



## Biology Graduate Caucus

Monday March 31st, 2008, 3:30 pm

**In attendance:** Nicole Tunbridge, Samantha Franks, Lina Perez, Suzanne Tank, Andreas Steimel, Melanie Hart, Kyle Morrison, Sarah Jamieson, Heather Major, Marie-Hélène Burle, Jeff Joy, Jerry Ericsson, Dawn Cooper, Clea Moray.

### 1. Welcome

- Nicole welcomes everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Claim our meeting expenses.

Motion to claim \$8.38 for meeting expenses by Nicole Tunbridge, seconded by Suzanne Tank.	
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Carried

### 3. Treasurer's Report – Sam Franks

- We have \$521 in both the core and trust accounts. After reimbursement for the symposium, we will still have money left over, and the year-end is coming up. It was suggested to put the left over money towards a BBQ. We spent more this year on food for the symposium from the SFSS because we ordered more food this year for the grad-hosted lunch.

### 4. Social Coordinator's Report

- The Symposium went well. Kay was great and sends a big thank-you to everyone.

Motion to put the remainder of the symposium money towards a new BBQ by Nicole Tunbridge, seconded by Sarah Jamieson.	
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Carried

- There is thought of having a small spring BBQ to inaugurate the new BBQ.
- A volunteer is needed to organize this year's Summer BBQ and possible pig-roast. Last year's pig roast was a huge success (there wasn't enough pig), although some people took offence to the cooking of the pig.

### 5. News from other committees:

#### i. Forum rep – Jerry Ericsson

- Forum is over for the year and for good. The last meeting was March 26<sup>th</sup>. Forum met with the VP of finance who gave a presentation on the budget cuts. Many felt that no information was given at the meeting.
- The results are in from the SFSS referendum and elections. We voted to leave the CFS. Palling is the new president of the SFSS.

#### ii. GIC/ GSS rep – Andreas Steimel

- Last meeting was on Wednesday. The Benefit Plan Referendum passed and was approved by Council. This increase will give us better dental benefits.
- Question regarding the CFS and the GSS: Due to the results of the referendum, the GSS will officially not be part of the CFS. If they try to sue us later, the CFS might lose their lawsuit.

#### iii. DGSC rep- Suzanne Tank and Jeff Joy

- Margo and the rest of the DGSC pass on a thank-you for organizing the symposium.

- Regarding the seminar course, the DGSC decided to still run the course, but with a work component to it. The consensus was that the course was good, but getting free marks was not good.
- Regarding the reduction of the number of credits required for a PhD, the DGSC has asked for an official survey of the students. Overall, students seem to be okay with the idea. The DGSC also talked about officially removing graduate courses that have not been offered in a few years. The reasoning behind all of this is the belief that the number of courses might be what is hindering completion time for degrees.
- Discussion on completion times: Do certain labs have a higher completion time than others? It may be related to expectations from the lab. TA'ing also has an impact, as it may take up significant amounts of time, and not allow you the time required to complete experiments by breaking up the day or week. As a result of higher completion times, the department funding lowers. The semester that your tuition decreases, you are no longer considered a full-time student as far as funding for the department is concerned. The website mentions that PhD's will last 4 years. This is to prevent students going on leave then popping up to defend.

iv. Scholarship rep – Sarah Jamieson

- The deadline for GF's is April 15<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. Reminder that after 9 semesters for an MSc and 15 semesters for a PhD, you are no longer eligible to hold a GF.
- The Steel Scholarship was reviewed.
- The tentative deadline for Conference Travel Award applications offered by the department for a summer conference is May 1<sup>st</sup>.

v. TSSU rep – Mel Hart

- Elections are being held today and tomorrow. There is also a referendum question regarding raising the union dues in order to pay for a permanent grievance officer position. Go vote.

6. Other business

- We need a new caucus chair. Its not difficult if you can get people to do things. We also need a new secretary and a new at-large rep. An e-mail will be sent out for volunteers. We really need people, as 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the steering committee will be gone.
- We also need a volunteer to look after payday coffee. This person just needs to make sure that there is a lab signed-up for each payday coffee.
- If you are not going to use your SFSS Travel Award, please contact Lina Perez ASAP (cperezor@sfu.ca).
- Clea Moray would like to talk about the effects of the funding cutbacks to the university. The amount of money given to the university based on the number of students enrolled has not increased with inflation. We in the sciences have been somewhat protected, but students in the Arts have not. In PSYC, only 3 courses have tutorials and there have been massive cuts in the number of classes offered. Although enrollment has increased, it has decreased in the upper years. There has also been a \$16 million deficit to secondary education in BC. Around 10 days ago, the Minister of Education told the university presidents that he is taking \$6.5 million from universities and putting it towards trades instead. The Arts are in trouble and Science is being affected. There is money to build buildings, because we are overenrolled, but this money is given to build only. There is no money for the maintenance to run these buildings. The university can't increase tuition because of the 2% cap, which is

good for us, but is lower than yearly inflation. There is a 2-day blitz to sign a petition to not suddenly reduce funding. The deadline is tomorrow. We should keep on top of what is going on, as it will affect TA's.

Motion to spend \$45 in order to get one person the Serving It Right license by Nicole Tunbridge, seconded by Suzanne Tank.	Carried
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7. Meeting adjourned.