

**Notes from “Mini-Grant” discussion
CfAO Fall Retreat
Sunday, 8:30-9:45 AM**

Attendees: Lisa Hunter (chair), Joseph Janni, Bob Fugate, Barry Kluger-Bell, Candice Brown, Eddie Laag, Norbert Hubin, Austin Roorda, Fiona Goodchild.

Summary: This discussion started out by reviewing CfAO Mini-Grants, but expanded to broader topics related to training students and increasing collaborations.

Mini-Grant Summary (given by Lisa Hunter):

- The goals of CfAO Mini-Grants are to: 1) increase interdisciplinary skills and experience of CfAO graduate students and postdocs; 2) increase collaborations within the CfAO

- All CfAO graduate students and postdocs are eligible to apply for a Mini-Grant at any time.

- Mini-Grants are flexible and have very few constraints. To assure a productive experience, short “visits” (e.g. less than a week or two) generally are not funded. The intent is for individuals to have a hands-on experience and gain and/or share skills. There is no upper limit on time; however, it is acknowledged that at some point salary issues will need to be discussed. All Mini-Grants are considered on a case by case basis, to stimulate creativity in conceptualizing a unique experience.

- Mini-Grant proposals are reviewed and approved by Lisa Hunter, with input from an ad hoc committee that includes student advisors and at least one other senior member of the CfAO.

- For more information on Mini-Grants, see:
<http://cfao.ucolick.org/EO/Minigrants/index.php>

Outcomes to date from Mini-Grants:

- Typically one Mini-Grant per year has been completed, due to limited interest amongst CfAO graduate students and postdocs. More discussion follows.

- Austin Roorda reported that the Mini-Grant student who worked at his lab stimulated a new, and very fruitful collaboration with Montana.

- Astronomy graduate student Tiffany Glassman completed a Mini-Grant that initiated a major change within the Professional Development Workshop: returning roles for past participants.

- Marcos Van Dam completed a Mini-Grant at Don Miller’s lab at Indiana University, and applied his experience with the Keck AO system to improve performance on the Indiana AO system.

Discussion of how Mini-Grants could be used or be useful:

- Preview of a postdoc
- Solve a mini-problem – these need to be defined, so individuals can know they exist.
- Not for running or organizing a meeting/workshop. This funding is likely available, but should be applied for through CfAO workshop funds (Chris LeMaistre).
- Not for attending a meeting. Doesn't really meet the Mini-Grant goals.
- Industrial partners should be very interested in hosting Mini-Grants.
- Might be most useful for a postdoc, rather than a graduate student.

Stimulating more Mini-Grants:

- PI's need to be more pro-active:
 - Write up possible projects, existing problems
 - Encourage graduate students and postdocs
 - Generate more ideas and communicate them
- Promote to CfAO community:
 - Email to all Center members
 - Make sure the industrial affiliates know
 - List projects/problems on the web
 - Retreats
- Mini-Grant reports at retreats – must have them and make sure that the audience knows that the work was done through a Mini-Grant
- Promote at Professional Development Workshop
- Should they be called something else?
- Need to address parameters for publications
- How do we get early collaboration on projects without fear of being scooped?
- Should the CfAO Executive Committee, or PI's do a needs assessment? For example, what if we had a brainstorming session about what we need to do by

Year 10, and thought specifically about how Mini-Grants might accomplish those goals.

Recommendations to the CfAO Executive Committee (beyond Mini-Grants):

The CfAO should promote shared postdocs through the proposal process.

The CfAO should encourage students and postdocs to arrange and chair workshops. It would be good professional development and a good CV item. Also would help us offer more workshops.

General discussion on training more U.S. students in AO:

- Cooperative apprenticeships at AO labs. Create a 1-year post-baccalaureate experience where an individual would spend a few months at several different AO labs, and spend some time preparing for grad school. We might be able to patch together with existing funding, augmented by education funds to cover the time spent on grad school prep.
- Bob Fugate indicated that there is existing funding for summer students at SOR. We should direct CfAO interns, and other undergraduates to this opportunity. They must be U.S. citizens.

Keep on list:

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