

Faculty Meeting Minutes (Open session)

Nov 23, 2020 | 3:45 – 4:45 pm | Benson Hall, Room 109- ZOOM

Attendance:

Meeting start: 3:45 | Adjourn 4:28

Faculty Present (blank=absent)

Department Chair, Jim Pfaendtner - Present

Stu Adler	P	Kyle Caldwell	P	Samson Jenekhe	P	Buddy Ratner	P	Cao Guozhong
Graham Allan	P	James Carothers	P	Mary Lidstrom		Daniel Schwartz	P	Jonathan Posner
François Baneyx	P	Chad Curtis	P	Jun Liu	P	Eric Stuve	P	
David Beck	P	Cole DeForest	P	Elizabeth Nance	P	Stephanie Valleau	P	
John Berg	P	Hugh Hillhouse	P	Rene Overney				
David Bergsman	P	Vince Holmberg	P	Lilo Pozzo	P	Neda Bagheri	P	

Others Present

Andrea Gleichweith	Nicole Minkoff	Dave Drischell		Nicole Devine	
Lindsey Doermann	Debbie Carnes				

AGENDA

- Announcements
- Undergrad in-person research reminder
- Postdoctoral teaching vote
- Graduate faculty vote
- Prelim Exam discussion outcomes
- PhD and MS Project placements

Announcements (Pfaendtner)

Andrea Joseph won 2nd place for graduate students in the Rapid Fire presentation competition at the national Society of Women Engineers meeting. This is the first time anyone at UW has won a national SWE award. Congratulations to Andrea and thanks to Elizabeth for mentoring a great grad student!

Jeff Richards (PhD Pozzo) who is now Assistant Professor at Northwestern has received the NSF Early Career Award. Congratulations to Jeff!

Graduate recruiting day is Friday 3/5/2021 – please put this date on your calendars. More information forthcoming from Cole and the Graduate Committee.

Undergraduate in-person research reminder (Pfaendtner)

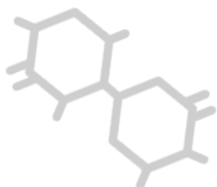
Undergraduates are eligible to be added to your critical personnel list for in-person research in Benson Hall once your lab has had 2 weeks of safe operation. This is at the discretion of the PI, the priority is sponsored research projects. Further questions can be directed to Jim or Debbie.

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Also, there will be a pilot re-opening of an office space. Jim's lab in B17 has prepared a COVID safety plan that has been approved by the Infrastructure Committee. This will allow limited in-person work on a computer away from home for grad students and postdocs. This is an attempt to address mental health challenges presented by the work from home policy during COVID. If there are no problems with the pilot project over the next month, they will present guidelines for other office spaces in Benson to open. We want to be sure we are not compromising the essential wet lab activities in Benson Hall. Once we can verify that there are no interruptions to that, we can provide guidelines to other PIs to safely open office space if wanted. The general principle is that grad students and postdocs should not be in Benson if they are not actively doing in person wet lab research, but this will make space available to people to do writing or other computational work away from home. Jim will report back on the pilot project, and check with Kameron and Debbie. Jim will report back in the beginning of Winter quarter.

Postdoctoral teaching vote Nadia Intan and Xin Qi (Pfaendtner)

Faculty will be voting on this issue that was presented in the last faculty meeting (10/26/2020). Jim will fund two postdocs in the Pfaendtner research group to teach a Winter quarter molecular simulation class; Nadia Intan and Xin Qi. They will not be paid with department funds. A ballot will be sent out by Andrea. Jim will report back at the end of Winter quarter on how this goes. Lilo is also working with the postdocs to explore professional development interests with them.

Graduate faculty status for David Bergsman (Pfaendtner)

Pro forma vote to make David a member of the Graduate Faculty so he can advise grad students and be on committees. Lilo Pozzo made a motion to appoint David Bergsman a member of the Graduate Faculty of UW, Dan Schwartz seconded the motion. There was a vote by show of hands, the motion passed. Congratulations David!

Prelim Exam discussion outcomes (DeForest)

First topic is finalizing the outcome of the first year PhD students' prelim exams. Nine completed their prelim exams in Autumn quarter in a virtual format. There were questions about how well this would go, but despite challenges all committees recommended a pass.

Cole previously sent a link to the evaluation forms in a Google drive folder. If there are any cases that need to be re-visited, this is the time to discuss. Cole opened the floor for discussion.

Jim asked if there are any more recommendations/thoughts about how to make virtual exams go well. Cole replied that initially when things first were virtual-only, there were issues about permissions and hosting events. But most of this has been figured out by now.

Cole asked if anyone participated in a committee where the student has the option to answer questions by hand using an iPad or such, did it go well, should we consider it?

Stephanie Valteau said that one of her students used a tablet, it worked well, it also probably depends on if the student wants to use a tablet or not. They should have that option.

Stu Adler said it would be useful to have a standardized method of black-boarding so there isn't a lot of time spent trying to figure it out each time. Cole asked for recommendations. Stu said most tablets have a sharing capability. But not everyone has access to iPads.

Jim said a cheaper option is what one of his students used, a USB-linked pen, stylus input. You can load the whiteboard option in zoom, then write on a cheap tablet that students can borrow.

Lilo said the whiteboard option in zoom was removed, it can be reinstated. Stephanie reported that for single meetings the student can set up by the whiteboard option. It won't work for a big seminar, but for one on one zooms it still works.

Lilo asked about expectations for student timelines, should they be postponing their general exams?

Cole said that they reached out to all students at the beginning of the quarter clarifying that extensions can be granted especially for those who have been directly affected by COVID and inaccessibility to a lab. Cole suggested that rather than adjusting our expectations about students' performance on exams, the timeline should be extended.

Jim said that we should expect to see impacts on students for a couple of years at least. The upcoming general exams in the next quarter or 2, we should make sure we are doing as well as possible.

Cole replied that all of the second years have taken a successful first attempt at a prelim exam. All that were required to take their general exam by the end of the past summer have done so except 1 or 2, which is about normal.

Cole asked someone to make a motion to formalize the outcomes as recommended by the individual prelim committees so that they can communicate to students that they have passed. Lilo so motioned, Dan Schwartz seconded it.

Jim asked for a vote by show of hands. The motion passed. Allison Sherrill will let all of the students know.

PhD and MS Project placements (DeForest and Beck)

All first year PhD students who were not committed to a research group need to be placed, Cole presented a proposal based on student choices and PI input. Cole will send out final placements to faculty.

Neda asked if there is a limit on the number of students a PI can recruit. Jim replied that it's a question of placing students where they want to go balanced with faculty needs. Try to accommodate student choice but within the constraint of faculty demand. So it varies, there's no

rule or guideline. Try to distribute students across different groups rather than have them concentrated.

David Bergsman asked how you can tell if students are gaming the system in ranking their choices.

Cole said that students told faculty this year that they were listing them as their first choice but that they had no interest in working with them. All the recommended placements have been confirmed by the faculty they are placed with.

Jim asked if someone would make a motion to vote on placement. Graham Allan made a motion to vote on placement and Dan Schwartz seconded the motion. Vote by show of hands, the motion passed.

Dave Beck presented on the MS students. In some cases, if the placement graph shows 'declined' the student did not contact the PI or engage with them. Two will not be placed in a research track. One because he couldn't find a faculty to support his interests, Dave will take him as the 12th Data Science MS student. The other is unplaced because he did not make a good faith effort to reach out to advisers. They will work with him and try to place him before Winter Q. Dave proposed that in 20-21, the 600-level credits that MS students are registered for in the fall actually meet as a class and do a report on what they are doing to engage advisers, to avoid this scenario in the future.

Jim said that because there is no fiduciary responsibility to MS students, no vote on placement is required.

John Berg asked if any of these students opted for the non-thesis program. Dave replied that it isn't yet known except for the Data Science students because that is a non-thesis degree. It won't be known until spring when they submit thesis proposals.

Jim asked how many last year chose the non-thesis option. Dave said that none chose not to do the thesis. Jim said that 75-100% of masters students stay for their thesis.

Dave proposed giving the students more guidance on what their thesis proposal should look like. So that there is consistency.

Lilo asked if there could be 2 separate tracks, one thesis and one not. Could students be admitted into one or the other? Lilo said there were students who joined the research group and committed to doing a thesis but then they chose to not do the thesis. It could also distinguish differences in degree.

Dave replied that establishing a new degree is difficult. They are still looking into it, but it will not happen in the near future.

Jim said that we should gauge interest from students, and allow PIs to express to students that they only accept students who do the thesis option.

Jim asked if there were any other topics to discuss. The meeting adjourned at 4:28.