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the
GIEC *Minutes*

OCTOBER 2006

October 25, 2006, 2:45-3:45 pm, KS 410

Present: Andrea, Anastasia, Vikki, Gerard, Steve, Carolyn, Kartik, Russ, Jim, Xiuqin

Absent: Patrick, Dave

The meeting began with us welcoming our newest member Vikki Meadows to the GIEC.

Kartik began with an apology for not being prompt with minutes from the last two meetings. He will try and be more prompt and when busy, Vikki graciously agreed to help lead the GIEC.

We went over last month's minutes - the following issues / info/ discussions came up:

a. People wanted to know what happened at the MSC Oversight Cmte meeting. We learned that much is uncertain about the SIM budget because of the elections and we may not know anything until Feb, 2007. The likelihood of any huge impact on IPAC is unlikely but there may be a large impact on JPL depending on how the budget turns out.

b. We learned that JPL is delaying switching to the 9/80 work week until beginning of next year. The opinions from the few people we have heard from here is mixed. We also learned that Suzy would like to wait 6 months and see how things go with the JPL experiment. A question came up regarding communications with JPL when they go to this work week - how will we interact with them? It was said that for critical mission stuff nothing will have necessarily changed. Postdocs objected to the 9/80 work week because taking a day off now meant a 9hr vacation time use rather than an 8 hr vacation time use.

c. JPL travel - Andrea will work on getting together a checklist for staff travelling on JPL travel. Kartik will check with Gordon to see how we can help people navigate the new JPL travel system, which is causing problems for many people - various complaints from non-intuitive software to non-working buttons on browsers. General consensus was that if you had an admin person who knew the system cold they could help you immensely. We decided to encourage the staff to ask admin staff for more help rather than become frustrated because they have been trained on the system. But the GIEC will also look into trying to figure out a way to make the process more transparent. One comment was that though "hideous" to deal with, at least the reimbursements were coming faster. There was another comment that there was no way to trace / audit what expenses were approved and what were not approved. Andrea said there is a way in the system - Steve will mention this to his constituent who was looking for this info. Steve noted that the ISG wiki is a good place to post info about people's experiences and what they have learned regarding JPL travel - we will try and encourage everyone to use this.

d. Palomar trip - Steve found the response to a Palomar trip tepid - however the GIEC as a whole seemed excited about planning a social outing. Vikki, Andrea and Steve will work on this and suggest possible ideas (e.g., camping / star gazing weekend etc.) next time.

New Business:

1. JPL postdocs at CIT were "forgotten" again as JPL switched to a new time card system. This system is not accessible by browser / intranet and needs VPN. But VPN is not available to foreign nationals - hence an impasse. Suzy, Mary Ellen, ISG are aware of this situation and are looking into it - this is critical and needs to be resolved before pay checks stop in Jan.

2. There was a strong feeling in the GIEC that the new benefits laid out this year were unfair and the literature misleading. It seems that while our individual rates and co-pays have gone up significantly, Caltech is paying far less than its fair share and in some cases paying even less than last year! We decided this was a very important issue and needs to be addressed - Anastasia will write up an email describing the new benefits program and we will try and educate the people. There was discussion of protesting this unfair and large increases in fees - we will be working on this issue over the next month and will discuss with mgmt as to what to do about it.

3. Graduate students need to be included in the GIEC somehow. They may want to interact with the post-doc rep (Carolyn) - Kartik mentioned the need for a second postdoc rep since their constituency is so large.

4. Finally we ended with a discussion on how to make GIEC more transparent and visible. Two ideas we came up with and will implement are: a) to make our meetings be open forum and invite anyone to come and participate - like town hall council meetings, and b) to invite two-three people each time to specifically interact with us and tell us about their life at IPAC - good or bad - they don't have to complain - we would just like to know how things are going and what can be done to improve things etc.

----- ACTION ITEMS -----

1. Gerad - check with Andy Boden if he will be willing to be the third p-doc mentor
2. Vikki, Steve, Xiuqin, Andrea - plan a big GIEC social outing - could be Palomar camping trip or something else
3. Andrea - checklist for international and JPL traveller
4. Kartik/Gordon - how to navigate the JPL system for travel reimbursement, approval etc.
5. Anastasia - email educating people about the new benefits issues / Everyone - poll and inquire how constituents feel about it after researching the higher fees for next year.
6. Russ, Carolyn, Vikki - find a person to come to our meeting next time to chat with us.
7. Carolyn - try and find a second p-doc representative for GIEC