

Minutes of the USLUA Executive Committee (EC)
12 May 2021 and 14 May 2021
Sally Seidel

12 May 2021:

Present: Newman, Goldfarb, Kennedy, Gershtein, Seidel, Mills, Gonski, Black, Suarez
Guests: Keti Kaadze, Meenakshi Narain

The meeting began at 4pm EDT and was recorded. The recording can be found at https://www.dropbox.com/s/bz0rdwohu62rcem/USLUCEMeeting051221_ZoomRecording.mp4?dl=0

The agenda for this meeting, and for the meeting planned for 14 May 2021, is: reflections on the recent DC trip, plans for the subcommittees, and discussion of issues affecting the community.

The committee is now expanded to 16 members, and increased parity has been achieved between representation of CMS and ATLAS. This parity is improved by the inclusion of Observers who will assist with targeted items.

Study of the proposed FY22 federal "skinny" budget indicates a lack of parity between the NSF and other agencies, and raises concern about a lack of recognition of the role of the Office of Science in supporting research relative to the NSF, even in terms of facilities.

While Senator Feinstein is the Chair of the Energy and Water subcommittee, her staff appreciates being informed of letters sent to her subcommittee with funding requests.

Marta Cehelsky in the URA office is retiring. Harvey will make contact with the new leadership of the URA to ensure a smooth transition. URA hosts the annual trip to DC; they are the host organization of this USLUA-EC. They assist with the taxation process.

Outcomes of the DC trip were discussed. 73 people participated, including many from the USLUA including members of the EC and Tao Han who is the DPF chair. Tao Han has clarified that there is a new relationship with the DPF: this EC can now advocate on behalf of HEP in addition to physics in general. Special thanks are offered to Breese Quinn, Fernanda Psihas, Keti Kaadze, and Justin Vasel for their contributions.

The "ask" from Congress is \$1180M for HEP including \$320M for core research and \$10 B for NSF. An advocacy packet was prepared, as has been done in past years and for each annual trip. A "2-pager" indicating P5 strategy and priorities is one of the most important items. The issue of concern is support for core research which has been at an historical low.

From Keti: The takeaway points include: government offices are very supportive to continue funding our science. It is important to continue to emphasize the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and to develop a brochure about practices in our community for

defending these values. Our community needs to improve communication about the return to the US on investment in science. Due to the change in administration, some offices at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and elsewhere were not yet filled at the time of the visit; thus it was difficult to fully discuss the planks about support for the field. The president's request had not been issued by the time of the visit. There was some perception that some congressional offices did not fully understand the importance of the DOE Office of Science to our field.

From Harvey: The vast majority of offices provided a warm welcome. There was no significant negative feedback. Approximately 300 offices received virtual visits. The virtuality led to more face-to-face engagement than might have been possible in a physical setting, so it was not entirely negative. Meetings typically lasted 30-60 minutes. A genuine interest in science was apparent. Some discussions pivoted on topics of value to the government offices, including innovation, programs patterned on those for veterans, and the importance of forming the next generation of leaders.

Detailed policies and priorities for science are not yet in place for this administration. There is a perception that the present view of DOE is a bit outmoded as it seems to be primarily identified with energy resources. The request is for a 13% increase for HEP; the proposed increase thus far is 5.5%. The Office of Science requested 10%; Keti has followed up by asking for at least 7.5%. There is a problem in that DOE is evidently not recognized as a fundamental funder of basic science.

The NSF allocation is proposed to be increased in FY22 by 20%. There are competing views on the future of NSF, captured by the Endless Frontier Act (favored by industry) and the NSF for the Future Act (supported by the scientific societies).

Congressman Frank Lucas has stated a need to prioritize funding support for the DOE in the Office of Science.

Continued advocacy for the importance of research must be tied to clarifying to Congress the role of the Office of Science. It was noted that different congressional offices have different size staffs, and may or may not represent districts in which a university is located. These impact the ability of any individual staff member to be informed about our issues. One recommendation is to distribute to congressional offices a biannual newsletter, to raise awareness and combat turnover in personnel. Advocates need to sharpen the message of how fundamental science improves society.

It is noted that customized letters are provided to congressional offices, indicating how funding to the DOE or NSF impacts each district (including for example purchases from a local company). Even in cases where \$0 are spent, positive impacts include, for example, REU students admitted from the district. It is recommended to emphasize the value of formal and informal education provided by HEP initiatives such as RET programs. The goal is to "put a face" on every dollar spent.

Meenakshi noted that a midyear follow-up visit to the congressional offices has been encouraged both by DOE and by the congressional office members.

This year, USLUA-EC extended the period of congressional meetings to 3 weeks, whereas it is normally 3 to 4 days. This improved the opportunities for accomplishing some meetings. It was noted that NSF and other offices are sometimes asked about how the workforce is impacted by their agency - for example, how many students are mentored or graduated with the help of their support, and how is technology impacted. It would be good to assemble and distribute this information, perhaps with the help of QuarkNet and the LHC experiments. It is increasingly important to articulate how HEP is linked with the scientific focus of the Biden administration, as that becomes known. Increased general brochures will not be as helpful as tailored messages for specific offices.

This meeting concluded within the hour.

14 May 2021

Present: Newman, Seidel, Goldfarb, Nachtman, Black, Kennedy

The meeting began at 2pm EDT. The meeting was recorded. The recording can be found at https://www.dropbox.com/s/5z3mlzvnsqn5e3n/USLUEC_ZoomRecording051421.mp4?dl=0

The government process continues to be followed. Meetings with the Secretary of Energy and with the Head of OSTP may be sought.

Symmetry Magazine is valuable for the Outreach Committee activities.

All members of the Executive Committee have indicated their preferences for committee assignments for this calendar year. It is suggested that each member concentrate on 2 committees.

The Quality of Life committee needs to restart activity now that quarantine rules are relaxing. The committee needs to help users understand where to get information ("who to talk to") in the case of a variety of problems that US users living at CERN may encounter.

The Web Presence committee should examine and update as necessary: information needed by the US-CERN community regarding taxation, medical insurance, and Covid issues. It could add information regarding how to contact Congress and include links to popular articles produced by the LHC experiments. An active webmaster is needed to perform regular updates. Updating the webpages at this time will have symbolic value associated with re-emergence from quarantine.

It is suggested to improve the committee's presence on social media.

The annual meeting was dropped in the past year. Discussions need to begin on restarting that process.

The Government Relations committee needs to maintain communications with DC even when there is no trip ongoing. This can include a biannual newsletter and additional discussions. The relationship between Physics and the Infrastructure Initiative should be articulated. The newsletter can include articles on events at the US Mission to the UN, visits by VIPs to CERN, advocacy issues, and relevant experiences of Committee members in DC.

It is recommended to revitalize communications with Sarah Charley of the CERN Communications Group, and to make use of connections to the website she maintains, which is united-states.cern/home.

It was noted that meeting spaces at CERN are not ideal for remote attendees. ATLAS has undertaken some steps to improve the meeting rooms in Building 40, for example installing microphones at the seats and more universal cameras. It has been difficult to maintain continuity in this process, and it is recommended that the US community increase involvement.

This issue is especially important for improving access by persons with disabilities, perhaps especially hearing disabilities. There was discussion of automatic captioning and automatic transcription of meetings, including discussion of its accuracy and cost. There was some discussion of the White Coat Captioning service. Otter.ai, which is an automated transcript service (free up to 600 minutes per month) was also mentioned.

It was suggested that a best practices document be prepared regarding color choices used in presentations, to improve access for colorblind personnel.

To increase the impact of the committee upon the community, fund raising will be increasingly important. Funds are used to produce mailings, maintain a web presence, support junior scientists' conference attendance, and print handouts and buttons for the DC trip. Funds provided through registrations at the Annual Meeting may not be adequate for the needs. Inviting contributions from the national laboratories may be considered, although these cannot be used for lobbying; the USLUA exists because there is no natural host laboratory in the US for CERN users. Mobilecause.com was discussed.

The value of decoupling this committee's communications from the FNAL mail system was raised. Mailchimp.com was discussed.

Harvey will use the minutes of this meeting to construct action items for the next meeting.

The meeting ended within the hour.