Present: Dave Brow, Margaret Clagett-Dame, Mike Cox, Jim Keck, Ann Palmenberg, Mike Sheets, Shruti Waghray

Absent: None

1. **Update on motion to create a two-semester course for first-year IPiB students** – Rayment

Mr. Rayment reported that, after meeting with BMC faculty, both BMC and Biochemistry faculty are in agreement regarding the creation of a new two-semester course for first-year IPiB students. Catherine Fox is organizing small group faculty discussions to address the format and content of the courses. Further progress will be reported at the November SC meeting.

2. **Discussion on clarifying the rules for the preliminary examination** – Rayment (attachment)

Committee members agreed that the process for students to prepare for their preliminary examinations varies widely from lab to lab, and the students are well aware of the inconsistencies. Some thesis advisors are vigorously involved as their students prepare their research proposals, while other faculty are completely hands-off and do not read the proposals prior to the preliminary exam.

Ms. Waghray commented that the recent departmental review is responsible for creating this as an issue, and that it is not a major concern on the students’ part. Nonetheless, the committee agreed that loose guidelines for faculty are appropriate, even though they will probably not be adhered to across all IPiB labs.

Current IPiB handbook language reads as follows:

- **Written Proposal**: Students must prepare a written research proposal and present it to their thesis committees for evaluation no less than two weeks before the date of the preliminary exam. Students may consult with their thesis advisors in planning the proposed research and during proposal writing. However, the thesis advisor should not proofread the proposal. The proposal is to be prepared in a format similar to that for proposals to the NIH. The maximum length is twenty pages of double-spaced text (12 pt. font), excluding title page, figures, and references. A good proposal could be shorter.

Proposed language agreed to by the Steering Committee is as follows [will update the language after the Steering Committee approves it]:

- **Written Proposal**: Students must prepare a written research proposal and present it to their thesis committees for evaluation no less than two weeks before the date of the preliminary exam. Students should consult with their thesis advisors in planning the proposed research and during proposal writing. However, the thesis advisor should not proofread or edit the proposal. It is recommended that the thesis advisor read the research proposal once and provide a general critique. The proposal is to be prepared in a format similar to that for proposals to the NIH. The maximum length is twenty pages of double-spaced text (12 pt. font), excluding title page, figures, and references. A good proposal could be shorter.
The Steering Committee also agreed that students should be further advised that each faculty member addresses the preparation for the prelim in different ways. The NSOC already emphasizes the difference in style between faculty and choosing a laboratory that best suits their needs. However, this needs to be restated at the time that the instructions for the prelim are circulated. Ms. Ryan has included this language in the prelim instructions.

3. **Address “direct admit” language in IPiB handbook** – Rayment

**Current language:**

a. **4.1** Students who are admitted directly into the laboratories of their thesis advisors ("direct admits") do not participate in laboratory rotations, but still must participate in all Program orientation events the week before the fall semester in which they matriculate.

**Proposed language:**

Under rare circumstances, a student may be admitted directly to a faculty’s research group. This typically arises from an introduction outside the normal admission process. Such students do not participate in laboratory rotations, but must meet the same application requirements as other students applying to the Graduate School and to IPiB. Direct admits are also required to participate in all Program orientation events the week before the fall semester in which they matriculate.

b. **4.1.4 Rotation Funding:** For students who are not on a fellowship or training grant or are not direct admits, financial support is provided by the Program through the period of the first semester lab rotations. Once the thesis lab and advisor are selected, financial support becomes the responsibility of the thesis advisor. [No changes proposed.]

Next meeting date: Wednesday, December 18, 2013

Coming up: Meeting to confirm NSOC thesis lab assignments during the week of December 9

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Ryan