

Brookhaven Council Commentary 2006–2007

The BNL Council represents the scientific staff and reports to the Laboratory Director. The general goals are to assist in making and keeping BNL an excellent place to carry out science and to improve its capabilities where possible. The Council, which is composed of representatives elected from the tenured staff, meets monthly. This is a summary of the Council's activities in 2006–2007.

Tenure Cases

Examination of tenure cases represents a major Council role. Six cases were brought before the Council, and corresponding recommendations forwarded to the Director. A 7th case that had passed the Council in a previous year was presented directly to the BSA Board by the Director.

Feedback from the Science and Technology Steering Committee led to discussions as to whether at least some of the “comparees” should be from a BSA core university. In part because certain BNL tenure cases represent areas of expertise not found at any of the core universities, no recommendations to amend the tenure guidelines were made.

Continuing Appointments

At the request of the Acting Deputy Director, the Council proposed some improvements to the continuing appointments guidelines, in an effort to correct a lack of uniformity in the applications received for these positions. Links to these guidelines, along with those for Tenure, Senior Scientist and Emeritus, are available from the Council web site <http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/Admin/council.asp>

Coffee House

At its April meeting, the Council unanimously passed a motion “to create a coffee house as a new gathering place” which was forwarded to the Director and has subsequently been realized as the Brookhaven Café in the Research Support Building.

Council Representation

The Council periodically reviews its representation from various departments and divisions. To keep roughly proportional representation one member was added to the Council, which now has 18 members.

Laboratory Director

In April, the Council presented a letter of appreciation to Praveen Chaudhari, thanking him for his service as BNL Director. The Council also formally offered its assistance to the search committee for the new director, which was gratefully accepted. In fact the Council met with the two laboratory representatives from the search committee, Sally

Dawson and Steve Dierker, during its May meeting. The Council sent a unanimous letter of support of the search committee's recommendation.

Laboratory Management Interactions

In addition to Dawson and Dierker, the Council met during the year, to learn more about various issues, with Tom Schlagel (ITD), Praveen Chaudhari (Director), Brookhaven Organization of Scientists (represented by Sid Kahana and Gerry Bunce), Pat Looney (Assistant Lab. Director for Policy and Strategic Planning), Fritz Henn (Associate Lab. Director for Life Sciences) and Sam Aronson soon after his appointment as Director. The Council officers held regular monthly meeting with the Director.

LDRD

Five members of the Council participated in evaluating LDRD applications, with one representative from each directorate: NPP, BES, Life Sciences, EENS and Light Sources. After considerable deliberation the Council provided an extensive set of suggested improvements of the LDRD selection process to the Director.

Ombudsmen

One case of termination of a scientific staff continuing appointment for reasons of financial exigency was referred to the Council this year. The Council determined that the case had been handled properly by Laboratory management. In the course of reviewing this case, two separate statements in the SBMS guidelines concerning termination, and Council's role, were identified as contradictory.

Training

Last year's Council reported to the Director with recommendations for the improvement of training at BNL. These recommendations have not been implemented; however, the Director convened a laboratory-wide committee, on which three Council members sat, to examine the "worst case" training, in this case GERT. Apart from some advice given to the Training and Qualification Program Office about a new course "Research with Integrity", the Council removed itself from the process of trying to improve training at the Lab.

Steve Kettell (Council Chair, Mar 2006 – Aug 2006)

Graham Smith (Council Chair, Sept 2006 – Feb 2007)