

Topical Group on Precision Measurement and Fundamental Constants (GPMFC)
Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, May 4, 2009
Paul Vetter, Secretary
[Minutes compiled and edited: May 28, 2009]

April APS Meeting, Denver, Colorado
Directors' Row I

Meeting chair: David DeMille

In attendance:

Blayne Heckel

Eric Hessels

John Gillaspay

Dave DeMille

Dave Kawall

Susan Gardner

Eric Burt

Zheng-Tian Lu

Jun Ye

Paul Vetter (Secretary)

Exec. Cmte. Members not attending, Scott Dewey, Mike Romalis

General discussion (out of order from Agenda)

What's next year's GPMFC meeting? DAMOP in Houston (with participation by Rice Univ.)

Program Committee will be chaired by the currently active Chair, so next year this is John Gillaspay

Old Business: any?

Demille: Could we generate a web presence to inform members of the topical group of other meetings, programs, conferences. Perhaps mass email to membership listing such conferences.

General discussion about the diversity of our membership and program committee: AMO physics, gravity, industrial/applied physics (with an interest in fundamental constants). The program committee should take note here and see if there are areas of common interest for co-sponsored programs with Gravity/General Relativity group. DeMille reports that he worked somewhat in this direction on the program committee last year, but did not find much agreement with the Gravity/GenRel people. Nonetheless, precision gravity tests and gravity wave detection experiments seem an obvious point of overlap.

Eric Hessels reported briefly on the outstanding business of increasing the amount of the Pipkin award: he spoke to APS about increasing it, but APS says that the return on investment will be down this year, so increasing the Pipkin award may be on hold again this year, pending APS feeling more flush with cash.

John Gillaspay gave a quick summary of old business item -- an award to memorialize Richard Deslattes: Siu Au Lee (ex officio) championed this award and had been doing the work in the past, but John's feeling was that APS is not interested in sponsoring "new" awards, so that this is not moving forward very fast. He felt that APS would perhaps consider it more seriously, if pressure continues to be applied Gillaspay: if anyone has the energy to continue this fight with APS, talk to me, but it looks pretty slow and not likely to happen. DeMille repeated the suggestion (that I think we heard in years past) that it might be more palatable to APS if it's a biannual award interleaved with the Pipkin award.

Agenda items:

Election report:

172 people voted out of 424 members this year for a participation rate of 40.6%, which is a pretty good improvement from last year (24.7%) . It pays to send out reminder notices. We had five (5) ballots returned on paper. The membership elected Jun Ye as Vice-Chair, and Kristan Corwin and Michael Chapman as Members-at-Large to the Executive Committee.

Blayne Heckel: can we encourage ex-members of the Executive Committee of the GPMFC to attend the exec cmte meetings in an *ex officio* capacity to ensure continuity?

All: Hear, hear!

Paul Vetter: I'll try to expand the email distribution list to encourage *ex-officio* people to show up to the meeting.

Nominating committee report, Susan Gardner: Other committee members were Luis Orozco and Fred Wiedfeldt. It would be desirable to get more candidates from the non AMO (atomic/molecular/optical) subfields in order to ensure diversity in membership, representation, future program vitality, etc. (Not that we don't love our new officers...) Is there growth potential from the sub-fields of cosmology, general relativity/gravity, particle/fields? Gardner tried a couple of people from particle/cosmology but could not get commitments to stand for election from a couple of popular and busy people. Susan has an informal .doc file which keeps track of the people we've approached. How about very low background counting/measurement people? DeMille: please attempt to renominate Breidenbach because Breidenbach he was a strong candidate which would appeal to co-members with DPF and others.

Blayne: can we (i.e. the Secretary) mention in the election announcement what the balance of the executive cmte is?

Paul Vetter: yes, next year in the election announcement, I will try to remember to mention the current composition of the exec cmte to encourage the members to vote for nonDAMOP people and broaden their horizons.

John Gillaspay: APS says that we can invite non-elected advisory people to participate as "guests" with the Exec. Cmte. We could try to unofficially grab people rather than elect them if we would like more input on program development, membership expansion, etc.

How about a grad student? There is provision in APS bylaws for grad student participation in Executive Cmtes, as non-voting members.

Also: nominating committee must include an outside person approved by APS. **Susan G. volunteers to chair the nominating committee again.** Blayne can suggest some LIGO people for candidates. John G. says that he and I (Paul Vetter) will forward to APS a name for the nominating cmte.

Program committee report, David DeMille: from current committee. John Gillaspay will be chair next year (2009-2010). With our membership numbers, we are entitled to ONE session sponsored (or two co-sponsored) at the April meeting. DeMille suggests that John G. contact other Topical Group heads and other Division heads rather soon to coordinate on potential program topics. DeMille reports that GPMFC “adopted” sessions on Dark Matter searches for the April APS meeting (i.e. that he accepted abstracts on these topics to go into GPMFC sessions), which was useful. Possible topic for next year’s April session: Neutron physics from new Spallation Neutron Source? No, too soon for results [although worth keeping in mind -- PV].

Zheng-Tian Lu: we easily received an okay for the DAMOP program for an invited session on EDM’s (searches for permanent electric dipole moments of atoms/molecules/particles). Lu reported surprised at how competitive this APS program cmte and the process can be. Focus session = 2 invited talks, followed by contributed talks. But anyway, I got a DAMOP session on EDM’s. Lu: it’s important to have a TGPMFC member to be a sorter to ensure we get good material. DeMille: I concur. Eric: the April meeting is again usually not well attended by PMFC people unless we overlap well with other groups.

The program cmte for 2009-10 Chair to be John Gillaspay, Blayne H. nominates Zheng-Tian Lu, who accepts.

Also: Dave deeply appreciates John Gillaspay’s proximity to DC to participate in several APS business functions.

Eric Burt: what about a student poster competition for GPMFC? Can we do a monetary award? DeMille: that would be better at the DAMOP meeting., where posters are more popular. Whom to approach on DAMOP about that? Z.T. Lu and Jun Ye: we will try to get that through APS, but we may have to be a bit more formal in developing and proposing that. DeMille: okay, remanded to Z.T. Lu and Jun Ye.

Fellowship committee report, Blayne Heckel (chair): nominations were sent to APS. We have three fellows this year, Klaus Blaum, Joachim Ullrich, Richard Steiner. General comment from several members: we [GPMFC Exec. Cmte.] aren’t getting good assistance from APS on this – bad communication. It’s opaque. 2009-10 committee: Blayne Heckel will chair the Fellowship Cmte. and Jun Ye will serve on it, rising to be chair the following year (2010-2011).

Pipkin Award committee report, David DeMille: Tiku Majumder was last year’s chair, with the award going to Zheng-Tian Lu this year (2009). Meaning that Lu is now on the

cmte. to determine a next award recipient. Both nonwinning candidates from last time will be held over. We do not need a Pipkin Award cmte at this time because it is awarded in alternate years. The chair and membership of the cmte can be determined at next year's GPMFC Exec Cmte meeting, but Z.T. Lu will serve on it.

Units Convocation meeting report, John Gillaspay: "Those meetings are not all that useful." Most significant and useful thing was informal discussion with other Topical Group members. An editor of *Reviews of Scientific Instruments* (RSI) wanted to work with GPMFC for a topical review article to appear in RSI. Gillaspay, to cmte: send me your suggestions for who might be interested in writing a review article like that. The RSI editor suggested a very overview approach to an article (think Rev. Mod. Phys.) – a feature article. Generally the units convocation is a networking thing, with politics and stimulus funding the main topics of discussion.

Membership and recruiting report, Paul Vetter: The membership numbers are stable over the last few years. In 2009, APS figures show that our membership is 416 (although it may be as high as 433, depending on which documents you look at), representing 0.88% of the full APS membership. Membership in 2008 was 419, representing 0.91% of the APS membership. From 2004 to 2009, membership has been relatively stable from 0.87% to 0.94% of APS membership, and slowly increasing in absolute numbers. Jun Ye mentions that direct action from Siu Au Lee got him to sign up to GPMFC.

John Gillaspay: one way to increase the participation in the business meeting would be to get someone to discuss with students what the funding opportunities are, what the employment prospects are. Can we get a person from e.g. NIST to address the business meeting (i.e. at DAMOP next year) for 15 minutes? Also: the Exec. Cmte. approves expenditures for pizza, beer, soda for students at the next business meeting at DAMOP (in Houston) as an outreach event.

Paul Vetter: I intend to send a solicitation email to non-members who gave talks at this year's April APS meeting, either in our sponsored sessions, or who I thought might be doing related work. I'll see if I can come up with a mailing list of several dozen people to target to see if we can get a few more people to joining GPMFC.

Communications, outreach, website

Periodic emails to members about meetings of interest. DeMille volunteers to collate some information about this, and get me information to send as emails to the membership. Input from other Exec. Cmte. members also welcome on this.

Continuity in term of office for Secretary/Treasurer: It would be a Good Thing™ to have a year of overlap in the terms of office for the incoming and outgoing Sec./Treasurers. My [PV] term of office ends at the end of the 2010 Exec. Cmte. meeting. Would we have to change the bylaws to do this? Yes, it would require a special election, which relatively simple to do via the web interface, but it does require an extra step. On the other hand, a simple way to do this is to make it abundantly clear to the incoming

Sec./Treas. that if elected, s/he is required to attend the first meeting immediately after the election, to learn the ropes from the outgoing Secretary.

Wiki or living document to guide Executive Committee members: It would be good to have some documentation about the responsibilities of the Exec. Cmte. of the GPMFC and organizational information available to future officers, so that we don't re-invent the wheel each year. Let's just write a text file or series of files, and put it somewhere on a Google server (e.g. a Gmail account that the new members could have access to). John G. volunteers to circulate an example from the Ohio Section (OSAPS) (about how to organize a meeting with explicit instructions for officers and so on) he thinks this is a good model for the documentation we have in mind.

New Business:

Motions to commend outgoing officers: Dave DeMille, Eric Hessels, John Gillaspay.
Seconded, approved.

Eric Hessels: could we have a "virtual poster session" for the members, since our membership typically does not all attend a common meeting? Could we get a web space for that? That might be cool.

Adjourn, 13:24 pm

Business meeting:

Attendance = 8

Suggestions from attendees:

Perhaps a revised, updated statement on the GPMFC website about what kinds of physics we think is cool (including low background counting experiments and related topics?)

How about targeted emails to people who gave the dark matter talks, who do CKM unitarity tests, who do precision neutrino oscillation stuff? That could recruit well. We could grow the membership this year.

Let's make a better website with a bigger mission statement thing on the website.

Shall I [PV, Sec/Treas] send an email to the constituents about looking for calls for program topics? Coordinate with John Gillaspay about making a program memo.

Adjourn 18:05 04/04/2009