

Observer's Report – NSCL PAC43

NSCL PAC43 met on March 7-8, 2019 at NSCL on the campus of Michigan State University. It was my pleasure to serve as the PAC observer as a member of the FRIB Users Organization Executive Committee (FRIBUEC) representing the NSCL/FRIB User Community. This marks the final meeting of the NSCL PAC which was first held in February of 1982. This letter summarizes the details of my impressions and observations of the program advisory committee meeting.

The committee had the challenging task of sorting through and evaluating 45 proposals requesting a total of 7194 hours of beam time and two Letters of Intent. Due to the planned end of operations of NSCL and the beginning of operations at FRIB, the available hours were more limited and the evaluation process even more challenging. The meeting itself began with introductory remarks and a detailed overview of the laboratory by Brad Sherrill (NSCL Director). The information conveyed in this introduction was significant given that the impending shutdown of the cyclotrons is tentatively planned around December 2020. Notably, it was indicated that while every effort will be made to run the remaining experiments, those that are not completed before NSCL ends operations will not transfer to FRIB and will need to be reevaluated. 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 3040 hours were approved.

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 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. It was also clear that the scientific merit of the proposed experiments was the main factor by which proposals were judged. When any significant conflict of interest was identified, the respective committee member(s) 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. In my opinion, it is a critical time for the user community to reflect on the work of the previous PACs and to consider any potential changes to the future FRIB PAC.

In summary, my observations of PAC43 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 especially within the constraints of the end of NSCL operations. I commend the PAC members for carrying out their duties in a thoughtful and fair manner, and with the highest scientific regards. The past several decades at NSCL have been filled with a wealth of scientific discovery and I, as well as many others, look forward with excitement to the future research program at FRIB.

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), Paul Fallon (LBL), Eric Ormand (LLNL), Alexandra Gade (MSU), Berta Rubio (IFIC-Valencia), Guy Savard (ANL)

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