

**Graduate Program in Genetics
Executive Committee Meeting
June 23, 2014**

MINUTES

- The meeting convened at 10:00 AM with all members in attendance:
 - Martha Furie (Pathology), Program Director
 - Howie Sirotkin (Neurobiology and Behavior)
 - Tom White (Physiology and Biophysics)
 - Paul Freimuth (BNL)
 - Gholson Lyon (CSHL)
 - Sudipto Chakraborty (CSHL student representative)
 - Erik Lavington (SBU student representative)Thanks were extended to new members Gholson and Erik.

- It was requested that a clear policy be formulated in the near future regarding course forgiveness/waivers for students entering the Program with a master's degree.

- Changes in Program requirements were discussed.
 - The elimination of Biochemistry as a requirement was approved, to be replaced by 3 elective credits (bringing the total elective credits to 6). It was also agreed that Communicating Science courses offered by the Alda Center may be used as electives. (As with all electives, these courses must be approved by the mentor and the Program Director in advance.)
 - It was agreed that a minimum grade requirement should be instated. The requirement will be that students must receive a B or better in all required courses and maintain at least a B average in elective courses.
 - Submission of a first-authored publication will be required.

Action item: Martha will petition the Graduate Council for approval to implement these changes.

- It was proposed to reduce the number of required semesters of Journal Club (BGE 691) from three to two, on the assumption that most students would be transitioning into lab- or topic-specific journal clubs by their fourth semester. However, it was pointed out that few such specific journal clubs exist at CSHL. It was therefore decided to keep the required number at three, and, as is current practice, advanced students may submit a request to the Director to substitute another journal club for BGE 691.

- The faculty list in the Graduate Bulletin is in great need of updating. Two who are listed, Yuri Lazebnik and Scott Lowe, are no longer at CSHL or SBU, respectively, and it was agreed to terminate their membership in the Program.

Action item: Martha will prepare a list of faculty that incorporates changes of which she is aware and circulate it to the Committee for further refinement.

- Additional, more minor proposed changes to the Bulletin text were distributed by Martha. These will not require approval by the Graduate Council.

Action item: The Committee was asked to read through the proposed changes for the Bulletin and get back to Martha soon with any comments, suggestions, or questions.

Action item: Once all changes are agreed upon, Martha will ask the Graduate School to update the Bulletin copy.

- It was decided that MSTP students will automatically receive waivers of Cell Biology and three elective credits (in lieu of Biochemistry) for having taken the equivalents in their medical school classes. MSTP students will still need to complete other required courses and 3 credits of electives.
- It was decided that theses of students who wish to leave the program with an MA in Biology must be read and approved by not only the mentor, but by a second person as well. The second reader should be a member of the Program and must be approved by both the student's mentor and the Graduate Program Director.
- The disparity in the deadline for completion of the proposal exam was discussed. The Bulletin states that it should occur during the fifth semester, but the instructions given to students specify by the end of the sixth semester. It was decided to let the official requirement (during the fifth semester) stand, and the instructions given to the students will be modified accordingly. It was also decided that the guidelines should suggest an increased length for the written proposal, on the order of an NIH R01 proposal. Other proposed, relatively minor changes were distributed to the Committee.

Action item: The Executive Committee was asked to review the proposed changes and get back to Martha soon with any comments, suggestions, or questions.

- Martha briefly outlined some of her proposed initiatives for the Program. Discussion centered on changing the format of the qualifying exam to that of a grant proposal, which will combine preparation of a written document with an oral examination. A preparatory course is currently being given by the Molecular Genetics and Microbiology program, which has indicated its willingness to partner with Genetics in this venture. The Committee was generally in favor of this format but stressed that getting faculty to participate may be an obstacle.

Action item: Given the positive response, Martha will prepare a more detailed description/proposal, based on the MGM model, for the Committee's further consideration.

- Martha stated her intention to improve documentation of student progress and to comply with the Graduate School requirement that every student receive written feedback annually. It was suggested that students' mentors be contacted to contribute to these reports, and Martha agreed that this is an excellent idea that will be implemented.
- Martha asked for help from the Executive Committee in organizing some program activities. In most cases, the help can be limited to identifying and recruiting program members who are willing to take the direct responsibility for these efforts. Areas in which help is needed are:
 - Admissions Committee: Jian Cao will be chairing next year on behalf of Genetics, but members will be needed.
 - Courses (Graduate Genetics and Journal Club): Course directors must be identified in the very near future.
 - Qualifying exam: Martha is willing to take the lead but needs at least one other faculty member to co-direct.
 - Rotations: It may be useful to have someone to focus on helping students pick suitable rotations and secure reports from rotation supervisors (currently, the rate of return of those reports is very low). In the meantime, Martha will be polling faculty for their financial ability to take rotation students this fall.
 - Curriculum Committee: We must revive the Curriculum Committee soon to implement changes in time for a resubmission of our training grant application in May 2015.
 - Retreat: The retreat needs to be thoughtfully re-formatted to be a more valuable experience for the students.

Action item: Committee members were asked to consider which of these activities they would like to help with.

- At 11:20, the student representatives left, and the faculty discussed student academic issues. One issue requires follow-up, which will be conducted via email after Martha gathers more information.
- The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 AM.