

# Postmortem of Peter Smits' Fall 2016 Committee Meeting

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4 Peter Smits' Fall 2016 committee meeting took place November 8th. Michael  
Foote, Kenneth Angielczyk, Graham Slater, Rick Ree, and P. David Polly (via  
6 Skype) were all present. There were three major objectives to this meeting:  
postdoctoral applications and post-PhD plans, the state of chapter 2, and  
8 the state of chapter 3. The first chapter of my dissertation was published in  
*Proceedings of the National Academy* in 2015. In total, the meeting lasted about  
10 an hour and half.

Prior to this meeting, Peter had submitted two competitive postdoctoral appli-  
12 cations: Miller Fellowship at Berkeley with Charles Marshall, and the Killam  
Fellowship at University of British Columbia with Mathew Pennell. The com-  
14 ment from the committee was that Peter should continue to apply for both  
postdoctoral positions and jobs. Following this meeting, Peter contacted Felisa  
16 Smith (University of New Mexico) to follow up on a soft-offer presented at GSA.

Chapter 2 of Peter's dissertation, which is a study of extinction risk in post-  
18 Cambrian Paleozoic brachiopods, was rejected for the second time from *Evolution*  
this Summer. The paper was rejected for both being overly technical and domain  
20 specific. The committee and Peter discussed ways of translating the paper to a  
more general and less technical audience. The major barriers are differences in  
22 approach, cross-domain translation of parameters, and changing the emphasis  
away from brachiopods and to the more meaningful results. In general, the  
24 committee supports revising and submitting to *The American Naturalist* though  
Peter would need to consider how to accomplish this carefully. Additionally,  
26 revising this chapter and getting it published is secondary to finishing chapter 3  
and the dissertation.

28 The final part of the committee meeting was a discussion of the current results  
and remaining aspects of the third chapter of Peter's dissertation. This chapter  
30 concerns the relationship between changes in the North American mammal species  
pool and the ecologies of those species. The preliminary results of this analysis  
32 were presented at the Geological Society of America meeting in September earlier  
this year. The remaining aspects of this project include some model improvement,  
34 detailed analysis of posterior estimates, and writing up the manuscript. Given  
these challenges, the committee was confident in Peter's ability to finish this

36 chapter within the next 4-6 months.

38 At the conclusion of the meeting the committee agreed that Peter should aim to  
finish his dissertation and graduate in Spring quarter. Kenneth Anegielzyck also  
40 requested that Peter work on a think- or perspective-piece on his approach to  
modelling macroevolutionary questions. This perspective piece will form aspects  
of the introduction and conclusion of Peter's dissertation.