

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus Meeting Agenda (draft until approved)

March 20th 2013 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM, 7000 level lounge



Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

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In Attendance: Lindsay Davidson (Chair), Amanda Kissel (Associate Chair), Corinna Lichota (Treasurer), Emily McAuley (Secretary), Lindsey Button (Member at Large), Kyle Artelle (DSC Representative), Rob Greenland (GSS Representative), Julie Wray (GSS Alternate), Sebastian Ibarra (Events Committee Officer), Catherine Scott (Events Committee Officer/TSSU Steward), Tanya Stemberger (Events Committee Officer), Franz Simon (Webmaster), Sarah Thomsen, Jen Scholefield, Iva Popovic, Matt Holl, Joel Harding, Jesse Taylor, Marinde Out.

Absent: Janie Dubman (International Student Representative), Mike Beakes (DGSC Representative), Jennifer Linton (Faculty Mole), Mohamed Sherriffdeen (TSSU Steward), Jay Brogan (TSSU Steward), Leslie Saunders (TSSU Steward).

1. **Welcome** – Meeting called to order by Lindsay at 3:30 pm.
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Additions to Agenda
 - i. Documentary – Amanda
 - c. Motion to approve minutes from last month's meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes from the February 20th, 2013 Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus meeting.

Moved by: Catherine Scott

Seconded by: Jen Scholefield

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**

2. **49 Megawatts – Amanda**

- a. We should have 3-5 panelists: Wendy and her post-doc have confirmed. We also invited the director of the documentary, who said he was available April 5 but that that may change. Either way, he approves of us screening the movie. We have also invited the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations – we are waiting for a response.
- b. The event will be a potluck.
- c. April 5, 2013, B9242, 5pm-6:30/7pm (movie is only 30 minutes).
- d. Expected attendance: 15-20 people.

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Motion to reimburse Sebastian Ibarra up to \$50 from the Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus Trust Account for coffee, tea, and soft drinks at our screening of the documentary, 49 Megawatts.

Moved by: Rob Greenland

Seconded by: Jesse Taylor

Decision: **motion carries with 16 for and 2 abstentions (Sebastian Ibarra and Sarah Thomsen)**

3. Graduate Student opportunities at upcoming external review – Joel

- a. External departmental review happens every seven years. It is basically a DGSC evaluation of the BISC department. This includes the recent BISC grad student satisfaction survey.
- b. Grad student meeting with external review committee April 3rd 1:00 pm, in B9242.
- c. Get in touch with Joel, Mike Beakes or Lindsay if you have input for this meeting. People who are interested in attending, participating, or just giving input, etc. should e-mail Lindsay (ldavidso@sfu.ca) and she will start a separate e-mail list.
- d. Also want to use today's meeting to get grad student feedback:
 - i. Grad student surveys
 - ii. Student-supervisor expectations (written document)
 - Now more accessible on caucus/dept web pages
 - More contact info available to incoming students
 - iii. Completion times
 - Moving deadlines forward (committee meeting formation, meeting timeline, etc.) should help reduce completion times
 - iv. Grad student funding
 - Will be raised to \$21K over the next 2.5 years
 - It is currently acceptable to TA two semesters per year, but not three (affects completion time). Maybe it should be limited to only one semester per year.
 - GFs are not guaranteed, so we can't count on that source of funding until it's allocated
 - v. Facilities (leaky, old labs)
 - Evaluation by engineers very poor (0.93/1 = basically a write-off; will be eventually taken care of depending on university timeframe)
 - vi. Course availability (especially STATS courses)
 - vii. Office space for grad students
 - Some students' offices are literally in the lab (no room, near chemicals, etc.)
 - viii. Issues with your specific program (e.g. MPM, MET) can be raised → email Joel (joel_harding@sfu.ca), Lindsay (ldavidso@sfu.ca)

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- e. We also need someone to lead the grad student meeting with external review committee: Lindsay will do this.

4. Grad hosted speaker update – Lindsay

- a. Thank-you gift: bottle of wine instead of t-shirt.
- b. Grad student informal lunch with grad hosted speaker – email Corinna (cla9@sfu.ca) to put your name in a draw.

5. Grad symposium – Lindsey

- a. Originally we planned to have this in the Halpern Centre. We are considering moving it to the Highland Pub. The Halpern Centre came with too many fees (booking fee, required food purchase for 80 people, bartender - \$487 for everything but liquor).
- b. The Pub on the other hand has no such fees, has good beer, more food selection, and we'll save about \$200 by having the event there.
- c. If we budget for: 1 beer ticket per student (80 people), the total event at the Pub would cost approximately \$450.
- d. We originally budgeted \$200 for post-event pitchers, which leaves no money for food. Should we budget an extra \$350 for food? Or should we use the post-event pitcher money (\$200) plus another \$150 for food (total of \$350)?
- e. We have \$670 total budgeted right now (\$470 for Halpern + \$200 from Felix).
- f. Majority of caucus in favour of switching venues to the Pub.
- g. Majority of caucus in favour of providing 1 drink ticket each (~\$450).

Motion to budget up to \$200 from the Biological Sciences Trust Account for post-Graduate Symposium pitchers at the Highland Pub.

Moved by: Lindsay Davidson

Seconded by: Corinna Lichota

Decision: **motion carries with 10 in favour, 5 against and 3 abstentions**

Motion to budget up to \$150 from the Biological Sciences Trust Account for food at the Highland Pub for the Graduate Symposium.

Moved by: Lindsay Davidson

Seconded by: Corinna Lichota

Decision: **motion carries with 14 in favour, and 4 abstentions**

6. Treasury update – Corinna

- a. Core Account – \$467.00
- b. Trust Account – \$2379.99

7. Committee updates

- a. DGSC – Joel
 - i. Oasis – New online system that allows prospective graduate students to apply to SFU online and for their applications to be

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reviewed online. However, while the system was supposed to make the application process smoother and easier, it has been glitchy. It is being worked on and is getting there.

- ii. BISC Grad students are guaranteed to receive at least half of their guaranteed funding (i.e. at least half of the minimum amount) from their supervisor. We each have a signed contract for this (you have likely never seen it, but it is in your file).
 - Master's – 2 years guaranteed funding, then contingent on progression and discussion with your supervisor.
 - PhD – 4 years
 - What can be done if your supervisor doesn't uphold this contract?
 - a. You can report it to the DGSC. The DGSC Chair will go to your supervisor, but has no real power to make them uphold the contract.
 - b. Next, the DGSC Chair can go to the Dept Chair. The Dept Chair (i.e. Felix) can then go to Barb Sherman who has the authority to take money out of the supervisor's account and pay it to the student.
 - c. The Dept Chair *could* also prevent PI from taking on additional students, but the PI could then file a complaint, so this wouldn't go far.
- b. DSC – Kyle
 - i. Nothing to report
- c. GSS – Rob
 - i. The GSS wants to change caucus funding model:
 - Small caucuses (e.g. 10 members) currently only get \$250. The GSS is considering increasing this to \$450.
 - Large caucuses could lose funding under the new model. The Dept of Education would lose 25% of their funding under this new funding model. Funding to BISC would also go down.
 - The majority of the BISC Graduate Caucus is in favour of keeping the old funding plan.
 - The GSS has 1 seat per department right now, which means that small departments outnumber large departments in representation. A solution to this would be to put the decision to a referendum instead where all students could vote on it. This costs money though (~\$600). However, this could be paired with the upcoming referendum to reduce costs.
- d. TSSU – Catherine
 - i. TSSU meetings conflict with BISC Grad Caucus meetings. However, it's the end of our term soon, so this doesn't need to

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- be fixed for this caucus. However, it should be changed by the future caucus if possible.
- ii. Automatic workload review – initiates discussion with your supervisor in the case that you are going to go over your TA hours. This is a new process. TSSU to follow up on whether this is actually happening.
- iii. New agreement available online – www.tssu.ca
- iv. Appreciation night upcoming – staff, faculty, everyone welcome. This is a thank-you for all your support during the bargaining process. ALL ARE WELCOME! Please RSVP.
- v. Job action survey – www.tssu.ca – input on how the job action went last semester.
- vi. Privacy – TAs cannot store student personal information on personal computers unless it is stored with encryption software. However, the university should have to provide this software if they want us to do that (TSSU working on this).
- e. Faculty Mole – Absent

8. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn this March 20th 2013 meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus at 4:32 pm.

Moved by: Lindsey Button

Seconded by: Rob Greenland

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**