

## RPES Advisory Committee Conference Call

FY 16 – Q1, December 1, 2015

Meeting Minutes

### Membership:

- Chair – Steve Naranjo, PWA
- Ann Callahan
- Steve Huber
- Jungmin Lee
- Mike Grisham
- Brian Wienhold
- Claire Baffaut (absent)
- Kyoung Ro
- Christi Swaggerty
- Jim Harnly
- Amy Hegarty, RPES
- Dana Lamberti, RPES (absent)

### Agenda:

- Call to order and welcome Steve N.
- Status report of old business Amy
- New business Steve N./Amy
- Next meeting and adjournment Steve N.

### Old Business:

Status of FY 16 Activity:

- FY 16 Annual Case Writeup Sessions were held July 30 and August 27
- New Panelist Orientation was held November 17-18 for 30 new panelists; includes 6 new HR Specialists
  - Another one will be held in April 2016

Year of the RL – webinars and cohort group discussions – Amy and Brian update the committee regarding possible involvement and implications for the RPES Program

Provide status of Action Items from the in-person meeting

- Dana add committee charter to new SY memo in FY 16
- Addition to panel review notice and panel reports – counsel employee
- Web site updates – many completed, some pending
- Dr. Liu's request to streamline ad hoc panels; tabled for now pending RPES team implementing new streamlining processes
- Status of subcommittee for GS-15 review process

- Ann is the team leader and has set up a meeting for next week to launch this effort (to revisit the recommendations made by the committee regarding GS-15s concerns collected a few years ago)
- P&P and Manual drafts, ready to start formalizing
  - Informal policy/procedure changes issued on the website first for implementation; will reduce the need to collect extensive feedback during the finalization of the P&P process
- Status of discussion with YRL - recommendation to add to PD
- Status of setting up an external website – pending
  - This was a suggestion submitted last year during the RPES Team site visits; a site to send to contacts that the IDRs can share to explain our process, confidentiality, etc.
- Met with MWA; still need to visit with ADs on their SY initiatives

### **New Business:**

Supergrade Panel was held November 19 – out of seven cases, three were recommended for promotion to ST.

- Four of the five waiting in queue for ST slot were promoted effective 11/15/15 since we received additional ST slots from the Department. One person still remains in queue.

### **Committee Turnover:**

- Three Committee members' terms expire 2/28/16 (Grisham, Huber, Naranjo)
- Amy will move forward to request nominations from SEA/MWA/PWA Area Directors to include a current Supergrade scientist and a Center/Institute Director to replace those perspectives on our Committee whose terms are expiring.
- This includes a new Committee Chairperson. Steve N. will talk to the remaining senior members of the committee to talk about the responsibilities of the Chairperson. Once he has a volunteer, he will let me know so I can add this recommendation to the Area nominations for Dr. Liu to consider.

### **Looking into FY 16:**

- New Panel Chair training will be held in spring 2016 (March).
- Amy and Dana will travel to Ft. Collins and Stoneville to meet with Area Office staff and Cat 1s from the locations as done in MWA, PWA, and NEA.

### **Update committee on Area mentorship programs for Cat 1s:**

- This was discussed in our May meeting but was also asked during the RPES Team's visit to Ames
- Amy will consolidate the Area responses (three have formal programs, two do not) and issue that to the Committee.
- The Committee will consider how to share among the Areas – provide “best practices” to Areas that may be looking for ways to improve their Cat 1 training or mentoring.

Recent concerns raised to Amy and promised to bring to the full Committee:

- Does the case writeup allow for researchers to claim use of modern technology in research – e.g., websites, types of users, complexity in research, grant funding, etc.?
  - The Committee agreed that this is already covered sufficiently in our broad definition of exhibits; there is already a lot of latitude in our instructions. The Committee also agreed to bring the discussion of non-traditional exhibits into any future training, Area meetings, etc.
- Are we comfortable with the interpretation of RGEG as it applies to reassignments (especially directed reassignments) and the impact on a researcher’s career? Are panelists ensuring there is evidence that the researcher is continuing to produce? Are panelists giving any kind of “sympathy vote” to those that are reassigned?
  - The Committee agreed that the RGEG is clear in the expectations for Factor 4. We are also confident in the panels’ interpretation of the RGEG and that there is no evidence that panels are assigning points on anything other than the RGEG criteria. This is already emphasized in new panelist and new panel chair training.

One final question from a Committee member:

- Q. Why does the Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG) only show points up to 50? This does not account for higher scores or Supergrade?
- A. It does not. The scores above Level E are described in the Departmental supplement that is in the back of Manual 431.3-ARS. Pages 71-73 of the Manual provide the Supergrade Evaluation Criteria, USDA Classification Guide for Evaluation of Senior Research Positions. As identified, this guide is intended to supplement the Office of Personnel Management’s Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG) as revised on September 7, 2006. This is where Level F is described and scoring policies are identified.

Next Conference Call:  
FY 16 Q2 – March 1, 11:00 am ET