



Biology Graduate Caucus Meeting Minutes

Friday January 28th, 2005, 3:30 pm

In attendance:

Katrina Salvante, Oliver Love, Tanya Burke, Sam Quinlan, Jason Catterson, Charlotte Voss, Sarah Jamieson, Aaron Wirsing, Niki Cook, Emily Wagner, Andrea Pomeroy, Suzanne Gray, Holly Middleton, Sandra Webster

1. Andrea welcomed all; the agenda was introduced

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Christmas party!

2. Graduate symposium - March 18

March 18, Friday: 3:00 – 7:00 pm
Atrium of SSB

In the past the symposium was held on a Saturday in September, and reps from each lab gave a general overview of their lab's research. However, attendance to these symposiums declined year after year. So, for the past two years we've had the symposium in the Douglas study area by Simon C's with food, beer, a poster session representing the labs in the department and prizes for best poster and door prizes. Posters consisted of pictures of lab members with research summaries. It has been a good place to meet people in the department, learn what other labs do, and have fun.

This year we've changed the venue to the Atrium in SSB. The organising committee consists of Andrea Pomeroy, Suzanne Gray, Sarah Jamieson, Dawn Cooper, and Jeff Christie.

The committee asked for feedback from the Caucus about the format of the symposium. Some responses were that we could have a piñata, karaoke, and multi-board twister. It was also suggested that to get people to go around and look at all of the posters; we could have a questionnaire with a question about each of the posters. Each lab would submit a question that goes with their poster. Suzanne and Sarah volunteered to "mark" the surveys. It was suggested that 1 questionnaire would be given to each lab, and it would have to be filled out for the lab to be eligible to win the poster prize.

An e-mail about the posters will be sent out after the meeting.

3. Update from the search committee

The searches are on for 3 new faculty positions with Oliver Love and Christiana Cheng as the grad reps on the following committees: Organismal Physiologist (Oliver), Cell Physiologist (Oliver and Christiana), and Cell Biologist (Christiana). The grad reps get 1 vote per committee.

There will be a catered lunch with each of the candidates where grads can talk informally with the candidates. This is a good time for us to ask them questions without faculty around.

Question: What is the candidate talk supposed to be about? Are they supposed to “sell” themselves? Yes, they’re meant to make us want to hire them, so they should make us interested in their research and make us believe that they’d be good for the department.

The grad reps have 3-4 questions that are always asked to each candidate regarding teaching, funding grad students, and grad student supervision.

Currently there are 4 Organismal Physiologists, 4 Cell Physiologists, and 5-6 Cell Biologists on the short lists. It was asked whether there was a possibility for new people to be interviewed. This depends on whether the hiring committees decide to offer the positions to one/some of the candidates on the current short lists, and whether they accept the position. If not, the committees can create new short lists or decide to end the search and start again from scratch.

Last search: Developmental Biologist and the CRC candidate are still on the table from the last search.

We should all make a push to go to the cell biologist meetings!!

If you’re interested in a future in academia, you should definitely get involved in attending these searches because you get an insight into the hiring process.

4. Mentor program review

Suzanne: the fall 2004 mentor program was really successful. For people who didn’t know about the mentor program, Suzanne summarized that in September the program paired new students with volunteer mentors (OLD grad students) and held a “welcome” social. The goal was for mentors and mentees to meet and discuss anything: relationships with supervisors, peers, lab work, etc. A survey was sent out, and a suggestion that came back was to have a mid-semester meeting to bring mentors and mentees together again. Suzanne mentioned that she never received surveys back from the mentees. There was confusion some confusion as at least two mentees were present at the meeting, and they filled out the survey. Suzanne clarified that there were two parts of the survey, and that noone filled out the mentee section.

Suzanne has tried to get something going in January, but there was no response from labmates to let her know that there were any new grads from any of the labs. It was asked whether the Caucus wanted to run the program in Jan, and the caucus agreed that since there are quite a few new students, the program would definitely be worthwhile.

It was suggested that 1 on 1 thing may be strange for some people. Small groups was suggested, but organization of this may be difficult. It was suggested that the mid-semester meeting might be good for this as it would be a group of mentors and mentees together.

5. News from the DGSC – travel award survey

Suzanne and Shelly are our DGSC reps.

A survey about the NSERC travel awards administered through the Dean of Science was distributed by e-mail. The DGSC wanted to see whether a more fair distribution of awards was feasible and to see whether Biology was getting its share of the awards. A summary of the results is attached. The survey suggests that Biology is in fact getting a fair share of the awards, and that if we approach the Dean of Science at this point, we may end up losing some of the awards.

One suggestion for the award is that we could suggest to the Dean that a student's supervisor could write a letter confirming that the student is giving a talk instead of requiring the conference acceptance letter.

So for now, make sure you apply, and apply as soon as you get an acceptance letter from your conference. This award ONLY pays for registration and airfare, not mileage or hotel accommodations.

On a different note, Joline had a little boy (Wyatt) on Dec 28, 2004. There will be a "shower" for Joline in the near future.

Laura also had a little boy (Elliot) sometime at the end of December 2004.

6. News from other committees

TSSU is in bargaining again.

7. Claim our money

Motion: We would like to claim our budget (\$200) for this semester from SFSS:

Motion/Seconded/Carried unanimously

This semester's steering committee: Andrea Pomeroy (chair), Keith Tierney (secretary), Christiana Cheng (treasurer), Katrina Salvante (member-at-large). All officers should have signing authority.

8. "Meeting room" update

Floor plans for the room were accepted by Barb and Brian, so construction should start soon. Furnishing options will be discussed with Dawn.

9. Meeting was adjourned

The website is currently being updated. Feedback is welcome.

If you have new students in the lab, get them to come out to Caucus meetings!

E-mail from Shelly, one of the DGSC reps, summarizing the Travel Grant Survey

Here are the results of the travel grant survey:

We had 29 responses. Of these, 18 had applied for travel grants. Because some students applied more than once, there were 28 total applications.

For the people who had applied multiple times: we got 11 grants from a total of 16 applications. Everyone who applied multiple times got at least one award. Most got it the first time they applied, only one did not. She got it the third time she applied. One student has received 4!

For the people who have only applied once, we got 7/12 awards. Of the 5 people who did not receive grants, 3 are listed as having missed the deadline. (Keep in mind that the deadline is not known beforehand, rather the students just get an email saying that there are no more awards).

The survey may also be biased towards people who did not get an award, as they might be more likely to reply. I have a list of awardees from Marlene, but it seems to be incomplete. Taken together, the survey and list seem to indicate to me that we are getting a fair number of these awards.

I think that overall the biology Department is doing quite well in terms of getting this money. I would suggest to the caucus that they can pursue this matter if they wish, but asking the Dean to clarify the situation may result in our receiving less funding...