001-2002).