University of Massachusetts Lowell
Learning with Purpose

Olney Science Center
One University Ave
Lowell, Massachusetts 01854
tel. +1 978-934-6695
fax. +1 978-934-3068
email. Andrew_Rogers@uml.edu

KENNEDY COLLEGE OF SCIENCES
Department of Physics and Applied Physics

Observer's Report – NSCL PAC42

NSCL PAC42 met on May 2-3, 2018 at NSCL on the campus of Michigan State University. It was my pleasure to serve as an observer as a member of the FRIB Users Organization Executive Committee (FRIBUEC) representing the NSCL/FRIB User Community. This letter summarizes the details of my impressions and observations of the program advisory committee meeting.

The committee had the difficult task of sorting through and evaluating 40 proposals requesting a total of 7060 hours of beam time. It is notable that 33 of the 40 proposals submitted were led (primary PI) by Users outside NSCL. The meeting itself began with introductory remarks and a detailed overview of the laboratory by Brad Sherrill (NSCL Director). His presentation was concise yet thorough. In my opinion, the information conveyed in this introduction was especially critical given the high level of activity at NSCL and the extremely rapid changes underway within the laboratory related to the completion of FRIB. A review of proposals, organized approximately by topic, was conducted on the first day of the meeting. An assigned specialist summarized a given proposal while a secondary specialist offered additional comments which aided in the evaluation process. Once the committee members finished discussing a proposal, it was ranked by each voting member. On the second day, the rankings were reviewed, and the PAC converged on its final recommendations where 18 proposals were approved (3321 hours) with two proposals on reserve.

My overall impression of the meeting was that it was very well organized, transparent, and strongly focused on advancing the scientific mission of the laboratory. It was made clear from the outset, specifically by the NSCL Director, that a fair and complete discussion of the proposals, independent of constraints, was of the highest priority. Indeed, this is what I observed throughout the process, where a full discussion and consistent evaluation of every proposal was conducted utilizing as much time as was required to reach a decision. I was greatly impressed, however, by the efficiency with which the PAC carried out its duties. This was, in my opinion, due to excellent organization, meeting planning, and preparedness of the PAC members. It was also clear that the scientific merit of the proposed experiments was the main factor by which proposals were judged. In the few instances where similarly ranked proposals needed to be differentiated, only then was an optimum balance of additional criteria used to make a decision. When any significant conflict of interest was identified, the respective committee member(s) (and myself on 4 occasions) left the room during discussions and abstained from any related decisions.

I observed that the PAC was composed of a diverse and highly qualified set of members within the nuclear physics community. Not only did the members represent a variety of fields, but their deep connection and detailed knowledge of NSCL ensured a thorough and well-balanced evaluation. I was particularly encouraged that the PAC maintained a broad perspective on what was considered the top science and, in my opinion, engaged in healthy criticism and discussion.

At the end of the meeting I had the opportunity to discuss my observations with the PAC and provide comments. I noted that a significant number of suggestions made by Kelly Chipps in her Observer's Report for PAC41 appeared to have been addressed and implemented for PAC42. While the PAC process was fair and well executed, I did suggest a modification to the voting procedure by which all PAC members would vote simultaneously as opposed to the current sequential voting procedure. Finally, it is important to recognize, as was noted during the meeting, that only one or two NSCL PACs remain before the first FRIB PAC is held.

In summary, my observations of PAC42 were exceedingly positive and I was impressed with the overall process. With many strong proposals, the PAC had a difficult task in selecting those experiments that should be allocated beam time. Despite the challenges, the PAC members carried out their duties in a thoughtful and fair manner, and with the highest scientific regards.

Sincerely,

Andrew M. Rogers
Assistant Professor of Physics
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

PEOPLE PRESENT

PAC Members (Voting): Daniel Bardayan (Notre Dame), Michael Carpenter (ANL), Catherine Deibel (LSU), Joseph Natowitz (TAMU), Eric Ormand (LLNL), Berta Rubio (IFIC-Valencia), Guy Savard (ANL), Hendrik Schatz (NSCL/MSU)

Others (Non-voting): Jill Berryman (NSCL Manager for User relations), Andrew Rogers (UML/FRIBUOEC), and Brad Sherrill (NSCL Director)