



Biology Graduate Caucus

Wednesday, November 28, 2008, 3:30 pm

In attendance: Erica Jeffery, Steph Green, Alex Chubaty, Mel Hart, Andreas Steimel, Mike Wogin, Devin Arbuthnott, Simon Goring, Brian LaBore, Janey Lam, Clea Moray, Jenn Sunday, Carson Keever, Nicole Tunbridge, Muhammad Arshad, Emily Meuser

1. Welcome

- Erica welcomes everyone to the meeting.
- Any additions to agenda?

2. Claim our meeting expenses.

a) Food

Motion to reimburse Erica Jeffery for \$10.78 for chips by Alex, seconded by Mel.	
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	Carried
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3. Travel Award Lottery

a) A-list people who have won a travel award:

Corey Watson
Erica Jeffery
Golnar Zandpour
Will Stein
Mathias Schuetz
Jordy Thomson

b) B-list people who may get a travel award if an A-list person declines the award, or if more funding becomes available (in the following order):

Michael Silvergieter
Michael Wogin
Jenn Sunday
Rachel Field
Stephanie Green
Andreas Steimel

Motion to distribute travel awards as indicated above by Erica, seconded by Devin.	
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	Carried
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Those who have won an award and wish to claim it (to be used for travel between Sept. 1, 2008 and Aug. 31, 2009) should go to GSS website, get reimbursement form and fill it out. Get it signed by a caucus executive, attach a copy of the minutes and any supporting documentation (receipts, etc.) and take to the GSS office with a copy of these minutes attached.

4. Events

a) Christmas Party

The Christmas party is coming together well. It has come up that the Xmas party gets pretty crowded in the space between chemistry and bio where we usually hold it. Maybe next time we can organize to have it in the TASC building, as they have larger open spaces there. Moving this gathering has been suggested before, but no one could figure out an appropriate space. We will need to talk to Brian and Barb about this. We would need to figure something out as a stage, but this is a minor concern.

Mel is organizing photos of all the new students with blurred out faces, and people will have to guess who it is. Maybe have questions about the students (fun facts) like the trivia about celebrities before movies in theatres. It might be fun to include new faculty as well. We don't necessarily need an additional event to replace the Tony awards, as there is already a lot going on at the Christmas party.

We need gag prizes. If you have something that would make a good prize, get in touch with Erica. She will send out an email about this.

c) Grad symposium

Our grad hosted speaker is now scheduled to come on March 19th. We need to get together an organizational committee for this event, to organize the schedule of events, food, alcohol, posters and funding. It may be difficult to secure as much funding this year as we have had in years past, so we may need to fundraise, or charge for liquor. Charging for liquor is preferable to charging for admission, because we don't want to deter people from coming. The maximum amount of funding that we can get from the GSS is \$500, while last year we got \$1200. We will likely have to use a substantial amount, \$700 or more, of our core funding, depending on how much we can get from the department.

The symposium is a very successful event for the department, but it has been suggested that it might benefit from including more science. Past posters have tended to focus on comedy more than science, and this may make it harder for us to get funding for the event. But, what is the main function of the symposium? It seems that the point is to encourage social interaction between labs that otherwise wouldn't have much contact. The symposium used to focus more on science, but has become more social. This may have been a considered move; it would be informative to talk to people who have been here for a long time to get more information about why the symposium is structured the way it currently is. If we wanted to include more science, it might be interesting to have short 'data blitzes' where labs could present an intro to their work. Or a simple way of having more of an academic focus is to ask that labs make sure that their posters have a fair amount of scientific content. The Moore lab tends to be good at doing this. This would be hard to ensure though, as labs are in control of making their poster what they want. Perhaps we could ask the poster judges what their criteria are, and reward posters that have adequate scientific content?

Brian will be in charge of organizing food and drinks, Jenn will organize the posters (and

maybe data blitzes), and Mel will take care of poster prizes. More help is always welcome and will certainly be needed closer to the date.

Motion to claim \$58.75 to cover door prizes for Christmas party, and the present for our grad hosted speaker by Alex, seconded by Andreas.	Carried
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5. Upcoming elections

- a. Treasurer position is open. One nomination has been made, and the nomination process will stay open for a while longer. This election will be held in January at our next meeting.
- b. Secretary position is coming open. We will accept nominations for Secretary, and hold this election at our next meeting in January as well.

6. Reports from committees

- a. GSS – Andreas Steimel

President's stipends are available to PhDs for one semester when they are writing up. The new Dean of Graduate Studies has raised the possibility of incorporating this funding into Graduate Fellowships. This means that more funding would be available throughout grads' programs, but there would be no guaranteed support for PhDs in their final semester. This idea has come up because an increasing amount of funding is going into President's stipends each year, leaving less and less for GFs. This new plan would not change the total amount of funding available, but might have a major impact on some people. Would this policy be grandfathered in, so that those who have not had the benefit of increased funding throughout their degrees will still be guaranteed funding? Andreas will ask this at the next meeting. Any other concerns about this should be forwarded to Andreas. In any case, this funding is distributed at the departmental level, so even if this policy passes, it wouldn't necessarily change the way that we get funded.

As well, the Dean is interested in allowing departments to award half-GFs. This will give more flexibility to the department in allocating funding.

As well, departmental funding for TAs has not changed from last year, but the university is no longer providing additional funding when courses require additional teaching support. This will mean that TAs will be having more students per tutorial, which will require more hours for grading, etc. Make sure to keep careful track of the hours that you work, and inform the course instructor if you are working too many hours. It is important to not work more than the hours that you are paid for. **(Andi, can you please add in info about cutting base hours here, and any other info that I missed?)**

- b. TSSU – Mike Wogin

The TSSU is giving some money to two different charities: contributing \$300 toward a laptop for a person working in Chile (\$300), and a donation to a homelessness charity in Vancouver.

The TSSU chief steward is taking another job for a couple of months.

Teachers who work more than 5 years now get 6% vacation pay.

7. Next Meeting will be in January.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Erica, seconded by Emily.	Carried
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8. Meeting adjourned.