

**Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus Meeting Minutes (draft until approved)  
January 18, 2012 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM, 7000 Level Graduate Student Lounge**



## **BISC Graduate Caucus**

**January 18, 2012 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM**

**In Attendance:** Jeanette Bruce (Chair), Natascia Tamburello (Associate Chair), Elly Knight (Secretary), Jennifer Linton (Treasurer), Marlene Wagner (Events Committee Officer), Erfan Vafaie (Webmaster), Rob Greenland (GSS Rep), Noel Swain (GSS Alternate), Matt Huntley, Franz Simon, Stephanie Green, Brett Favaro, Jesse Taylor, Jennifer Sunday, Jason Brogan, Lindsay Davidson, Marinde Out, Thomas Unsoeld, Danielle Dagenais, Janie Dubman.

**Absent:** Sacha O'Regan, (Events Committee Officer), Sherri Elwell (Member at Large), Nicole Gerbrandt (Events Committee Officer), Chris Mull (International Students' Rep), Doug Braun (Scholarship Committee Rep), Cassandra Carroll (Faculty Mole), Erica Jeffery (DGSC Rep), Leslie Saunders (TSSU Steward).

### **1. Welcome**

- a. The meeting was called to order by Jeanette at 3:31
- b. Additions to agenda: none
- c. Minutes from Previous Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2011 BISC grad caucus meeting.

Moved by: Jeanette Bruce

Seconded by: Jenny Linton

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**

### **2. Treasury Update – Jenny**

- See section 3 for grad-hosted speaker details.
- A cheque requisition for \$73.92 intended for last year was submitted late, and thus withdrawn from the 2011-2012 core account. Need to move the amount from our trust account to cover it.

Motion to transfer \$73.92 from the BISC grad caucus trust account to the BISC grad caucus core account to cover a cheque requisition from Rowan Trebilco for gifts for the 2011 Grad-hosted Speaker account.

Moved by: Brett Favaro

Seconded by: Elly Knight

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**

### **3. Grad-hosted Speaker - Jenny**

- a. Volunteers for the events
  - Assisting Sherri & Nicole at Costco: Erfan can do on Thurs Jan 26<sup>th</sup>.

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- Transporting Dr. Pauly: Danielle can pick up on Thurs Jan 26<sup>th</sup> and Fri Jan 27<sup>th</sup>. Could potentially reimburse for mileage. A taxi will be arranged for Thursday and Friday evening.
- Someone to meet the taxi: no volunteers. If you can help out, please let Jenny or Jeanette know.
- Hosting Dr. Pauly: Nicole. If you'd like to help, email Jeanette.
- MC the Olympiad: Jeanette.
- Stretch break: Leslie did a yoga break a couple years ago. Jeanette to contact.
- b. Spending Allocation
  - Originally \$2000 for total. This is \$900 less than last year because Dr. Pauly is local. We have since realized, however, that we need to provide transportation. Transportation will cost approximately an additional \$265, for a total of \$2265. Additional funds will be provided by caucus, which we can certainly afford.
  - For spending, we have a cash advance from the department, and other expenses are invoiced, so volunteers won't have to purchase items out of pocket.

Motion to pay the SFU GSS \$48.16 (event #8355) for rental of AV equipment for the Jan 27<sup>th</sup> BISC Grad Olympiad from the BISC Grad Caucus trust account.

Moved by: Jenny Linton

Seconded by: Jeanette Bruce

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**

Motion to pay Club Ilia (invoice #138368) \$225 for 3 gift certificates for prizes for the Jan 27<sup>th</sup> BISC Grad Olympiad from the BISC Grad Caucus trust account.

Moved by: Jenny Linton

Seconded by: Brett Favaro

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**

- c. Speaker gift:
  - Bobble head and wine carafe ideas are out. Any new ideas? We'd like to spend approximately \$125.
  - Should give him a SFU biology shirt in addition to the speaker gift.
  - Wine or scotch perhaps? Will ask one of his students.
- d. Talk to Jeanette or Nicole if you would like to meet with Dr. Pauly. There may be some lunch involved... There will also be plenty of informal opportunities at the post-talk social and post-olympiad social.

**4. Spring Events – Jeanette**

- Should have another event or two before the current term ends in May. Ideas?
- Rock n Roll bingo.
- Karaoke
- Rock n Roll bingo Karaoke?
- Matt will investigate a curling event with UBC.
- Media relations seminar in the same vein as the seminars offered last year on publishing etc. Could invite Fin Donnelly (MP) to speak about science communication to policy makers and a newspaper rep to speak about science communication to the

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media. Perhaps an SFU media relations person as well.

- Teaching skills workshop reminiscent of the one hosted at Brackendale. Perhaps UBC would be interested as well.

**5. Meeting Time - Jeanette**

- Doesn't work for everyone (esp. TSSU rep & GSS meetings).
- Important for the exec to be in attendance.
- Jeanette to do a doodle poll.

**6. Committee Updates**

**a. DGSC – Jeanette for Erica (via email)**

**1. Completion Time Web Survey**

- We have just posted a web survey asking grad students for feedback on some important issues the DGSC has been discussing: factors influencing MSc completion times, student-supervisor relations, and a proposed interdisciplinary "Introduction to Graduate Studies" course.
  - Please complete the survey (should take you under 10 minutes), and encourage your labmates and other colleagues to participate as well!
  - Currently, only one survey response per computer is allowed; if people are finding that's a problem, please let us know and we'll change the settings.
- 2. Also on the topic of MSc completion times, the DGSC is has passed two motions:**
- MSc students will now be required to form their committee one semester earlier (used to be by the end of the 3rd semester, now it will be by the end of the 2nd semester).
  - MSc students will now be required to hand in a formal proposal (2 - 5 pages) with their first Annual Progress Report (due mid-way through the 4th semester); previously, MSc students were not required to write proposals, although many supervisors ask them to anyway.
- \*The DGSC will wait for feedback from the survey before making other changes.

**3. Defense Absences**

- Recently, there have been three defenses at which the senior supervisor was not present (due to illness, emergency, or being on sabbatical).
- The DGSC discussed whether attending in person is becoming an outdated concept, due to increasing use of internet teleconferencing, and whether the DGSC should create guidelines indicating when not attending in person is acceptable.
- The vast majority of the DGSC agreed that having senior supervisors and committee members in person is best for the student, and that teleconferencing should only be admitted under special circumstances. All SFU-associated examining committee members (includes adjuncts) are expected to attend in person; for PhD defenses, it is common and acceptable for external examiners to Skype in.
- However, the DGSC sees the advantages to the department and to the student of having external examiners attend in person. The university used to provide money to fly external examiners in and pay them a stipend; the department chair is going to see whether they can find ~\$1000 per PhD defense to bring in

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- externals.
- It can be difficult to coordinate the departmental seminar schedule with when defenses are scheduled, but it would be possible to have an independent "External Examiner Seminar Series" so that the department could benefit.
  - Last note on this topic: apparently, the university is looking into improving teleconferencing capabilities, and may be more encouraging of remote attendance at defenses in the future. Currently, they frown on more than one examining committee member attending remotely, but if resources and university policy change on this point, the department will probably follow.
4. Videos advertising the biology department to prospective (graduate) students have been posted on the department webpage. The videos were put together by multi-media students at SFU. It was suggested that the videos be imbedded in the biology homepage; at the moment there is a "YouTube Biology Promotional Videos" link near the bottom of the page that isn't obvious.
- b. **TSSU** – Absent, no news
- c. **Faculty Mole** – Absent, no news
- d. **GSS** – Jesse
- GSS recently voiced their support for the gondola plan in a letter to the municipality.
  - I heart SFU campaign: GSS launching campaign to raise awareness about the disrepair of our buildings and lack of funding from the province. Students and staff are encouraged to take photos of deteriorating buildings to contribute to a compilation put together by the GSS. Contributions will be entered in a draw for a prize. SFU estimates it requires \$20 million more per year for maintenance of these buildings, however funding has been cut by 90% and it would require at least \$700 million just to catch up on repairs. See [http://www.sfugradsociety.ca/News/Entries/2012/2/29\\_I\\_Heart\\_SFU\\_Campaign.html](http://www.sfugradsociety.ca/News/Entries/2012/2/29_I_Heart_SFU_Campaign.html) for details.
  - Several questions are going to referendum:
    1. Money for sustainable SFU: The undergraduates contribute to sustainable SFU already, and the referendum will ask whether graduate students would also like to contribute: \$2 from full-time students \$1 from part time students to sustainable SFU. A graduate student seat on the board of Sustainable SFU may be granted after grad students start contributing. See <http://sustainablesfu.org/> for more info about Sustainable SFU.
    2. GSS fee increases: The referendum will ask whether graduate students want to raise the general GSS fee by the consumer price index (CPI; i.e. inflation rate) annually instead of going to referendum every time it needs to be raised. The GSS is trying to prepare for long-term funding needs.
    3. Benefit plan cap: The benefit plan price fluctuates every year, but is currently capped at \$399. The referendum will ask whether graduate students want to raise this cap to \$450 and then subsequently raise annually by the CPI.
  - AGM is Feb 28<sup>th</sup>. Please come! There will be free food and there are important bylaw changes that require quorum of 100 people. The caucus that has the highest proportion of members show up gets a prize (maybe \$500 at the pub?).
  - The GSS is looking for a new speaker. Any GSS member (non-council) can apply.
- e. **Scholarship Committee** – Absent, no news

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**7. Adjournment**

Motion to end this January 18th meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus at 4:15.

Moved by: Jeanette Bruce

Seconded by: Brett Favaro

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**