

LAPA Vice-president's report
Biannual meeting: May 9, 2007
by Michael J. Demkowicz

1. Introduction

The last six months have been very busy for LAPA and its members, but also very productive. The Association has made progress in all of its stated mission goals. This report will summarize the activities of LAPA during those six months and describe its ongoing efforts.

2. Current status:

2.1 Current membership

According to LAPA bylaws, all postdocs associated with LANL are automatically LAPA members. As of the writing of this report, the number of LANL postdocs was about 370. Of these, twenty individuals were recognized as voting members (see bylaws for definition of voting member). Additionally, eleven individuals were eligible to attain voting member status or have voting status reinstated pending their attendance at the May 9 biannual meeting.

2.2 Officers and committees

The current elected officers of LAPA are:

- President: Jason R. Stairs
- Vice president: Michael J. Demkowicz
- Treasurer: Laura C. Stonehill
- Secretary: Chandra Savage Marsden

The current chairs of LAPA standing committees are:

- Policy: Melissa J. Lucero
- Communication: Nathan H. Mack
- Finance: Kevin D. Houston
- Social: Nenad Velisavljevic
- Conversion: Nathan Mara
- Career: Joseph Hickey

There are currently no active special committees.

2.3 Budget

Out of the \$2000 of morale funds allotted to LAPA for FY07, \$1350 remains. Of the \$5000 of other funds (materials, travel) there remains \$3450. The expenditures of these funds to date have been:

- Morale: \$525 pizza social, \$125 conversion seminar refreshments
- Travel: \$1450 travel to National Postdoc Association (NPA) spring meeting
- Materials: \$100 certificate frames, name tags, and miscellaneous materials for pizza social

3. Completed business:

3.1 Policy committee

The Policy committee met to deliberate on a proposed amendment to article VII, section 2 of the LAPA bylaws. The proposed amendment was to distinguish between an “Executive committee” that consists only of LAPA officers and a “Full Executive committee” that includes the officers as well as committee chairs. It was decided that making the distinction was not necessary. The amendment was not adopted at the subsequent General Assembly meeting.

3.2 Communication committee

The Communication committee drafted and approved a letter to be included in the hiring package of incoming postdocs. The letter welcomes new postdocs to LANL on behalf of LAPA and provides information on the Association, including socials, conversion seminars, General Assembly meetings, and the LAPA website.

3.3 Finance committee

The Finance committee is currently auditing the financial records produced by the LAPA treasurer.

3.4 Social committee

LAPA socials have been held on the third Wednesday of every month at La la’s Cocina in Los Alamos. Additionally, on March 8 a pizza social was held at Fuller Lodge.

3.5 Conversion committee

The Conversion committee hosted seminars by the following speakers:

- Nathan McDowell (EES-2)
- Paul Follansbee (MST division director) and John Sarrao (MPA division director)
- Gene Peterson (C-division director)
- Neil Henson (deputy group leader), Enrique Batista, Joel Kress (group leader), T-12

The Conversion committee also analyzed data from the LANL Postdoc Program Office on the rate of conversions subsequent to the transition to LANS management and found that that rate had dropped by about 65% compared to pre-transition figures.

3.6 Career committee

The Career committee was involved predominantly in lobbying for and organizing a career fair for LANL postdocs. See section 3.10 for details. Additionally, a CV writing workshop was given by Carol Ann Martz to prepare the CVs of postdocs interested in having a polished CV for the CV database and for distribution to companies who attend the career fair.

3.7 Employment Concerns special committee

The Employment Concerns committee was called as a special committee to give LANL postdocs the opportunity to meet to discuss concerns about future employment at the Lab. It was chaired by Alicia Garcia-Lopez. Among the issues discussed was the declining rate of conversions of postdocs to TSM status since transition to LANS management as well as the possibility of lobbying for automatic 4th-year extensions for postdocs. The report of this committee was later used in compiling an agenda for the March 6 meeting of LAPA members with Director Anastassio (see section 3.9).

3.8 National Postdoc Association (NPA)

In the past six months, LAPA has had multiple interactions with the National Postdoc Association (NPA). The first was in connection with an application for LAPA to receive recognition through the NPA's award for an organization that has made outstanding contributions to the welfare of postdoctoral researchers. Unfortunately, LAPA did not receive the award this year.

The second opportunity for LAPA to interact with the NPA came during the annual NPA meeting in Berkeley. The LAPA president applied for and received the mentoring award, which paid his expenses to attend the annual meeting and designated a mentor from an established postdoc association at another institution to serve with guidance on how best to develop LAPA. Additionally, LAPA appointed a special committee headed by Joseph Hickey to solicit interest from the LANL postdoc population to apply for the NPA travel award, the recipient of which would also be entitled to NPA financial support for meeting attendance. This committee designated a front-runner who would apply for the award, but would be sent to the meeting using LAPA funds even in case the award were not granted. That person would also receive official "LANL institutional support," a factor that strengthened the individual's chances of winning the award. The committee also selected a runner-up who would be sent to the meeting with LAPA funds in the event the travel award were granted to the front-runner. The front-runner selected by the committee—Chandra Savage Marsden—received the travel award and the runner-up Jessica Houston went to the meeting as well using LAPA funds.

The three individuals who represented LAPA at the annual NPA meeting in 2007 gathered numerous suggestions for how best to continue developing the Association. The LAPA president will compile these ideas for discussion by the General Assembly and maintain contact with the NPA-designated mentor for LAPA.

3.9 Meeting with Director Anastasio

On March 6 Director Anastasio held a meeting with LAPA representatives to obtain their perspective on Lab-related issues currently of interest or concern to LANL postdocs. An agenda was drawn up at a preparatory discussion meeting among those members who were scheduled to participate. The report compiled by the Employment Concerns committee was used as a starting point for this agenda.

As at previous meetings with postdocs, Director Anastasio was very open and frank in his discussion and receptive to the comments of those who participated. The minutes compiled from that meeting detail the topics that were brought up. Notably, the Director endorsed LAPA's request to hold a career fair for the LANL postdocs (see section 3.10). Additionally, he requested that LAPA suggest three specific actions that could be undertaken to improve the LANL postdoc experience.

After soliciting input from LANL postdocs in an open meeting, the following three suggestions were sent to the director's office:

1. Pre-enroll all incoming postdocs in all the training required for their job so as to minimize idle time upon arrival. Pre-apply for crypto-cards for all incoming postdocs.
2. Allow all postdocs to act as co-PIs on all grant proposals, both internal and external.
3. To improve the fair evaluation of postdoc-supervisor relationships, make "mentoring" a regular part of all TSMs' performance reviews.

3.10 Career fair

Thanks to the lobbying of the Career committee and Director Anastasio's endorsement, LAPA and LANL are co-organizing the first career fair held for the Lab's postdoc population. To this end, LAPA has been given administrative support by the LANL Human Resources division. The event will take place at the Los Alamos Research Park on September 5, 2007. A list of companies to invite has been compiled and the first invitations are scheduled to be sent within the week of the LAPA May biannual meeting.

4. Ongoing business:

4.1 Social committee

Socials will continue to be held on the third Wednesday of every month at La la's Cocina. A social will also be planned to take place in Santa Fe. Picnics will be organized in the spring/summer and in the fall.

4.2 Conversion committee

The following individuals are scheduled to give seminars on conversion to TSM status:

- Jack Schlachter (P-division director)
- Sue Seestrom (Associate Director, Experimental and Physical Sciences)
- Fran Stephens (C-division recently converted postdoc)

4.3 Communications committee

The Communication committee is currently involved in the following undertakings:

- Putting together a poster exhibiting LAPA and its activities
- Initiating a monthly LAPA newsletter that keeps the LANL community updated on the Association
- Creating a LAPA brochure to be placed in group offices, etc.
- Organizing a monthly orientation meeting for newly arrived LANL postdocs
- Sending introductory letters to upper management

4.4 Career committee

The Career committee will continue to focus on organizing the September 5 career fair for LANL postdocs. Among its ongoing tasks is the compilation a postdoc CV database for distribution to the potential employers who will attend the career fair. Additionally, the Career committee is organizing further CV writing workshops and a seminar on behavioral interviewing.

4.5 Mentoring

In an effort to help resolve mentoring issues that occasionally arise between postdocs and their supervisors, it has been suggested that a committee be designated to hold quarterly meetings open for all postdocs to voice their concerns. Such a committee could be formed by instituting the Employment Concerns committee (previously a special committee) as a standing committee or by delegating the responsibility for holding such meetings to the Policy committee. It has also been proposed that members of the LANL postdoc committee be invited to attend these meetings as well.

5. Plans for Pursuant Six Months

President's Goals (Attached)

6. Updated Roster of Voting Membership

Attached

7. Acknowledgements

The Vice-president would like to acknowledge the committee chairs and LAPA officers for their prompt contributions to this report.