

Panel on Public Affairs Meeting Minutes
October 4, 2019
APS Washington Office of Public Affairs
529 14th Street, NW, Suite 1050, Washington, DC

Members present (19):

J.Wells (Chair), D.Dahlberg (Chair-Elect), W.Collins(Vice-Chair), M.Marder (Past-Chair), J.Adams, S.Blessing, B.Clark, B.Cruz, B.Demarco, R.Falcone, L.Grego, C.Gutierrez, M. Hockaday (virtual), B. Klein, J. Jasinski, T. Mason, C. Nitta, R. Orbach, M.Tamor

Members absent (4):

C.Cruz, D.Ernst, J.Gates, M.McNeese

Advisors/Staff present:

P.Bucksbaum, M.Elsesser, D.Gross(virtual), K.Kirby, J.Oliver, J.Russo, F.Slakey

Call to Order

J.Wells called the meeting to order at 8:01 A.M

Welcome, Approval of Minutes

A call for edits to the June 2019 minutes was made. a motion was introduced.

***Motion:** A correction was made to the minutes to indicate that Susan Blessing was not present at the June meeting.*

***Action:** The motion passed, unanimously*

Advocacy Update

APS Office of Government Affairs (OGA) staff provided an overview of advocacy activities, including: Federal agency budgets, helium conservation/recycling, open access, scientific mobility, sexual harassment in the sciences, and visas/immigration. In particular, APS members suffered an average price increase of helium across the country of 21% from 2018 to 2019 which follows similar increases from the last several years. The OGA worked with Joseph Di'Vertii to have an op-ed placed in the New York Times that included two recommendations that stem from the POPA report from liquid helium from 2016.

Ethics Subcommittee

Marder, provided an update on the APS Ethics Committee work. The Ethics Committee will be sending an ethics survey to the APS membership. A goal of the survey is for APS to gain a better understanding of how -- or if -- the physics community has changed since the ethics survey that was carried out 15 years ago that indicated mistreatment suffered by early-career scientists.

Other Areas the Ethics Committee is currently working on:

- Consortium on STEMM
- Educational Campaign
- Revocation of honors and awards
- APS Meeting materials

- Reviewing the “Redundant Publication” section in the APS Ethics Guidelines
- Addressing harassment at non-APS meetings.

Action: encourage the Ethics Committee to review the ethical issues raised by Kelvin Drouegemeier in his recent OSTP memo

Action: include an update from the Ethics Subcommittee at the February POPA meeting

National Security Subcommittee

Hockaday, Chair of the National Security Subcommittee, presented a draft statement on technologies and treaties. The goal of the statement is to highlight the important role “treaty science” plays in building confidence in and technical assurances for future verifiable and effective arms control agreements.

Motion: Two changes were recommended:

(1) add “including those concerning disarmament, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and limiting of nuclear tests” so that the sentence reads: Arms control agreements and treaties have been essential tools in the pursuit of stability and security in the nuclear age **including those concerning disarmament, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, and limiting of nuclear tests.**

(2) add “agreement” so that the sentence reads: Recently, the United States withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) **agreement** with the UN Security Council’s five permanent members, Germany, and Iran and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia, while the New START Treaty is set to expire in February 2021.

Motion: Accept the Statement with minor edits and forward to the Board for review (Blessing/Klein)

Action: Approved unanimously

Grego/Wells, proposed a study on missile defense. The study would look at the existing public test record of the US ground-based midcourse defense system and consider what would be required in a test program to provide confidence in a missile defense system. The study would educate the public and policy-makers about the capability and effectiveness of the current missile system and provide a framework for discussions about missile defense systems.

Proposed Study on Missile Defense

Action: consensus that Grego/Wells should bring a proposal to POPA in February, consistent with the educational purpose that was discussed and taking into consideration the particular comments of POPA.

Energy & Environment Subcommittee

Marder/Orbach proposed a study on methane flaring. An APS-POPA study of the use of dual frequency-comb spectroscopy (DCS) to measure emitted gases from flaring sites would enable accurate and continuous information to identify the nature and amount of emitted gases from the flaring sources. The use of DCS from various platforms (ground level monitoring, use of drones and satellites) can inform relevant agencies of the magnitude of flared gases in their jurisdiction and inform the public of the nature and amount of releases from flaring can result in actions to curb emissions.

Action: consensus interest in proceeding with a study, and having the Energy & Environment Subcommittee bring a final proposal to POPA in February that reflects POPA’s comments and suggestions.

APS Office of Government Affairs (OGA) staff provided an overview of the suggestion that APS respond to the EPA rulemaking on methane. The APS response would highlight recent research that indicates that the methane warming potential is higher than previously anticipated. APS could oppose the proposed rule and suggest that regulations stay as is until emissions are fully assessed.

Action: consensus that OGA will work with Bill Collins to draft an APS response to EPA's proposed methane rule.

Tamor proposed a study on "Fake BioFuel". The study could influence the structure of regulation of biofuel. It would identify means that could covertly cheat biofuel regulations and then provide possible pathways for measurements that could detect cheating.

Action: the Energy & Environment Subcommittee will consider a potential study and, if there is sufficient interest, bring a proposal to the February 2020 Meeting.

Physics & the Public Subcommittee

PGRE Discussion

Lance Cooper (guest) discussed the UIUC physics department's use of holistic review in assessing graduate student admissions. He discussed their position regarding the use of Physics Graduate Record Examination (PGRE) scores in the admissions process. He provided recommendations on what could be in an APS statement

Motion: forward the proposal for a broader statement, that Lance Cooper recommended, to Monica Plisch and encourage her to work with experts to develop a statement for POPA consideration accompanied by relevant data that could be posted with the statement. (Blessing/Marder)

Action: Approved unanimously

APS Statement in Support of Public Outreach

Blessing, the Chair of Physics & the Public Subcommittee, presented a statement on public outreach that was proposed by APS FOEP and was discussed at the last POPA meeting.

PROPOSED STATEMENT

The American Physical Society values the efforts of physicists to engage with the general public, communicating the principles, findings, and benefits of physics research, and recognizes that such activities are an essential contribution that benefits the physics community.

CONTEXT

The 2019 Strategic Vision of the American Physical Society highlights outreach efforts as essential to its core mission. It is vitally important that the value of physics research be clearly communicated to the general public. This requires effective and vocal advocates. Supporting and encouraging those who engage with the public, who are making a valuable contribution to science, is in the best interests of the physics community.

Motion: Cease consideration of the proposed Statement because the intent is already captured in the APS Strategic Plan. (Blessing/Marder)

Action: The motion passed with 1 abstention

APS Statement International Nature of Physics & International Cooperation.

Amy Flatten (guest) provided an overview of the Statement on the International Nature of Physics & International Cooperation and the views of the APS Committee on International Scientific Affairs

(CISA). CISA reviewed the current statement and proposed that rather than making minor revisions to the existing statement, a new statement should be developed, given that so much has changed since the existing statement was written.

Motion: maintain the current statement and support CISA's proposal to draft a new statement by May 1st for discussion at the June POPA meeting (Blessing/Thom)

Action: Approved unanimously

99.2 Research in Physics Education

Blessing, the Chair of Physics & the Public Subcommittee, presented the APS Statement 99.2 Research in Physics Education that was referred to by Committee on Education for edits. COE provided several suggestions but did not change the content. The statement was updated and clarified.

Motion: Replace the current statement with the updated statement (**Collins/Marder**)

Action: Approved unanimously

New Business

Bucksbaum, raised a suggestion that had been made by physicist Mark Raizen. In a Physics Today OpED, Raizen proposed the establishment of a nonprofit foundation that could serve as a new Bell Labs.

Action: consensus to invite Mark Raizen to the February POPA meeting to discuss his proposal for a "New Bell Labs"

Action: consensus to ask Steven Lambert to review Raizen's proposal with FIAP and/or the Ind Board, and to invite Steven to participate in the February POPA discussion

Next Meeting

The date for the next POPA meeting will be February 7, 2020

Adjournment

Action: J. Wells adjourned the meeting at 2:49 PM