Monthly Meeting Agenda—March 9, 2015

The March monthly meeting of the Physics Graduate Student Council was held on March 18, 2015 at Panera in Harvard Square. Jae Hyeon Lee, Olivia Miller, Joe Olson, Anna Patej, and Arthur Safira, and two representatives from the post-doc community organization—Wolfram Mobius and Ashkan Salamat—were in attendance. The post-doc members joined the meeting on Jae’s invitation. In the future the Council will collaborate with the post-doc community organization on various issues with overlapping interests. The present document summarizes items discussed, plans for the upcoming months, and division of responsibilities.

Summary

The Council began the meeting with the review of members’ activity since February monthly meeting.

• Arthur:
  1. Alumni directory: Spoke to Jacob about the initiative. There has been little to no progress on the initiative. Arthur will check back with him again later.
  2. Meeting with Westervelt (discussed later below).

• Anna Patej:
  1. Will begin planning for the proposed weekly proposed Seminar.
  2. Feedback from students on the panel discussion on beginning research/qualification exam has been collected by Jacob. Will summarize it in a document for archival purpose.

• Joe Olson:
  1. Plans to organize a poster session for the open house for G0.

• Nick*:
  1. Continue to organize social hour.

• Olivia:
  1. Stress reduction events: Will start planing for and organize the events. Will reach out to Gerry once she has done more research over the spring break.
  2. Puppet show: Jenny Hoffman discussed with her about the recent puppet show. Prof. Hoffman wishes that the puppet show is more of an opportunity for older graduate students to interact with younger graduate students than an event where students get to “attack” faculty. Prof. Hoffman feels that many jokes in this year’s and past few years puppet shows were mean, especially towards female faculty, which cause some concerns.

• Jae:
1. Professional internship opportunity: See below.

2. Particle physics curriculum review: Began organizing a series of meetings among high energy physics theory students.

3. Student mental health: Has set a date for the event, inviting Dean McCavana and Dr. Lapierre. Will send out a letter soliciting essays from faculty, post-doc and students about their experience dealing with mental health issue.

The following items were discussed at the meeting.

- Constitution: Jae will draft an initial draft of the constitution. There will be a meeting after the spring break for the adoption of the constitution and set a plan for an election.

- Maternity room: (3/10) Anne Trubia has located a space in Lyman building for the maternity room. Elise will work with her in designing the room.

- Grad-undergrad mentoring program: There was no further communication from undergrad SPS. (3/10 update) Mark and Eric from SPS contacted Jae about beginning a one-on-one mentoring program. Jae encouraged the SPS to send out an e-mail to all graduate students asking for participation in the program.

- Particle physics initiative: First meeting will be March 12th at noon in Lyman 330.

- Women in physics: Olivia will work with Women in Physics to discuss the possibility of conducting additional survey and organizing a panel discussion. The purpose of the panel discussion will be to educate community members about issues that women in physics face in the department as well as in a broader community in general.

- Professional development:
  - Meeting with Prof. Robert Westervelt:
    - CIQM and professional internship opportunity: Jae and Arthur met with Robert Westervelt to discuss the possibility of making professional internship opportunity more available to current graduate students. Prof. Westervelt has been recently granted a large government grant on a 20+ faculty collaboration with many industrial partners. The collaboration is based at the center called Center for Integrated Quantum Material. The industrial partners want current graduate students to intern at their firms. Currently, these opportunities are not well advertised to graduate students. Prof. Westervelt met with PGSC to see whether PGSC could provide an information channel between graduate students and CIQM and its industrial partners.
    - Professional development culture in Harvard physics: Jae and Arthur discussed with Prof. Westervelt the lack of professional development culture in graduate school. They think there should be more support in general, less stigma against going into industry upon graduation, and more opportunity during graduate school to develop professionally including professional internship opportunity. PGSC would like to change the culture in this direction. Prof. Westervelt expressed his support for the initiative. For example, he will attend a meeting with PGSC and other faculty to discuss professional development culture in the department or a panel discussion concerning the subject.
    - Alumni directory: Prof. Westervelt will talk to Jacob about the alumni directory, giving him additional encouragement.
    - Physics students community room: Prof. Westervelt supported the building of a community room for physics and applied physics students.
Alumni/industry reps networking events: In the future, PGSC will hold networking events inviting alumni who went into non-academic careers and industrial representatives who can help graduate students transition to jobs beyond graduate school.

Career development staff: Jae proposed an idea of the university creating a new staff position in the department whose primary job is to help students and post-doc with their career development. More specifically, the staff’s job description will include the following:

1. Individual career counseling.
2. Assist students/post-docs with job search.
3. Organize networking events with industry reps and alumni (CIQM, etc.)
4. Maintain a website that lists post-graduation job/internship opportunities (specifically for Harvard students) and house alumni directory.
5. Organize professional and leadership development workshops and seminars.
6. Act as a liaison between the department and Office of Career Services.

The rationale behind this proposal are: 1) Staffs who could be expected to carry the above responsibilities have to focus on other priorities, 2) someone who has experience in the industry and general knowledge about career development is not available in the department, and 3) there will be a high return on investment. (The more successful graduate students are in the long run the more money they will donate. It is good for the department’s reputation.)

Suggestion from post-doc community representatives:

- Industrial firm; case studies (Wolfram): Instead of just giving talks about their company, industry firms can have students and post-docs work on concrete case studies, which will give them a better idea of what they will be doing if they worked for the firms.
- Leadership program (Ashkan): In addition to informal talks, leadership and professional skill development events can be fun and serve as valuable experience.

Student mental health issue:

- Information session: Jae will be organizing the information in April. A collection of essays by community members will be distributed after the event.
- Notes: Attendees suggested various things to consider when preparing for the event.
  - Encouragement to seek help: Members should be encouraged to seek help if struggling.
  - Self-diagnosis: An information on a self-diagnostic test of whether they are struggling with mental health problems or just mildly stressed will be very useful.
  - Helping others: Information on how to identify and help members who are struggling with mental health problems should be included in the presentation.

Plans and division of responsibilities

The following are plans and division responsibilities among Council members until the next monthly meeting.

- Arthur:
  1. Alumni directory: Talk to Jacob about the initiative.

- Anna Patej:
  1. Will begin planning for the weekly Seminar.
  2. Will summarize feedback from students on the panel discussion on beginning research/qualification exam in a document for archival purpose.
• Joe Olson:
  1. Will organize a poster session for the open house for G0.

• Nick*:
  1. Will continue to organize social hour.

• Olivia:
  1. Stress reduction events: Will start planing for and organize the events. Reach out to Gerry once she has done more research over the spring break.
  2. Women in physics: Will collaborate with Women in Physics to plan and organize a panel discussion.

• Jae:
  1. Write the first draft of the Constitution. Organize a meeting for its adoption.
  2. Design survey on professional development and mental health issue