

Brookhaven Council Commentary 2007 - 2008

The BNL Council is a Committee of 18 tenured scientists which, in its capacity as an advisory group reporting to the Laboratory Director, makes recommendations on issues affecting the scientific staff. Council by-laws list specific responsibilities on its role in granting tenure and reviewing cases of termination and scientific misconduct. The former is happily more common than the later. At the request of the Director, the Council assists in the LDRD and Goldhaber selection process and provides membership to Committees whose activities bear upon the Lab's scientific lifestyle. Council members are selected by the scientific staff in elections that are organized by Department, Division, or Directorate. Following is a summary of Council activities covering the time period, March 2007 – February 2008.

Tenure Cases

The Council considered 4 new tenure cases and one case from the preceding year, 2006. For each of the new cases, Council subcommittees were formed to guide the process. The Council considered written case files containing a CV, key publications, a memo to the Director from the candidates Department Chair summarizing the case, letters from outside reviewers with a comparison to peers, and biographical information on reviewers and peers. An oral presentation to the Council was given by the candidates Department Chair, often assisted by a tenured colleague familiar with the candidates accomplishments. Following discussions within the Council, a written recommendation stating the strengths and weaknesses of the case was drafted by the subcommittees and voted on. Final reports were sent to the Director Jan. 24, 2008.

The fifth case had been evaluated by the Council in 2006 but administrative approval had not been finalized. At the Directors request, the Council reviewed documentation and provided a written report.

Revisions to Tenure Procedure

The Council was informed that the existing tenure process takes too long because meeting of the BSA Board and the Science and Technology Steering Committee are scheduled in opposite order to their voting sequence. In order to keep the tenure clock within the specified bounds, the process will be moved up in time and compressed.

Visitors to the Council

An important component of the Council's activities is to be informed on management concerns that effect a scientists working environment. In most cases visitors were sent a list of questions prior to a meeting.

May: Doon Gibbs (Associate Laboratory Director for Basic Energy Sciences). Energy LDRDs, BNL-University Joint appointments.

June: Peter Bond (Associate Laboratory Director for Nuclear and Particle Physics). Ombudsman to represent interests of scientific staff.

July: Tom Schlagel (Director, Information Technology Division). Cybersecurity, customer support, computing platforms.

August: Pat Looney (Assistant Laboratory Director for Policy and Strategic Planning) and Doon Gibbs (Deputy Director for Science and Technology). Selection process for energy related LDRDs.

August: Sam Aronson (Laboratory Director). Ethics training course, Tenure cases and future of tenure, Financial health of BNL, Bureaucracy, Treatment of foreign nationals, Open campus

November: John Amabile (Head of Safeguards and Security), Lenny Butera (Operational Security (OPSEC) coordinator), Randy Biegelman (Head of Counterintelligence, CI), Phil Sarcione (Deputy head of Safeguards and Security), Mark Sakitt (Scientist consultant for OPSEC and CI). DOE regulations, Treatment of foreign Nationals, Open campus.

February Doon Gibbs (Deputy Director for Science and Technology) and Lori-Anne Neiger (Chief Intellectual Property Council & Technology Licensing Manager) BNL-University joint appointments.

Meetings with the Lab Director and Deputy Director

Once a month, schedules permitting, the Council Chair and Secretary met with Sam Aronson and Doon Gibbs. This was an opportunity for a give and take discussion on the concerns of (non-management) scientists and Lab management. Discussions included requests for Council input and progress reports on tenure cases and other Council business. Council meetings included a re-cap of the Directors meeting.

Joint Appointments

As discussed by Doon Gibbs and Lori-Anne Neiger, there are ~ 20 scientists at BNL who jointly hold tenured positions at Universities. DOE and Battelle are in favor of growing this program. Lab management would like to see JAs equivalent to BNL employees in all respects possible. During 2007 one Council member accepted a JA with Stony Brook. A precedent was set when the Council and the JAs Department both voted that membership on the Council continue.

Cybersecurity, Physical security, Counterintelligence, and an Open Campus

There were multiple discussions with Lab management and within the Council on these issues. While everyone recognizes the changing landscape and the increasing presence of DOE in imposing regulations, the Council felt that its responsibility was to communicate to Lab management impacts on doing science. Issues that arose include 1) delays in granting foreign nationals access to the Lab, 2) the lack of meeting place that is outside of the Lab's secure perimeter 3) the tradeoffs between having the security perimeter surround the whole Lab vs. specific buildings containing classified research or critical infrastructure, and 4) the need **not** to enforce uniformity in computer systems or to require encryption of "ordinary" scientific data.

LDRDs

This year the LDRDs were split into 2 categories which were separately competed. The new LDRD category was for focused R&D in energy science; the other category followed past years practice with a focus on the development of new core competencies. Council sub-committees participated in the discussion and rankings of proposals in both categories. In order to bring greater expertise to the reviewing process, sub-committee members were encouraged to seek the advice of their Council colleagues on proposals outside their area of expertise.

Goldhaber Fellows

A Council subcommittee sat on the Goldhaber Fellowship selection committee, providing advice and ranking the candidates. The Council strongly endorses this program as a way of attracting outstanding young scientists to BNL.

Family Friendly Workplace

As part of the Lab initiative to improve working conditions, Peter Bond requested Council representation in discussions of scientific work schedules.

Ethics (Research with Integrity) training

A first version of an ethics training course had been released for voluntary evaluation and comments. The Council took an active role in taking the course and collecting comments, which were relayed to the Director. Recommendations which were by and large adopted include 1) Starting with a statement on what constitutes misconduct in scientific research based on existing Federal Guidelines 2) Recognition of the difference between misconduct and honest mistakes, 3) Recognition that differences of opinion and interpretation and changes of research direction in response to changes in funding are not examples of misconduct, and 4) the need to inform staff what their duties are if they come across a case of possible misconduct.

Council Representation

Currently there are 18 Council members who represent Departments/Divisions in approximate proportion to their size. In EENS Council members are elected by an at large vote of a Directorate. Two Council members left this year to become an assistant ALD and Department Chairman. NSLS and NSLS II were considered as a single unit for the purpose of selecting one of the replacements.

Chair: Vladimir Litvinenko
Secretary: Lawrence Kleinman