**Neuroscience Faculty Advisory Committee**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Giltner Hall, Room 101**

**April 19, 2019**

**Attendance**: Gina Leinninger, Michelle Mazei-Robison, Marc Breedlove, Jim Galligan, Krishna Yelleswarapu (student rep), Greg Swain, Alexa Veenema and Caryl Sortwell (chair)

**Old Business**

1. *Please note that there has been a temporary delay in the production of the meeting minutes from March 12, 2019. These meeting minutes will be circulated and approved after this meeting. Below are some action items from the March 12 meeting:*
2. Previous Action Item: Jim will revise Neuroscience Inclusion, Diversity and Equity (DEI) statement based on feedback from meeting
   * Jim noted that this statement of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity is now updated and posted on the website

Previous Action Item: Jim/Julie will arrange for election for the FAC slot that Caryl will vacate when she ends her term as a FAC member after the May meeting

* + Caryl reported a worthy applicant has been found for the position: Scott Counts (Grand Rapids)
  + Jim will send out a call for nominations/self-nominations on April 22; once those have been submitted, a ballot will be sent out of all nominations.
  + A new member will be selected by the end of May

Previous Action Item: Caryl and Michelle will produce a draft of the NSP Specialty Research Clusters for FAC feedback, ultimately this information will be added to the NSP website

* + Caryl reported that her and Michelle have created a draft, and the draft was updated by Jim
  + More discussion on research clusters to follow

Previous Action Item: Caryl will produce a draft of survey questions (ultimately to send to the NSP faculty) for the purpose of identifying labs for the *Research Labs for Dissertation Training* page to be added to the NSP website

* + For the purpose of identifying research labs for dissertation training
  + This is the first discussion item on New/Continued Business

**New/Continued Business**

1. Discussion Item: NSP Website Additions (Caryl)
   * Draft of the NSP Specialty Research Clusters

* Caryl highlighted the importance of remembering the intent of this: this is an outwardly facing document that will be posted on the website for the purpose of helping future applicants find their interests in the program. The document can be utilized as an advertising and marketing tool to display where we truly have specialty research
* Caryl stated the criteria in creating the clusters was not necessarily based upon whether a lab had funding for a student. Students can still rotate in a laboratory and get the expertise on a topic. This is something that could be listed as part of a specialty research cluster. There are many faculty in this position; they might not be taking new students but could still be a participant in a research cluster.
* Caryl added there will be later discussion to specifically identify research labs for dissertation training – hopefully pulled from the survey. But this is not the focus of the clusters. The question is: is a major focus of the laboratory in this research specialty?
* Caryl asked for thoughts on the new revised list.
* Jim explained the list had been modified. The first grouping that was listed on the original document was in enteric nervous system; Jim stated he would like this to be broadened to the peripheral nervous system. This category will be more inclusive to faculty studying somatic motor system, sympathetic nervous system, the cardiovascular system, neuromuscular junction, peripheral sensory nerves and pain mechanisms.
* Alexa stated that one question would be: if a faculty is collaborating with someone who is an expert in the peripheral nervous system, but that faculty himself is not, do they still belong to this category? Should a category be added for this person’s primary research?
* Michelle responded that this list was put together based on primary research. She tried to put people in one bin originally just to simplify these clusters. If the focus of the lab is spread across two disciplines, people can certainly be cross-listed. The idea originally is to see where strengths are in primary research.
* Marc Breedlove added that Cindy Jordan, Cheryl Sisk and himself would fit into motivated behavior, yet also developmental disorders. Breedlove suggested we could ask faculty to self-sort, while making a rule to not choose more than two fields.
* Caryl stated that listing faculty in their primary research will help students find their connections and maximize on their intended research. Caryl said the list could be sent out so that people could self-sort by their top two research specialties and receiving feedback this way. Caryl reminded everyone that this isn’t about added the more important thing is to figure out if we are missing any category.
* Jim said he added Cognitive Neuroscience to the list. Discussion ensued on different categories to be added to the list, including neurobiology of motivated behavior.
* Michelle stated that this version was a very rough draft created for input. Marc thanked Michelle for making the list. The group agreed that it was a job well done, and that the list is inclusive and covers the range of the Neuroscience faculty. Caryl stated that after the list is sent out, there can be flexibility in adding and fixing categories along the way.
* Gina Leinninger noticed there are some faculty who aren’t on the Specialty Research Cluster list that are technically Neuroscience. Gina wanted to formalize that this is a list of active members.
* Caryl stated that in her mind, to be on this list one has to officially be a part of the Neuroscience program, as well as fall under one or two of the specialties. Caryl added there will be an additional web page that more clearly identifies laboratories in which students can do their dissertation research in.
* Michelle replied that this list was not meant to be fit every faculty member, and not every person would fit into these major specialties. This list is meant to be dense with people where there are many people in a given category. Michelle gave the example that if a student is interested in Alzheimer’s disease, they could easily look at the list and see there is a home for that at here at Michigan State University.
* Caryl said she when the list goes out, she would try to word the e-mail so that people understand the intent; that if they are part of the Neuroscience program, conducting research and recruiting students and don’t fall under these categories, their information will still be discoverable and featured on the page. This is just a supplementary page for students looking for a specific topic, and ultimately if they came to MSU would know they had multiple options to study this topic. Jim confirmed that he would read and help construct the e-mail.
  + Draft of Survey Questions to identify *Research Labs for Dissertation Training*
* Caryl stated this is another survey with the intent for incoming graduate students and students who may apply to identify laboratories in which they can do their dissertation research in. Caryl said is working on a list of questions to help us figure out which faculty should be on that list. This would be a list that would be updated on a yearly basis. Caryl stated the spirit of these questions is to find whether faculty have resources and interest, and if they do not have resources that they are actively trying to get them. The last question was written to gather information from the Neuroscience faculty and the graduate students that make up their laboratories; general statistics.
* Marc responded that the important aspects were captured, but to possibly elaborate on the question about funds by asking for the source to be identified (NIH, NSF, etc.), just to prove the answer is feasible.
* Jim suggested merge the two questions into one, because having a stipend to support a student but not having money to support a project would not work. Discussion continued in support of the questions being merged. It was agreed that it’s a nice reminder that funds are needed not just for stipends, but also funds for the projects themselves. It makes it more clear that faculty cannot have one without the other.
* Jim inquired about the next question on the survey (“Do you currently have any graduate students? If yes, how many? Are they in the Neuroscience program? If not, which program?”). Caryl answered that she’s trying to understand whether Neuroscience laboratories that students could be placed in are being filled with students from other graduate programs. This wouldn’t be anything we would use for designating a research lab for dissertation training for our program, but it would be interesting information to know.
* Michelle agreed it would be interesting to know; she also said that it might capture some labs that are getting their graduate students from other programs but would like more Neuroscience students. This might be a way to encourage people to get involved if they have active labs but aren’t getting many Neuroscience students. It might help the faculty know that there are sources and students aren’t finding them. Marc agreed he liked the survey questions as well. He added that it’s a way of reminding the respondent to take stop and look at the students in their lab; it is a minimal requirement of taking a graduate student, and proof it’s been given some thought.

Action Item: Caryl will reword survey questions to reflect the what was discussed, and send out the updated questions in an e-mail.

1. Discussion Item: NSP Graduate Program (Greg Swain) Update on NSP Graduate
   * Greg reported that recruiting has been finalized and was successful; we have seven new students coming in. Two students have CNS fellowships, one student has a UEF fellowship, and one has an early start fellowship. Pretty successful in getting fellowships this year.
   * Greg also reported that a form was sent out a week ago for the first annual graduate guidance committee meetings with the students. Survey data from the Graduate School reflects that in the past three years, there has been a down-tick in students who are exiting and their view about the interactions with their advisor and graduate committee. The Graduate School would like more of this data, but also it would be beneficial for the students. Greg also stated the Dean would like more of a paper-trail for all graduate students, particularly when cases arise about degree extensions. Rich Swartz has mandated for the college is that he is not going to consider fellowship applications starting in the Fall unless they include concrete evidence of an annual committee meeting.

* Greg stated the comprehensive exams are underway. Six students are taking the written portion of the comprehensive exams this year. One of the students is taking them now; the other five will complete them in May.
* Greg said the responsibility is on the students to get those committee meetings set up, but it’s also up to the advisor to stay on top of this. The applications for fellowships will come due end of July/first part of August, and this will need to be completed by anyone that is applying.
* Caryl recalled there weren’t many continuation/completion fellowships for the last round or two of students. Caryl inquired if the funding was back up?
* Greg replied that he doesn’t have concrete numbers for this, but in general the college had a bit less funding to work with this year. At the university level, there were 20-25 fellowships awarded (UEF, UDF). Greg said he didn’t believe there was any big surge in funding; if anything, the numbers are staying flat or decreasing. The number of applications the college receives continues to increase every year; for the same amount of money, there are more people applying. The competition continues to be strong, but Greg stated our students have been doing really well with those. No continuations this year, but yes to early start fellowships.
* Caryl inquired about the continuation/completion fellowships, and if it was possible to get feedback on what makes a good application? She added if it’s not about a change in funding, it would be interesting to get some feedback to more successfully compete.
* Greg replied that our college doesn’t use any sort of rubric in the evaluation. We do have criteria, with a numeric number assigned. All judged by the reviewers; every applicant has at least three or four of the graduate program directors reviewing them. At the university level, there is a rubric and comments are included. If someone were to ask Judith Stoddart or Deanne Hubbell in the Graduate School, there might be a way to extract written comments that have been provided about an application package. At the university level, there might be a way to get a little feedback.
* Caryl asked if the continuation/completion fellowships are distributed evenly throughout various programs? If more than one application is coming from the Neuroscience program, should we be looking at our own applications and choosing only the most competitive applications?
* Greg replied not to, as we often have more than one of package the awarded; we don’t have a huge number coming from Neuroscience but have been pretty successful in getting multiple fellowships funded. Greg isn’t sure what Richard does with the information the graduate programs give him in terms of the reviews. There is a ranking system that all directors see, and a cut-line is decided on where the money is. Greg stated this whole list is based on the reviews the graduate program directors provide; after there is a meeting deciding if the cut-lines should be moved based on what based on how much money Richard thinks there will be.
* Jim clarified that this was about recruitment and continuation fellowships?
* Greg replied both. He stated as far as the even distribution of these fellowships, he believes they are based more on merit: financial need, student accomplishments, and diversity.
* Michelle said that more to what Caryl was speaking to, the issue is that the pool of money has been extremely variable. Are these fellowships coming back again, or are the funds depleted such that they aren’t giving as many?
* Greg replied that Fall is the best time because this is when all the money is available. Greg stated that depending on how many accept will control the Spring. If the Fall and Spring aren’t so successful, there will be a whole lot more money in the Summer to award. Each year is dependent on that.
* Jim stated the priority is on completion fellowship rather than a continuation fellowship. Jim responded to Michelle and said he doesn’t think the money is coming back
* Krishna added that a current graduate student in his lab has a fellowship that helps to pay for the first and last year of tuition, and those are not taxed. The students are surprised when a significant amount of money is due when filing their taxes. Krishna said that it might be nice to have someone who can help students understand that this is what lies ahead when filing their taxes. Sometimes the students don’t have this money saved.

Action Item: Greg will send out an e-mail to advisors reminding them to keep on top of these committee meetings

1. Discussion Item: NSP Strategic Plan–Research and Graduation Education (Jim/Krishna)

* Jim reported Phi Duxbury is trying to organize a strategic plan. Phil is looking for feedback from all units about what their ideas of a strategic plan should be. Jim is asking input from the FAC about a strategic plan for the Neuroscience program over the next five years. The two major topics would be: research and graduate education. How can these be improved, what are initiatives we could put forward in strengthening these? Jim is looking for suggestions and ideas.
* Gina added that she thought Greg had put together a nice list of ideas, and out of that Gina seconded the training grant and working on this again. Gina suggested that maybe the College would be willing to help with that.
* Jim agreed, and believes the College and Graduate School would be willing to help with that. Jim added that Greg’s Post Doctorial Mentoring Program is a very good idea. Jim also stated faculty hires will be tough for the Neuroscience program, as we are not a tenure granting unit; Jim stated we will have to work with other departments to accomplish this.
* Greg stated that he had identified mass spectrometry and imaging as there isn’t a strong presence here. There was a proposal put in a few years ago for multiple hires in this area, but Greg believes there would be support across campus from multiple departments if something like this were pitched. Greg thinks the mass spectrometry business is something they would support. Greg added as the Neuroscience program’s contribution to the strategic plan for the College, we could take a leadership role and figure out a way to bring two faculty to the campus that do this kind of work.
* Caryl said that she liked that idea. She added that there is a new mass spectrometry and proteomics core in the Grand Rapids Research Center. Caryl added that expanding capabilities to do mass spectrometry imagining is something that we’ve all talked about. Caryl reported that two GII positions in their department were taken away because there is no money left; it’s a tall order to think about recruitment as well. Caryl looks at this as a technique, and as an earlier step trying to get more enthusiasm for that approach. Perhaps if you’ve seen the primary author give a presentation in a slot on our seminar series for Grand Rapids and East Lansing, just to get excitement and exposure building. Caryl said this could be a pre-cursor step to freeing up more resources.
* Greg stated the prudent thing to do is just a well-organized plan that in place that has been pitched. Greg added that sometimes when funding becomes available, it’s not “spur of the moment”. Greg stated that the finances around here are somewhat limited, but it is also recognized the university needs to continue evolving. Funding isn’t going to go away, but they are going to be a lot more strategic into where they put their money. Greg added that having a plan and a leadership role in the college is a smart thing to do.
* Michelle reported that the Dean came to Physiology yesterday, and it appeared he wanted to support marshalling resources for seed-money for program project type grants. Michelle said if we could put into words that we are actively putting together groups or themes or researchers to put together bigger proposal.
* Jim replied that during his monthly meeting, he had a long talk with Phil about exactly that. He stated that we will just have to work on groups of people that would be willing to do this and find one person to be the program director. Jim asked Greg if he wanted to give any more details about the diversity and inclusion idea?
* Greg reported that these 3-2 programs are really something that the university is trying to promote. MSU has three partner universities now. Greg stated that he reached out to one of the partner universities (North Carolina Central) last year to see if it was something they would consider. The idea would be to set up a 3-2 so that a student getting a degree in Psychology at Central would fulfill the requirements there, but the curriculum would be established so they could finish the required courses to obtain a master’s degree in Neuroscience. This would be one way to get them here, and they would have success with these graduate courses. Greg suggested we could set it up for these students to have rotations in a lab to get a feel for research skills and use this as a tool to recruit them to the program. Greg added that ultimately, this could really help our diversity.
* Marc clarified that the program would be three years at their home institution, and two years here; the idea being that in those two years they will complete their bachelor’s from North Carolina Central, and complete a master’s that we will give them.
* Greg confirmed that was correct. Marc stated that this is a brilliant idea, and it would ease them into the difficulties of graduate school.
* Greg stated that he’s going to spend some time this summer figuring out the logistics and have face-to-face meetings to figure out how the curriculum might be meshed. This might be a way to help with our recruitment and diversity enhancement.
* Caryl added that she really likes this idea and would volunteer to help with this project. Caryl added that once these specialty research clusters are nailed down, people sometimes are willing to travel, and a few people from different clusters could potentially market the opportunities that students would have at Michigan State University.
* Greg said the bi-directional interaction is definitely something we will want to be put in place. Greg added that these training programs aren’t really going on in the college right now; this is an opportunity for Neuroscience and the College to take a leadership role in some of these things and be proactive. There is quiet a bit of administrative support for these programs, and willingness up at the top to provide support for these things. Greg believes it would be really good for the program.

Action Item:

1. Discussion Item: Planning/Ideas for Annual Retreat – August 23, 2019 (Greg, Krishna)
   * Krishna reported that he reached out to the students, and a few have gotten back to him. He stated three categories of interest were: diversity, student representation, and privilege in graduate school and research. There was interest in talking more about the collaborations that were highlighted at the last retreat. Another focus was talking about the new building, the resources that will be available there, and highlighting what the Neuroscience move will bring for students and faculty. Krishna also stated there was interest in profession and developmental resources available for Neuroscience students (certifications, college teaching, etc.). Lastly, statistical analysis, the power in experience, significance with the .05, and whether statistical significance means something in the long run. Krishna added we could work to put a theme together for a couple of these ideas, but this was what he had from the students.
   * Jim stated the retreat would be in Grand Rapids this year, and that Julie Delgado is searching for a location.
   * Caryl said she would reach out to Julie to put see who she’s working with in Grand Rapids. Caryl inquired about who plans the agenda?
   * Jim replied that this was a collaborative effort; students present ideas, faculty share topics they would be interested in, and based on this we develop an agenda. Jim recalled that last year’s theme was big projects and collaborative studies. Jim stated we would solicit feedback from faculty and students to come up with a theme.
   * Krishna stated the students really enjoyed the activities. He suggested one in the morning and again in the afternoon so that students could talk to faculty and give everyone a chance to engage.
   * Michelle agreed, stating that at her table it was a good mix of students and faculty last year.
   * Marc clarified that this event was going to be Friday, August 23 and not Thursday, August 22?
   * Jim replied that it will take place Friday, August 23
   * Caryl said that if there is a new faculty member in the program and we haven’t heard about their research, she would like to have a research talk. Otherwise, Caryl said she would like to spend the time meeting and planning and less time talking about research.
   * Krishna added that the students would be interested in hearing about failures in science; how to deal with failure, how to bounce back, and what failure really means.
2. New Business: Our next FAC meeting is Tuesday, May 14 at 10:30am (last meeting of the year)

Action Item: Caryl will send out the Survey questions for tweaking

Action Item: Caryl will send out Specialty Research Clusters

* Caryl asked if these should be two separate e-mails? She was thinking yes, so that faculty won’t confuse the purposes of each. Everyone was in support of two separate emails.

1. No Old Business

Meeting adjourned: 11:37am