

RPES Advisory Committee Conference Call - Minutes

FY 14 – Q4, September 25, 2014

Members Present:

- Chair – Steve Naranjo
- Ariel Szogi
- Steve Huber
- Mike Grisham
- Brian Wienhold
- Amy Hegarty

Members Absent:

- Ann Callahan
- Jean Steiner
- Jim Harnly

Agenda:

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

Old Business:

- **Supergrade Panel held March 10 – status of recommendations:** There has been no further progress made on the promotion recommendations of the five scientists that met the SG criteria. We were told that there were three slots available, but we are waiting on the Department to finalize the approval of the three. **UPDATE 10/1/2014: The three promotions to ST were approved today and the employees are being notified.**
- **New Panelist Training – summer class:** Over 100 new panelists were virtually trained this summer. We have received lukewarm to negative feedback on the web-based course and panel video, but very good feedback on the live interactive webinar. We are considering returning to the in-person training for spring 2015, since we expect that to be a smaller group and there might be room in our budget. Amy received a suggestion during her visit to Texas to allow all SYs to view the online new panelist training and the ARS-516, in order to help SYs prepare a better case writeup. On the call, one member suggested that we also provide a summary of the differences between the performance management plan and the RPES. Amy thinks there is currently something that addresses this that can be added to this site.
- **RPES Trip to Texas (9/9-11) – pilot training:** the RPES Team was invited to College Station, Texas, and conducted a session with SYs, Program Support Assistants, and the Associate Area Director. While there, we also visited Temple and provided the same

training. The session was titled “Moving RPES into the Future,” and was well received. We plan to incorporate this session into FY 15 and FY 16 with visits to each of the new Area Office officials that are co-located in larger SY and PSA communities. On the call, it was suggested that the RPES Team work with each location to extend the invitation out to other nearby ARS locations that might be able to commute into the presentation and capitalize on the visit as much as possible.

- Steve H. mentioned that there will be a MWA RL Meeting in early December that he recommended to invite Amy. She hasn’t seen an invitation yet but would be very excited at the opportunity to attend and possibly get a few minutes (realistically not on the agenda, but at least a few minutes in an open forum session or even at the networking sessions).
- **Status of Committee Charter:** Steve explained that Dr. Hammond would like the RPES Advisory Committee and our work to be more transparent, to align with current management philosophy. We discussed that notes will be transcribed and reviewed by the committee for appropriateness for publishing on the RPES website. Any specific case discussion will be sanitized for the larger audience. Steve will work with Amy to edit the charter and resubmit to Dr. Hammond for approval.
- **Area Director meeting in October:** Amy was not able to meet with the Area Directors in September, so she is scheduled to attend their webinar on October 6. The purpose of her presentation is to be sure we are all “on the same page” regarding management expectations of review/quality of case writeups and panel service, in addition to asking the ADs for their input on how we can bring RPES back to its former glory.
- **How to move RPES operations into the future?** 20 minute brainstorming activity: notes are on separate document.

New Business:

- **Year of the RL:** Amy and Brian are on the newly formed committee titled, “Year of the RL” that meets in October. They will report back with updates as appropriate for sharing.
- **Committee membership and tenure (handout):** We discussed the current membership and expiration dates. Steve N. was appointed chair in Jan 2013 and would agree to stay on for 3 years from this date unless the AA-ROM wants to change this. Steve H., and Mike G. are all willing to serve an additional year in order to reduce turnover occurring at the same time. Jean would like to be replaced as soon as possible. Steve and Amy will work on this for submission to AA-ROM along with the revised charter.
- **Revisit recommendations to AA from GS-15 Project in 2012:** Amy wanted to summarize the reasons Dr. Rexroad did not approve the various other recommendations from the 2012 memo, since it was mentioned to resurrect these recommendations to the new management.
 - Dr. Rexroad did not act on the Advisory Committee’s recommendation for a separate case writeup for GS-15s because all grades are evaluated for the same purpose, to verify classification of grade level, therefore all grades should have the same documentation from which the panels are to evaluate. Therefore, there is not a business case to support this recommendation.
 - Dr. Rexroad indicated in our discussion that the GS-15s, of all grades, should have the most established case writeup that they are comfortable with since it has been developed over many years. In addition, if the GS-15s were approved a different case

- writeup format, could not the GS-12s justify for the same reason? So, treating one grade differently might open up questions as to why the other grades could not follow suit and might open the Agency up for litigation.
- From an administrative perspective, Amy pointed out to Dr. Rexroad that if the GS-15s were provided a different format for their case writeup, then the Agency would have to develop and administer new policies and procedures for this new format. Program Support Assistants, reviewing officials, and Area Directors' staff would have to understand the differences in format, multiplying the possible confusion and errors.

Next Conference Call:
FY 15 Q1 – December 9, 11:00 am ET