



Biology Graduate Caucus

Friday, January 29, 2010, 3:30 pm

In attendance: Janey Lam, Juliana Yeung, Dhani Kalidasan, Chantale Begin, Jenn Sunday, Matt Huntley, Anna Drake, Thomas Unsoeld, Mike Wogin, Brendan Connors, Isabelle Raymond, Justin Suraci, Samineh Deheshi, Rain Dickson, Jordy Thomson, Erica Jeffery, Ikkei Shikano, Brittany Wilmot, and Muhammad Arashad

1. Welcome

a) Introductions/ Attendance

i) Isabelle requests all questions to be directed accordingly at the end of the meeting, with the limit of 3 minutes for questions.

ii) There are no additions to the agenda.

2. Claim meeting expenses:

Motion to reimburse Juliana Yeung \$10.89 [chips] from Bisc Grad Caucus funds. Motion made by Isabelle, seconded by Chantale.	
---	--

Carried

3. Events!

a) Grad Symposium

i) Symposium/ Grad-hosted speaker:

Speaker: David Conover

Dates: March 18-19, 2010

Volunteers: A Grad Symposium Committee has been formed

Format:

Talks: Given by different labs and aimed to introduce what each lab does.

-Comments in the past from the department indicated that there is a need for more scientific content.

-At least 6 labs have expressed interest for giving a presentation on the research completed in their labs.

-2 hours total. Aim to have many labs from the department present: 3 minute talks from each lab with a power point presentation.

-Location: (possibilities) IRMACS? C9000? (booked through GSS) At present SSB 7172 is booked for Mar 18 (12-2:20 pm) and B9242 booked for Mar 19 all day.

- Another talks recruitment e-mail will be sent. Jenn Sunday has agreed to help with the recruitment process by going to different lab to encourage them to sign up.

Social: To follow the talks, and to have poster session during the social.

Approval of Budget:

Symposium/ speaker: \$2900

Request:

- \$750 GSS (Thursday: snacks; Friday social: food/ beverages)
- \$310 Caucus
- \$1200 Dean of Science/ Dean of Grad Studies (yet to confirm)
- \$? Biology Department (not yet approached)

b) X'mas Party

i) Feedback:

- Everyone thought the event went well
- The band was good

ii) Reimbursement - prizes:

Motion to reimburse Isabelle Raymond \$100 [X'mas party prizes] from Bisc Grad Caucus funds. Motion made by Isabelle, seconded by Mike.	Carried
Motion to reimburse Anna Drake \$100 [X'mas party prizes] from Bisc Grad Caucus funds. Motion made by Isabelle, seconded by Mike.	Carried

c) Movember

- i) Reimbursement: Donation (\$25) to match the donation made by REM for Movember.

Motion to reimburse Isabelle Raymond \$25 [Biology Caucus donation to Movember] from Bisc Grad Caucus funds. Motion made by Isabelle, seconded by Anna.	Carried
---	---------

4. Travel Awards:

i) Travel Awards:

Six names picked out during the Caucus meeting for the Travel Award winners for the Fall 2009 semester: Simon Zappia, Jordan Thompson, Emily Meuser, Emily Darling, Anna Drake, Andreas Steimel.

5. Reports from committees

a. GSS - Thomas Unsoeld

- i. Benefit Plan Endowment Fund: Each grad student's benefit plan payment has contributed a little bit of surplus, which has created a contingency fund (~\$200,000). The fund is intended for the unlikely event that the GSS general membership votes to eliminate the benefit plan in part or in whole. In this scenario the GSS would then be liable for the remainder of its contract with its insurance providers. The Benefit Plan Contingency Fund is intended to ensure that the GSS has the funds to defray such liabilities.

Now the money in the fund exceeds what the GSS would be required to pay out in the case of a default. It has therefore been proposed that an endowment fund is created. The interest from this fund will be used to help students who are in-need to cover their benefit plan contributions. Based on current interest rates (2%), there will be roughly \$4000 available which can cover the health and dental benefit plan fees for 10 -12 students per year. The BISC Grad Caucus is in favor of supporting this idea.

- ii. The Peak Newspaper: Some students are not happy with the Peak newspaper. Every student contributes \$4.90 per semester to fund the newspaper operations. Some grad students have expressed that they are not happy with the amount of representation that grad students get in the newspaper and have indicated that they have been discouraged from publishing in it. This has been an on-going issue. At this point, only undergraduate students work there. The GSS president will speak with the members of the Peak to seek changes. If nothing changes, then the GSS will have a referendum to determine if the GSS will stop funding the Peak.
- iii. Proposed GSS Referendum: (1) A referendum is proposed to decide whether to attach signing authority to the title of the executive director of the GSS. At present, signing authority is given to the executive director (a paid position) by the GSS council. (2) Executive committee members. Currently, only members of council can be elected to the GSS Executive Committee. The GSS is discussing whether to change this so that all grad students can have a chance to be elected to the Executive Committee. Another question was how many of the 5 positions should be opened to all grad students. Caucus is in favor for opening 2 positions to all members and keep 3 to be elected from council. All 5 members should be elected by council.

b. TSSU – Mike Wogin

- i. TAships: The department may not technically be allowed to withhold TAships when a grad student does not hand in their progress report. Not being in the status of ‘good academic standing’ should not affect someone from getting a TAship.
- ii. Bargaining year: There will be a forum discussing if people are willing to strike

c. Faculty Mole – Samineh Deheshi

- i. SFU Surrey: Aboriginal services are looking for tutors
- ii. Department website: New pictures are needed for the front page of the website. If interested in contributing pictures, talk to your supervisor and then talk to Barb

- iii. The Dean is hiring: There is an interest to hire a Toxicogenomics faculty member that will be shared between FHS and Biology.
 - iv. Security: homeless people are being dropped off by the last bus of the night. Therefore beware when working late.
 - d. DGSC - Jenn Sunday, Chantale Begin
 - i. Consolidation of grad courses: Some grad courses are not offered often, therefore different discipline groups (ie. EBERG, Cell biology, etc.) were encouraged to coordinate. EBERG will remove courses from their list that has not been offered for the past few years (population dynamics, and community ecology and macroecology. Some extra courses will continue to be offered. Other groups will be coming up their course plans later.
 - e. DSC - Lindsay Farrell, Rian Dickson
 - Lindsay is away.
 - Only undergraduate awards were discussed at the last meeting.
 - f. International Students Rep - Muhammad Arashad
 - i. A workshop will be held for international students with family. The workshop will include some suggestions to help spouses get jobs.
 - ii. A snowboarding trip to Grouse Mountain is planned for Feb 5th.
5. Next Meeting: March 3, 2010.
6. Isabelle motions to adjourn the meeting.
- Seconded by Janey
 - Motion carried