Present: Mr Nial Gursanscky (in the chair), Assoc Prof Melissa Brown, Mr Karl Davy, Ms Arti Singh, Ms Jill Sheridan (minutes), Mr Mark Starkey (up to and including ‘Registrations’ in Item 1, minutes), Mr Peter Vella, Mr Daniel Westlake.

Apology: Prof Alastair McEwan, Prof Mary Garson, Mr Xiang Setoh.

Absent: Ms Eve Chow, Mr Pinus Jumaryatno, Dr Peter Wilce.

Minutes: Minutes of the meeting held 27 October 2009, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed.

Business arising out of the minutes:

Transport of Chemicals and Biologicals

Mark reported that the guide on transport of biologicals had been finally approved at the School OH&S Committee meeting of 9 December and would appear on the intranet shortly. A draft guide on transport of chemicals had been considered by the OHSC and changes suggested.

Mark awaited an update from Lyle Carrington on any on-line form that could be made available and would follow up on Lyle’s return from leave in January.

OH&S Committee vacancy

Mark reported that the Chemistry Building RHD student representative on the School’s Occupational Health & Safety Committee, Wei Zhong, had completed (or is close to completing) her PhD and had therefore resigned from the Committee. A replacement was sought.

Mark added that the Committee meets approximately every 6 weeks for up to couple of hours at a time. Wei had reported that she had enjoyed serving on the Committee – she had learned from it and enjoyed the camaraderie.

It was agreed that if no member of the RSCC came forward, a general call to RHD students based in the Chemistry Building would be issued.

1. Review of the 5th Annual SCMB Research Students Symposium:

Members discussed how the symposium had gone, with a view to suggesting changes to the next student organising committee. Deliberations included consideration of 33 participant feedback forms, the results of which Arti Singh had collated, and of email feedback from Xiang Setoh, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Overall, members felt that the event had gone very well. Melissa Browne thought it had been the best such symposium to-date and congratulated the organising team on a great job.

Timing

- Due to marking loads, the early part of the week following the exam period should be avoided. A better time is either late in that week or early the following week.
- One feedback respondent had suggested moving the event away from the heat of summer, unless the poster displays could be under cover.

Program

- Feedback was that there was generally sufficient time allocated to view and judge posters. It was suggested there be one poster per board at any one time, so less crowded, otherwise space the boards out more.
1. **Review of the 5th Annual SCMB Research Students Symposium:** (cont’d)

   **Program** (cont’d)

   - The ‘People’s Choice’ award had drawn at least one favourable comment.
   - Most respondents were happy with the arrangements for the talks – their duration and the parallel sessions. There were one or two comments that more time could have been allocated for the talks, including more question time. However, members felt that 5 minutes for questions was standard for conferences.
   - Only two of 32 respondents commented negatively on the parallel sessions, in terms of not understanding some topics. However members reiterated that the objective in a multi-disciplinary School setting is not to run discipline-specific sessions, and that one of the challenges for speakers is to appeal to a broader audience.

   **Student Participation**

   - Attendance by postgraduate coursework project students and by honours students had been good. Karl commented that the timing of the event had suited honours students. It could probably be up to a week later without compromising honours student attendance.
   - Setoh had commented that Parasitology student numbers were low. It was felt that he was referring to the number of presenters. One Parasitology student had presented a talk and two others presented posters. Melissa felt that the issue could be that there simply were not many Parasitology students. Setoh had suggested that if Parasitology participation was low, the Australian Society for Parasitology be approached to sponsor a prize. Jill would look at the ratio of Parasitology presenters to Parasitology RHD students in the School, to see if it differed significantly from the overall ratio (Subsequent to the meeting, Jill established that Parasitology students represent about 6% of the SCMB RHD student cohort. The level of Parasitology participation in the Symposium was consistent with this.)

   **Venue**

   - The number of participants had been higher than in recent years and Committee members felt that a bigger venue had been needed. The lecture theatre had been overcrowded for the plenary talk. Having the posters outside had caused discomfort for presenters and viewers. The sponsor/refreshment area had been crowded at the breaks. Despite this, 30 feedback respondents had rated the venue as OK or better and only 3 had said it was unsuitable.
   - Options suggested for the future were: Sir Llew Edwards Building; IMB; QBI; Union Complex (Schonell and Cement Box theatres, Heath and Holt rooms); Hawken Building.

   **Catering**

   - All felt that the catering had been good. Special needs had been adequately accommodated.
   - Peter pointed out that catering was the single largest expense and the cost cannot be claimed from Graduate School sponsorship. It was suggested that registrants be asked to indicate whether they would be taking lunch at the event, so that catering supply could be better matched to demand.

   **Advertising**

   - Arti reported that 29 feedback respondents had heard about the event via email, 18 via posters and 14 by word-of-mouth (includes multiple choice responses). Overall, the promotion of the event was viewed as successful by members.

   **Registrations**

   - Daniel reported that only one registration had gone missing and had been retrieved later.
   - See the comments above regarding matching catering to registrations.
Review of the 5th Annual SCMB Research Students Symposium: (cont’d)

Receipt of abstracts and determination of presenters

- Daniel reported that one abstract had temporarily gone missing (see Registrations). It was suggested that in future a disclaimer could be added to the call for submissions asking people to re-submit if they had not received an acknowledgement within 5 days. It was noted that online registration was currently beyond the Committee’s capabilities.
- Arti would refine the abstract template for next year’s use and would add in a couple of questions -- asking about membership of sponsoring associations, for example -- to minimise the need for additional email communication after abstracts have been submitted.
- The choice of speakers had been well received with no complaints.

Finances, including purchases and sponsorship

- Peter Vella thanked the School for sponsoring the event, noting that this year’s increased cost came from higher than expected registrations (due partly to the late inclusion of postgraduate coursework students). A/V set-up for the overflow room had cost $300, though room hire had been free, but in the event the room had not been needed as many attendees had come for only part of the day.
- In his notes Setoh had commented on the importance of following up with sponsors prior to the event to avoid miscommunication. A couple of invitations had gone astray (Geneworks and Crown Scientific) causing some embarrassment. Setoh’s recommendation had been to contact each sponsor’s rep early in the planning to gauge interest and confirm contact details and to communicate by email rather than by letter. Overall, sponsors had been very happy, as they had had a chance not only to mingle with attendees but also with fellow sponsors.
- Belinda Forbes had earlier advised the Committee to seek financial advice at the start of planning next year so that GST etc, could be properly allowed for.
- Jill recommended applying early for Graduate School PACS funding and suggested applying for the maximum allowable amount, given the size and scope of the symposium.
- All agreed that costs were likely to increase for 2010; food had been the biggest expense and Women’s College had provided this at a very reasonable cost that was unlikely to be repeated.
- It was agreed that the Committee needs to open a bank account to deposit fundraising money.

Session chairs – keeping people to time

- Melissa noted that the session chairs did well keeping speakers to time.
- It was felt that lapel mikes would be preferable in future as not all speakers used the podium mikes to advantage.

Prizes

- Melissa suggested that a ranking rather than a scoring system would be a better way of deciding prize winners.
- All agreed that the number of prizes was not excessive as most sponsors wanted their own named prize; presenters should be eligible to be awarded more than one prize, if warranted, but ideally the prizes would be presented together to avoid a drawn-out prize-giving session.

Plenary speaker arrangements

- Niall reported that the arrangements had gone smoothly and the speaker had been happy. The only glitch had been with the gift—buying a bottle of wine had proved unexpectedly complicated because of conditions imposed on alcohol purchase. Niall recommended buying to a standard UQ gift, such as a clock, in future.

Other

- Arti reported that the ‘How Not to Give a Talk’ session she and Peter had run prior to the symposium was generally well received. 14 out of 22 attendees providing feedback had found it useful.
- Arti agreed to compile and collect briefing notes from this year’s symposium and send them to Jill to collate and keep on file for 2010.

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