



Biology Graduate Caucus

April 20th, 2011 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM

In Attendance: Cassandra Carroll, Brian LaBore, Jesse Taylor, Thomas Unsoeld, Rob Greenland, Carmen Sarnovski, Sherri Elwell, Brett Favaro, Michelle Nelson, Jeannette Bruce, Aleks Maljkovic, Jenny Linton, Sacha O'Regan, Doug Braun, Janey Lam, Juliana Yeung, Natascia Tamborello, Noel Swain, Elly Knight, Erica Jeffrey, Samineh Dehashi, Alex Chubaty, Dhani Kalidasen

1. Publishing workshop:

More discussion next meeting since people involved were not here.

2. Grad Hosted speaker:

56 votes total

Name	# Votes
Greg Graffin	14
Randy Olsen	11
Kevin Gaston	8
Robert Sapolsky	7
Jorge Cham	5
Pascale Cossart	5
Olivia Judson	3
Daniel Pauly	2
Steven Sterns	1
Total	56

3. Bisc Caucus Elections:

Positions (with person who nominated the individual in brackets)

1. Chair - Jeanette Bruce (self)
2. Associate chair - Natascia Tamborello (self)
3. Secretary - Elly Knight (self)
4. Treasurer - Jennifer Linton (self)
5. Webmaster - Erfan Vafaie (self)
6. Member at Large – Sherri Elwell (self)
7. Events Committee Officer (up to 3) - Nicole Gerbrandt, Sacha O'Regan, Calen Ryan (all self)

8. Faculty Mole - Cassandra Carroll (self)
9. Graduate Student Society council representative - Rob Greenlund (self)
10. Teaching Support Staff Union Steward - Brian Labore (incumbent)
11. International student representative - Chris Mull (self)
12. Departmental Scholarship Committee representative - Doug Braun (self)
13. Departmental Graduate Studies Committee representative - Joel Harding (self)

Motion for acceptance of all nominations	
Motioned - Brett, seconded - Aleks	Carried- Unanimous

4. Biology Caucus Trust fund use:

Aim: narrow down to 3 picks and people can research about them

Suggestions to be considered:

-we can have more than one suggestion

Maybe: Toster Oven, coffee maker/ espresso maker in Biology Grad lounge

Maybe: Biology t-shirts sold at a subsidized cost

Maybe: high definition projector for B9242

- Further discussion with Barb and Felix, there is some money in the department; perhaps purchase in conjunction

Maybe: Random draw travel awards

- Suggestion: have a sustaining pool of money for continuous line of awards, but there could be problem with sustainability

Three ideas that required research rose to the surface during the discussion.

1st - a B9242 projector - Brett will research this

2nd - biology T-shirts - Jeanette will research this

3rd - toaster oven and coffee maker - Noel will research this

4th - to give it away as travel grants, which would not require any further research.

5. Reports from committees

a) DGSC:

Why is MSc so long meeting with Isabelle Cote

Most MSc in biology take around 3.8 semesters; how pre packaged the project is, TAing occupy a lot of time (TA ship correlate to delaying of degree completion)

Practical solutions: have thesis project formalized earlier on, committee meeting/ supervisors to help steer students to finish faster, have a section in annual progress report to allow students to realize the scope of the project about the length of time to complete project, caucus can help give suggestions to new students, reduce number of courses to students need to take

b) TSSU:

Bargaining between TSSU and the university

- Thus far: Change in the language of the contracts
- Graduate students: TSSU suggests having the school make a centralized TA application system to allow TAships to be available to Grad students in other departments. Priority will still go to the grad students in the department first, then grad students in other departments will have a chance at TAships before undergrads/ external.
- Sessional instructors: help them get some form of seniority so that they have more job security. Other institutions like Queens or UBC have a system like that. Hopefully this will increase the quality of education.

Biology will likely be going into arbitration with TSSU

- Work load review: TA is suppose to complete a workload review early in the semester after the first set of marking. This will then allow the TA to renegotiate the amount of pay for the workload.
- Biology department views that they don't need to submit a copy of the workload review to the TSSU. Other departments are doing the same thing at the moment.
- TSSU is aiming to have more pressure on HR to talk to students/ instructors about workload reviews.

General note:

- If anyone has any concerns regarding TAships/ workloads/ etc. talk to Brian LaBore

c) DSC:

GFs will be ranked on May 5th

Minor Travel Awards will be due at the end of May

New scholarship to be established: Special graduate entrance scholarship

- Establishment in progress, talk to Sam for detail

d) GSS:

- U-Pass referendum in the summer semester: Are you in favour of continuing the U-pass program by increasing the U-pass fee by \$3.95 per month? (yes/no)
If the questions does not receive majority support there will be no U-Pass for grad students at SFU starting from September 2011
New U-Pass will be distributed monthly by vending machines on campus, passes will be generic.
- Benefit Plan: significant increase in claims resulting in increase of Plan fees. GSS to mitigate the increase in fees by decreasing admin costs and reduction of Health Practitioner coverage from 80% to max. \$35 per visit (FYI: BC Chiropractic and Physiotherapy Network members offer flat rates of \$35 per visit and would therefore be covered fully). The annual maximum of \$400 remains unchanged. Visits to licensed psychologists will continue to be covered at 80% per visit up to a maximum of \$400 per year.
Still, even with these changes implemented, plan will increase \$32.95 from currently \$362.99 to \$395.94 for the 2011-2012 policy year.

<p>Motion to extend the meeting by 15 min</p> <p>Motioned - Brian, seconded - Rob</p>	<p>Carried- Unanimous</p>
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- Child care bursary pilot program: \$200-\$400 per student (depending on number of eligible applicants)
Eligibility: have at least one child and express financial need
- GSS would like to create a Student Advocate Position: cost up to \$50K per year. If one has problems with supervisor, department, or university, also planning student advocacy events and campaigns, etc. Currently there are only student volunteers at GSS that help other students such issues. Survey has indicated that students are in favor for increasing advocacy efforts. An office would be set up at the GSS. Proposal to be voted on at the next GSS Council meeting.
Main concern of the caucus, the position/ availability for the advocate must be well advertised.
- GSS would like to create Office Assistant Position: potential part-time work for students. Proposal to be voted on at the next GSS Council meeting
- Thomas is not impeached from the GSS Executive Committee.
- GSS will not move into the Halpern Centre, so the GSS office will remain where it is right now in MBC
- GSS – TSSU Social: Mexican Fiesta on May 17th at Highland Pub

- More details, other questions, ask Thomas

Motion to end Meeting Moted - Brett, seconded - Janey	Carried- Unanimous
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