

Oct. 26-27 2014

Report for CAPA/CAPS 2014.

The 2014 CAPA/CAPS meeting was held Oct 26-27 in St. John's NF, with sessions being held at the Sheraton Hotel and the Memorial University of Newfoundland. The Postdoctoral Association at Western (PAW) was represented by Jiro Inoue, President of PAW. Also in attendance for Western at the CAPA portion of the meeting were Mihaela Harnos, Postdoctoral Services Coordinator and Peter Simpson, Associate Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies).

The relevant portions of the meeting consisted of two parts: joint sessions held for all CAPS/CAPA members, a CAPS-only AGM.

CAPA/CAPS joint sessions.

Two sessions were devoted to "success as postdocs" type talks – Frederico Rosei and Christian Beaulé spoke on postdoctoral experience. The official CAPA AGM was concerned with finances and other administrative issues.

Presentation by CRA

The CRA session was mainly concerned with the status of postdocs as either trainees or employees. The main problem here is a lack of certainty about the employment income status of postdocs – if postdoc income, regardless of source, is employment income, then there will be CPP and EI payments due, in addition to the possibility of EI income in some circumstances. According to CRA, in the event of an investigation, each case will be looked at individually based on the working relationship between the postdoc and PI.

This uncertainty is problematic for admin and postdocs. An investigation can result in EI and CPP being retroactively charged to the university, which may filter down to the postdoc. In this case however, EI benefits, including maternity and paternity benefits may be accessible.

Discussion on Benefits

There seems to be broad support for benefits among administrators and funding agencies, although the path to implementing these is unclear. The CAPA internal committee will continue to look at this issue going forward. Progress is slow.

CAPS AGM

The CAPS AGM was a bit underwhelming. There are some significant organizational problems with CAPS that may prevent it from achieving significant goals.

Major points of interest:

Postdoctoral Association at Western

- 1) CAPS voted to become a member of ICoRSA (International Consortium of Research Scholar Associations)
- 2) CAPS is looking for physical space and reliable web space.
- 3) CAPS is officially adopting NPAWeek as “Postdoc Awareness Week”.
- 4) CAPS would like someone at NPA, but there are budget constraints. I volunteered that perhaps Western’s rep will go as a CAPS rep as well. This will involve “asking CAPS for support to attend NPA on behalf of CAPS,” at which points CAPS will provide some service or materials (swag) to promote CAPS itself.
- 5) Governance and continuity at CAPS is a major issue. There is a need to maintain institutional knowledge across administrations.
 - a. The post of “past president” was made official with a role in planning the AGM after the president’s term is over.
- 6) CAPS is [still] considering a membership fee in order to raise some sort of operating capital.

Attendance at the CAPS meeting was sparse, likely for many reasons. Primarily, many postdoctoral associations do not have a budget to send a representative to this meeting. Organization of the meeting was fairly poor with many schedule changes that were not well disseminated.