

CIRES Members Council Meeting

Minutes

May 14, 2021

12:00-1:30 PM MT via Google Meet

| Y/N | CIRES Section | CMC Member | Role |
|-----|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Y | CSL | Joe Katich | Vice Chair |
| Y | CSL | Yelena Pichugina | Track Committee Rep |
| Y | East Campus | Molly Hardman | |
| N | East Campus | Mistia Zuckerman | |
| Y | GML | Jon Kofler | Backup Exec / Fellows Rep |
| Y | GML | Gaby Pétron | OPA Chair |
| Y | GSL | Eric James | Membership Chair |
| Y | GSL | Man Zhang | |
| Y | Main Campus | Ryan Cassotto | Mentorship Program Chair |
| Y | Main Campus / IT | Meg Tilton | Rendezvous Vice Chair |
| Y | Main Campus / HR/ADM | Jimena Ugaz | |
| N | NCEI | Aaron Sweeney | Secretary |
| Y | NCEI | Adam Woods | Executive Meeting Rep |
| N | PSL | Janice Bytheway | Mentorship Vice Chair |
| N | PSL | Antonietta Capotondi | Fellows Rep |
| Y | SEEC | Dawn Umpleby | Rendezvous Chair |
| N | SWPC | Eric Adamson | Chair (<i>see note below</i>) |
| Y/N | CIRES Section | Liaison | Role |
| Y | Admin | Lucia Harrop | Administrative Liaison |
| | CIRES Section | Guests | |
| | SWPC | Hazel Bain | |

12:00 PM Call to order by Acting Chair (Joe Katich). [Note: Eric Adamson has accepted a federal position and has stepped down as CMC Chair. We will need to vote in the current Vice Chair (Joe) as the new Chair and decide what to do about filling the Vice Chair position. Gaby Pétron has graciously offered to record the minutes, as Aaron is unable to attend. Thank you, Gaby!]

Reports:

1. Rendezvous (Dawn/Meg)

- a. Rendezvous is Friday, May 21.
- b. We are 99% ready. Topia is ready. ACTION: Please invite your CIRES colleagues to visit Topia before Rendezvous to become familiar with it. **Note: Only use Google Chrome for Topia.** If more than 10 people are clustered together in Topia, then not all will be able to hear or participate in the conversation.
- c. Please note that if Topia is active in one browser tab, then even if you move to a different tab, your audio and video are still active!
- d. Rooms 1 and 2 in Topia - Check the [general map](#) and [detailed map](#) and [webpage of poster abstracts](#) to see where they are.
- e. The agenda and links are available from the [Rendezvous page](#). Meg is the lead for shepherds.
- f. Different sections are invited to join at staggered times with shepherds ready in the landing zone → see [agenda](#) for this information.

2. Secretary (Aaron)

- a. Nothing to report.

3. Membership (Eric J.)

- a. Lots of turnover going on at the moment! Yet another CMC Chair is stepping down.
- b. Jimena Ugaz has joined CMC as a Main Campus Rep, and was voted in.
- c. Several people are interested in joining: one person each from CSL, Admin, NSIDC, and SWPC. Hazel Bain from SWPC is interested in joining the CMC. They will email the Acting Chair (Joe) if they are interested in joining. The vote-in can happen at the next CMC meeting.
- d. Any news for CIRES Main Campus representation? Ryan has a new list for CIRES Main Campus cluster that will be maintained with help from Meg, Lucia, and Jimena, with students removed. Christine Wiedinmyer mentioned there are new CIRES employees in the Weather Prediction Center (WPC) in Maryland. They are too small to be their own cluster. Suggestion from Ryan: They could be added to the SWPC cluster once SWPC has a representative.
- e. Quarterly CMC newsletter followup discussion:
 - No discussion.

4. Mentorship Program (Ryan / Janice)

- a. The final month of the current mentorship program cycle is May. Email was sent for the final survey, but only 10 responses have been received thus far. Ryan/program will send a reminder next week. We need to get responses to improve the program.
- b. The recording of Tommy Acierno's "Times Up!" time management seminar is now available. It can be accessed by clicking on the "Time Management Seminar (1 hr

11 min)” link under the Resources tab of <https://ciresmentoring.colorado.edu>. Tommy delivered a lively seminar with some fresh perspective on time management that is as relevant for the CIRES Mentorship Program as it is for day-to-day activities and work/life balance. We encourage participants to check the recording out and share the link with your colleagues outside the mentorship program. Question: Was the time management targeted at scientists? No, it is useful for people in general.

- c. The CIRES Mentorship Committee’s own Bec Batchelor and her CIRES Education and Outreach colleagues have created a new [Career Development Series](#)! The CIRES Mentorship Program is proud to co-sponsor these monthly one-hour workshops. The second in the series, “Collaborative, Interdisciplinary, Team Science,” is scheduled for June 17. Additional workshops are planned in July (“Building a Meaningful Support Network”), August, and beyond. Please visit the [CIRES Career Development Series website](#) for more information and to register for these events. In addition, if you have suggestions for future workshop topics, please email Bec directly (Rebecca.Batchelor@colorado.edu), or to any of the [CIRES Mentorship Committee members](#), or send an email to ciresmentoring@colorado.edu.

5. OPA (Gaby)

- a. No update this month.
- b. We will pick up from the April 22 discussion after Rendezvous.

6. CIRES Career Track Committee (Yelena)

- a. No update this month.
- b. Next meeting of this committee is June 2nd. Yelena will not be able to attend, but Meg will be there.

7. Chair/Vice Chair (Eric A.) Joe

- a. Meeting with Associate Director for Science
 - There is the potential of including CGA in the CMC meeting formally. But there is likely not much overlap in interests. They can attend CMC meetings and discuss issues as other CIRES staff.
 - Raised various topics, e.g. salary increases (potentially in Jan 2022, but still uncertain--we should know more after enrollment is final so around October 2021 we should hear what CU decides), 2% bonus for 6 month salary (~ 1% of annual salary).
 - Lucia explained there are updates and clarifications on the CIRES Admin blog.
 - Going forward, merit raises will occur in January.
- b. ACTION: Chair to update text around committee disposition of records and circulate for comment from CMC.

Open Issues:

1. CIRES Graduate Association (CGA) discussion:

- a. See discussion under “Reports: Item 7: Chair” above.

2. Organization of CIRES Clusters:

- a. Should we establish a committee to undertake this effort, or engage the entirety of the CMC? Ryan is investigating how to divide up “Main Campus.” **DECISION: We will wait until Ryan’s findings to make a decision going forward.** See discussion under “Reports: Item 3: Membership” above.
- b. Discussion:
 - Lucia: Email lists for each cluster are up-to-date.
 - Meg: We can create up-to-date cluster lists from emails that do not include students. Main campus: Admin + research.
 - Ryan had created a Google Doc, which is harder to maintain, as he did not know he could get a list from CIRES. What is hard is separating students, but they could be separated by job code.
 - Meg will check the list again and update a non-student list and be in touch with Ryan.

3. Addressing the lack of raises (Joe)

- a. Joe has talked to people who reached out and some talked with Waleed.
- b. Noted desire for discussion within townhall w/ Christine
- c. Another CIRES employee has brought forth a concern regarding CIRES leadership’s attitude toward lack of raises. I anonymously copy his concern below:
 - “I realize that balancing responsibility to external sponsors and rewarding employees is a difficult balancing act, and I'm ok with Waleed's decision to withhold the optional additional leave from CIRES (referencing his December decision to not grant further time off around the holidays). But I'm not fully on board with the justification, and it appears to me (perhaps incorrectly) that sponsors are getting a fantastic deal, paid for by CIRES employees. Don't worry - I haven't been stewing over this for months. But now that I'm hearing that raises may not happen again this year, I thought it could be more productive to speak first, rather than complain later. Since CIRES employees are working without raises this year, didn't the external sponsors realize a ~3% savings, paid for by reduced paychecks to CIRES employees? Waleed notes that a day off costs sponsors \$250k. But by working without raises, we have gifted sponsors about \$1.5 million (I think). I'm irritated that Waleed highlighted costs to sponsors, rather than burdens on employees. Please let me know if my irritation is completely

inappropriate. For example, if additional administrative leave and covid leave was a substantial cost to sponsors, I'd feel good to know that our reduced pay helped cover for employees who needed leave. Or I'd feel good if we were told that our reduced pay has increased (or maintained) the value to external sponsors. I don't want or need an additional day off, but I want to be assured that our director has our interests first. My goal here is to reduce the financial burden to CIRES employees, and do whatever can be done to maintain good morale, in the face of another year of difficult finances for the university. And I think any form of bonus or special recognition may be helpful."

d. Concerns brought forward to Aaron:

- On the lack of raises (year 2) and increased cost of living:
 - "...while we call people's annual raises "merit increases" these really amount to just salary increases to keep up with the cost of living. (In fact, in many cases they do not even do this, as the cost of living in Boulder is going up ridiculously fast.) CIRES administration seems aware of this, and we know that CIRES has to follow campus policy. But overall, because these increases compound over time, these deferrals are leading people to fall behind more and more with respect to the cost of living, and unless CIRES takes specific action, many people will never catch up. Moreover, this hurts the most vulnerable people the most, because they're the ones for whom these pay increases go directly into bills or groceries and other basic life expenses. So, maybe CIRES can't do anything in the short term, but have they made any plans to mitigate these impacts on employees in the long term? Can they plan to offer larger than normal increases once increases are permitted to help people catch up? Are there other strategies they are considering to help make up the difference? I know people feel like they've really gone above and beyond, working long hours in challenging circumstances, to keep our projects afloat for more than a year. After all that, I'm worried about the impact of this sort of thing on morale, as I am sure you and CMC are as well. Are there other things CMC or the CIRES administration is doing to help people manage after 13 months of this?"
- On the impact to spending down funds before the end of the current Cooperative Agreement:
 - "...with the CIRES Cooperative Agreement renewal coming up, these salary increase deferrals could actually have an impact on how groups spend down their funding at the end of the current CA term, since some funding sources may end up underspent with no way to increase spending due to these budget decisions. Is CIRES taking any steps to help mitigate this possibility?"
 - Discussion:

- Lucia: CIRES finances is working on this. A no-cost extension is possible. The Cooperative Agreement (CA) is one big pot of money. A team of experts make sure no funds are lost at the end of the CA. CA funding was short, a proposal has been submitted to get extra funds to last until the end of the current CA.
- ACTION: Joe will follow up with Aaron re. this comment.

4. On what CIRES Admin can do to improve the work environment at home:

a. Concern brought forward to Aaron:

- “I’m sure you know about some of the challenges people at NCEI are having getting access to some really important IT equipment within NCEI, which is another morale hit among our team. Could we ask CIRES to do more to help our employees get access to the resources they need to create better work environments at home?”

■ Discussion:

- Joe: Which resources are we talking about here? Will follow-up with Aaron about this too. Does anyone know?
- Eric James: CIRES has laptops that can be borrowed.
- Meg: NOAA does not let staff use CIRES equipment for certain tasks.
- Lucia: Aaron, you can put people in touch with her, re: ergonomics, and contact Nate if it is IT stuff.
- Jimena: Is it about a foreign national not having some access?

5. Calendar links for CIRES events - any updates from IT (David Z.)

- a. Lucia: CIRES weekly events listed in emails can be added to calendars.

6. Need a new Vice Chair

- a. Joe: Please consider if interested. Reach out to Joe or Eric J.

New Issues

1. Vacation and Sick Leave

a. Discussion:

- Joe: A CIRES supervisor approached me stating their concern about how little vacation time is used by supervisees (DSRC). Should a point be made to stress the importance of taking time off? See their comment: "I'm sure CMC is well aware of all the challenges posed by covid, and now shootings. I supervise a bunch of people, and I'm alarmed by how little vacation and sick leave get used. I'm trying to encourage people to take a break and use their benefits, especially now."
- Joe: Maybe try to encourage people to take a break when they need to. Remember that the 352 hour vacation cap is back by the end of June, 2021.
- Jimena: Waleed will touch on that during the June 8 CIRES Town Hall.
- Lucia: The upcoming Admin newsletter will mention this too.

2. Return-to-work anxiety

a. Dawn distributed email regarding reopening anxiety.

b. Discussion:

- NOAA and CU are adopting a careful approach with employees' best interest in mind.
- CU HR will have a formal process to evaluate and decide on work location for each employee.
- Lucia: CU requires employees to be vaccinated. NOAA/DSRC is different- -there is no vaccine required right now. More to come from CIRES HR on this topic.
- Joe: CSL leadership sent an email asking for preference re: return-to-work. No vaccine requirement, just encouragement.
- Q: What about visitors at DSRC?
- Lucia: CU will get vaccine proof. All CU employees are required to get the vaccine, whatever work location. Exemptions can be received.
- Molly: NSIDC surveyed their employees re: back-to-work. Four out 90 want to go back full-time. 48% want 75-100% remote work. Managers were surprised. There is an ongoing discussion with CIRES.
- Lucia: GSL survey on this. A hybrid model was preferred.
- Meg: This could help alleviate shortage of office space.
- Gaby/Jimena: CU HR seminar: One possible outcome for hybrid work arrangement employee, depending on group: You may keep your own office/desk on CU campus if you are present three or more days in person.

3. On the recent censuring of CU President Mark Kennedy

- a. An employee contacted Jon and Gaby to spread the word regarding the recent censuring of CU President Mark Kennedy.
- b. Relevant info:
 - [Daily Camera article](#)
 - [Op-Ed by Regent](#)
 - [DiversifyCUnow letter](#) (anyone can sign)
- c. It was unclear whether the employee was asking CMC to engage or simply to distribute information.
- d. The current CU President is stepping down. A search for a new CU President has started.

4. Prison labor and office furniture

- a. Background: CU has had a [purchase agreement](#) with Colorado Corrections Industries (CCI) since the 1970's for all University furniture. This means that all furniture purchased by CIRES was produced by prisoners. The current purchase agreement ends this coming June. It is now possible for Units to obtain a waiver in order to use other vendors. The CU Labor Union has an [FAQ](#) about this. The purchasing agreement is [here](#).
- b. Discussion:
 - Lucia: CIRES's Susan Sullivan looked into this. CCI is not an ethical employer, based on information gathered. Pushing to not buy from CCI. Other vendors are options. Susan/Lucia will look into practices for these other vendors.
 - Lucia and Dan are the main people who buy furniture for CIRES. May do an announcement after this is finalized more.

5. Overloading of CIRES supervisors

- a. Eric James (GSL) brought up a concern from one GSL employee regarding CIRES supervisors. In their particular group, there have been many transitions from CIRES to Federal employee. Since Feds are not allowed to act as the formal supervisor for CIRES employees, the few remaining more senior CIRES employees are getting swamped with supervisor responsibilities. This person also mentioned that CIRES Fellows (many or all of whom are Feds) can supervise CIRES visiting scientists.
- b. It is common for CIRES supervisors to supervise >5 supervisees. It really only becomes an issue if the CIRES supervisor is expected to direct their day-to-day research. ACTION: Eric will follow up to get more details about the issue.

1:30 PM Meeting adjourned.

Actions:

- (All) Please consider serving as Vice Chair. Reach out to Joe or Eric J.
- (All) Please invite your CIRES colleagues to visit Topia before Rendezvous to become familiar with it.
- (All) Share CIRES mentoring resources mentioned by Ryan with unit
- Joe will follow up with Aaron re: comments about getting employees the resources they need to create better work environments at home and on spending down funds.
- CMC Chair to update text around committee disposition of records and circulate for comment from CMC.
- Eric will follow up to get more details about the issue (re: overloading of CIRES supervisors).