Minutes of SHUG executive committee meeting of December 29, 2003.

The Executive Committee convened by conference call at 1:00 PM EDT on December 29, 2003. 7 of the 11 members were present. The members in attendance were:

Paul Butler (Secretary)
Zema Chowdhuri
Joanna Krueger (Chair)
Paul Sokol (Vice chair)
John Tranquada (Past chair)
David Vaknin
Angus Wilkinson

The meeting began with a review by John Tranquada of the Brookhaven meeting on user access to facility. John gave an overview at the Nov 10 meeting, but there was some confusion that surfaced at the Dec 9 meeting, for which John was absent, when trying to understand the purpose of the letter being signed by the user groups. John reiterated his previous summary and took questions. Asked about the priority screening program, he indicated that it addresses only foreigners going to national labs and does not apply to foreign scientists going to universities, and is essentially a recognition of the fact that DOE clearance procedures are a good pre-screening. He was unsure whether it applied only to scientists taking positions at national labs or also to people visiting the labs. He also indicated that he thought it went into effect this summer but that he has not noticed any appreciable reduction of time so far and is thus not yet convinced about the program's effectiveness. On the issue of whether clearance at one lab might carry over to other labs, Bill Nay and the Office of Science are aware of the problem, and there are intentions to address this eventually. Concerning access for foreign nationals, the time required to provide clearance before a lab visit will largely be controlled by the DOE security order. To what extent those suggestions get incorporated into the final draft is unclear, but the purpose of the letter from the user groups is precisely to express our support of Mr. Nay's ideas. A second letter from the UEC chairs has been prepared, addressed to Mr. Nay, voicing strong support for the priority visa screening for scientists by the Departments of State and of Homeland Security and requesting that Secretary Abraham communicate this view to the Secretaries of State and of Homeland Security. Given the importance of these issues being resolved reasonably, Joanna asked to what extent was there a sense at the meeting that we could effect change and how would we go about that. John suggested that it was not clear how quickly change can be effected, but that clearly these kinds of letters are important.

Paul Sokol updated the group on the ACNS activities. He has formed a small committee consisting of Ray Teller at Argone, Audrey Archuletta of LANSE, himself for NIST and SHUG/SNS and David Vaknin for SHUG/HFIR. Paul S. will try to set up the first meeting by conference call in January. His current idea is to set up 4 themes covering

four corners of the room addressing Source issues, Instrumentation issues, User support issues, and Administrative issues. Paul also noted that he had not yet been successful in contacting Bill Hamilton, current LUG chair, but would continue to try and hopefully involve them more directly. Paul B. asked if Shenda Baker or Jeff Lynn (ACNS program co-chairs) had been contacted about these ideas. Paul S. said that Jeff had been contacted and is entirely "on board."

Next the election results were discussed. Paul Butler had forwarded the email from Judy Zager at SNS giving the winners (Paul Butler -ORNL, Lynn Walker – Carnegie Mellon, Angus Wilkinson – Georgia Tech, John Turner – The University of Tennessee, and David Bowman – Los Alamos National Laboratory) and the total number voting (183) to the committee immediately prior to the meeting. Joanna asked how the 183 compared to last year. Paul B. indicated his information from Judy was that last year's total was 228 but pointed out that last year didn't run into the holiday season so much. Paul B. suggested that last year he sent a note to the candidates indicating the winners. This was followed by an email announcement of the results sent to all those who'd voted. He recommended a similar procedure be employed but that it would be inappropriate for him to send them. Paul S. indicated he'd be willing to do that and Paul B. promised to send a copy of the two emails sent out last year to Paul S. and Joanna. Paul B. said he also had JPEG graphics showing number of votes for each candidate and agreed to forward them to the committee. The sense of the committee however seemed to be that those numbers are important for verification of the winners, but should not be publicized. Finally Joanna pointed out that there was no mention anywhere on the SHUG website of the elections. This was noted as an important omission that we should avoid next year.

An open, wide ranging discussion ensued on several related topics, a flavor of which is given below:

We are currently using the SNS mailing list as our "membership roster." However, as with last year, the idea that perhaps the list of those voting constitutes a subset that is at least clearly interested arose. Just as last year however, restricting future message to those alone was felt to still be too restrictive at this time. Paul B. pointed out that he often encounters the attitude that SHUG has no real purpose yet since the facilities aren't really operating. While he can (and has) explained one on one why, on the contrary, this time is particularly important, it is clear that we are not getting this message out generally. It was pointed out that our bylaws do require "biennial renewal" of membership, which of course we currently have no way of doing. How do we remove people from our mailing list who should stay on the general SNS list? How do we add people to our list who ask us to be added? If we maintain our own list how and who does it? Several suggestions were offered but ultimately this clearly will need more discussion by the new committee. In the meantime, Joanna and Paul S. agreed to add wording to the email announcement of winners indicating the importance of participating now even though the facilities are not yet fully operational, with maybe some examples, the fact that there is a renewal requirement which will begin to be enforced soon, and provide a means for people to respond to the email asking to be removed from the SHUG list. This announcement then, unlike last year, would go to the entire SNS list.

This led to the question of how to sustainably maintain a membership list/mailing list and web presence. Having it run by a member of the executive committee is appealing, but not a long term solution without creating a "permanent member" which we want to avoid. Currently we use SNS to do this, which would appear to be a perfect long term solution (though so far they are not maintaining a separate SHUG members list). However it is unclear what happens when we begin to take a more active advocacy role and start/encourage what effectively are lobbying efforts. As a government lab there are definite restrictions in this area. As an independent organization of users those restrictions do not apply to us, and in fact, as "customers," we probably should lobby both the facility and the government regularly. However, our ability to do so could be severely hampered by having the facility perform our administrative tasks (maintain rosters, web servers etc…). Both Paul B. and Paul S. currently serve on the NIST User's Group Committee which is in the middle of dealing with just this problem. Granted that NIST, which is run directly by the DOC, faces stronger restrictions, but the fundamental issues remain the same. Again a number of suggestions were offered and again it is clear that more discussion by the new committee will be necessary. John Tranquada offered perhaps the most promising lead to a solution by suggesting UT, or perhaps JINS (or UT through JINS) as the entity that manages our electronic needs.

There being no other business, Joanna thanked each of the outgoing members for their services and the meeting adjourned at 2:15PM EDT

Respectfully submitted,
Paul Butler
SHUG Secretary