

New Zealand Universities Antarctic Alliance (NZUAA)
Minutes for the Second meeting held at the University of Auckland
6th July 2006

Present: Jenny Webster-Brown (U Auckland), Bryan Storey (Chair, U Canterbury), John Cockrem (U Massey), Peter Barrett (VUW), Allan Green (U Waikato 1100-1215), Dean Peterson (Antarctica New Zealand), Lou Sanson (Antarctica New Zealand 1300-1315), Tim Naish (GNS and VUW), Robin Falconer (GNS 1200-1315), Lionel Carter (NIWA and VUW)

Apologies: Clive Howard-Williams (NIWA), Lloyd Davis (Otago)

Minutes: Accepted from previous meeting

Matter Arising

CRI representative. The Chair welcomed Robin Falconer representing GNS and reported that he had not yet contacted a Landcare representative as Landcare had been undergoing management restructuring. It was suggested we approach David Choquenot Manager of Biological Systems Landcare.

BCS to contact David Choquenot, Landcare Research

Link to RSCAS. BCS reported that he had written to RSCAS about poor communication of SCAR issues within the community. This was taken on board by RSCAS resulting in a SCAR presentation at annual Antarctic meeting in Wellington. BCS also reported that he was forwarding SCAR information through NZUAA communication channels. During a general discussion on RSCAS the following points were made:

- There was insufficient turnover of members on the committee
- Marine biology was not well represented
- The age structure on the committee was a concern
- There was no chemistry expertise on the committee (Jenny Webster-Brown offered to provide some direction here)
- The committee needed to involve active researchers

BCS to communicate to RSCAS chair

Financial Statement

BCS presented the accounts for past six months. The current balance is \$11 459.00. AUT had still not contributed \$2000. BCS had invited Dr Steve O'Shea to be a member. He was enthusiastic but had not followed through with interest.

NZUAA Website

BCS apologized that the website was not yet up and running with university profiles. Following the decision at our last meeting to attach the NZUAA website to the AntarcticaNZ website, Dean Peterson and BCS agreed that this was probably not a good idea and that we needed to maintain more independence. Consequently BCS put the following options to the group:

1. Link the website to an existing University website.
2. Establish an independent website and employ someone to maintain the site
3. Establish an independent website and use the resources of the chairs institute to maintain the site.

Option three was agreed. A site address (nzuaa.aq) would be purchased from NZUAA funds. BCS agreed to set up and maintain the site although there would be some delay as Gateway Antarctica was currently recruiting a new technician.

Workshop plans

The chair circulated the provisional list of planned NZUAA workshops following our last meeting. He reported the difficulties of linking a workshop to the annual Antarctic conference as the amount of available time was limited particularly for 2006 due to SCAR conference in Hobart. He also reported that Nancy Bertler had planned to hold a climate related workshop but that it clashed with field work plans.

We remained optimistic that workshops would follow in due course. Feb 2007 was suggested for climate atmosphere workshop (Nancy Bertler) and that a Southern Ocean workshop would develop through CAML (BCS tabled an email from Don Robertson about coordinating a group of interested researchers in New Zealand). BCS reported a Transantarctic Mountain workshop to be held in US at Ohio State University 4-7 September. Ian Hogg, Shulamit Gordon, Bryan Storey, Peter Barrett and Nancy Bertler were interested in attending.

Funding for Antarctic research

FRST. BCS summarized the recent changes in the funding processes at the Foundation where investment had changed from a competitive Outcome Based Investment (OBI) process used in the recent Ecosystem Portfolio to one of a balance between negotiated and competitive funding for the range of portfolios up for re investment over the next year or so. In general this seemed to be a sensible approach except that the Global Processes portfolio had an unusually small proportion of the total funds available for competitive bidding. It was agreed that this was not good for Antarctic researchers trying to access Foundation funding for the first time and that the amount of money available hindered collaboration between different institutions. It was agreed that there was little we could do to change the situation; most of the institutions represented had made separate submissions to the Foundation.

Representatives reported potential proposals that they their groups would be submitting and suggested that where relevant we cross reference proposals and continue the dialogue

SCAR Capacity Building; BCS presented the SCAR paper on capacity building. It was felt that NZ was making progress on capacity building through Antarctic courses and active research programmes but that the key challenges were to:

- Involve top students in Antarctic research
- Create more employment opportunities in NZ, e.g. research positions.

Dean Peterson reported that the numbers of students applying for Antarctic scholarships was low and that AntNZ could not justify more scholarships even though companies were prepared to provide sponsorship. It was suggested that we seek sponsorship through Antarctica New Zealand to enable NZUAA to sponsor young researchers or specific collaborations or new staff and try to leverage more funds from universities to increase research capacity. A 20k annual NZUAA contestable fund would provide NZUAA with immediate visibility within the community.

Peter Barrett informed the group of the Transantarctic Association Fund that was available annually for travel grants of 1-2 k.

Peter to provide details for distribution through NZUAA networks

Antarctic Research within NZ Universities

As part of a general discussion on a workplan for 2006, the meeting focused on research being one of the five key functions of the NZUAA “To explore possibilities to integrate and coordinate University research programmes”. The group had a general discussion around large versus small Antarctic projects, outcome driver (FRST supported) versus blue skies (Marsden/university supported) research, top down strategy-driven-research versus bottom up curiosity-driven-research. The group favoured a mixed model for New balance with a balance between large and small projects, outcome driven and curiosity driven blue skies research, and emphasized the importance of the uniqueness of Antarctica in formulating research projects, the value of research excellence, the historical niches and presence of internationally recognized expert groups in New Zealand. The group recognized that the difference between outcome driven and curiosity driven research was often in the packaging, and that we could try harder to focus university research on common themes.

The group felt that the discussion was useful and that we should send our views to the Board of AntaNZ .

PB to draft a letter for circulation

The group brain stormed possible themes, and suggested theme workshops be held over the next few years to identify research priorities.

The following themes, and theme leaders were suggested as follows;

- Ross Sea Ecology (coastal, McMurdo Sound, Oceanography); Lloyd Davis
- Southern Ocean-deep; John Montgomery
- LGP-Terrestrial Ecosystems; Group already exists
- Palaeoclimate-ANDRILL; Group already exists
- Cryosphere; Wendy Lawson/Sean Fitzsimmons
- Atmosphere, ozone, Ross Sea Climate; Nancy Bertler
- Geological processes; Bryan Storey

It was agreed that each theme should hold a 24 hour workshop (perhaps sponsored) over two days (pm day 1, am day 2), and that each workshop should identify research priorities and prepare a succinct workshop report.

Workplan for 2006

- Build a website; Dean offered support from Antarctica NZ to build the site that would be linked to/part of AntarcticaNZ website.
- Post university profiles on NZUAA website.
- Arrange two theme workshops for 2006, one linked to the Antarctic conference and next meeting of NZUAA.
- Publish theme workshop reports

Next meeting; It was agreed that this should be during or just prior to the Annual Antarctic conference to be held at VUWellington in July 2006. It was hoped that we could hold one of the theme workshops (Possibly Ross Sea Ecology) in July and that the NZUAA meeting would be a short business meeting.

ACTION: BCS to communicate with AntaNZ/VUW re link up with annual meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 5.00pm.

BCS thanked School of Biological Sciences, University of Auckland for providing venue and lunch.

Bryan Storey