

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus Meeting Agenda

June 19th, 2013 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM, 7000 level lounge



Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus June 19th 2013 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM

In Attendance: Janie Dubman (Treasurer), Jesse Taylor (GSS Rep), Franz Simon , Catherine Scott (TSSU Steward), Corinna Lichota,, Chris Mull (Associate Chair), Matt Holl, Mike Beakes (DGSC Rep), Emily Helmer (Secretary), Amanada Kissel (Member at Large), Michael Hrabrar (GSS Rep), Mohamed Sherifdeen (TSSU Steward), Antonia Musso (TSSU Steward), Catherine Scott, Brett Favaro, Corinna Lichota, Lindsey Button, Julie Wray

Absent: Jen Scholefield (Chair), Lindsay Davidson (Scholarship Committee Rep), Rowan Trebilco (Faculty Mole), Sarah Thomsen (DGSC Rep), Kyle Artelle (Scholarship Committee Rep), Tim Forrester (TSSU Steward), Marlene Wagner (Events Committee Officer), Mathew Hepp (Events Committee Officer), Annie Ellison (Events Committee Officer), Marinde Out (International Students' Rep), Tim Forrester (TSSU Steward), David Hope (Webmaster)

1. **Welcome** – Meeting called to order by 3:30 pm by Chris
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Additions to Agenda
 - i. None
 - c. Motion to approve minutes from last month's meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes from the May 22th, 2013 Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus meeting.

Moved by: Janie Dubman

Seconded by: Catherine Scott

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**

2. Start of the fall semester BBQ (September 5th) and mentoring program.
 - a. The mentoring program for new graduate students does not get used frequently, likely because many students have started in a previous semester etc. It is suggested to have an ice breaker or game at the BBQ instead.
3. Renting of Caucus BBQ within the department.
 - a. Renting out the Caucus BBQ to people outside of the department was discussed. Jen nominates Jess Taylor to monitor the BBQ for rental and collect money. The official price to rent should be ~\$10.

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4. Ordering biology t-shirts
 - a. Spare t-shirts have all sold out and more should be ordered before the BBQ. Antonia volunteers to handle t-shirt orders and will be given contact information of company (Jennet and Joel handled t-shirts last order).

5. Grad-hosted speaker nominees
 - a. The deadline for grad speaker nominations has been extended. So far only two nominations have been made and grad students are encouraged to put in nominations.

6. Departmental Review
 - a. Elizabeth Elle has requested feedback on the departmental review. The BISC graduate caucus will be submitting a feedback. This will offer a collective opinion of the BISC grad caucus, although students may also submit individual reviews.

 - b. Issues to include in the response:
 - i. Merging MPM and MET in EEC - Students in these degree programs should be consulted before making changes as there are some concerns.

 - ii. BISC 800 - Certain faculty don't think BISC 800 should be mandatory. It is suggested that an orientation for new students be held once a semester or at minimum in the fall and spring semesters and an orientation be encapsulated in BISC 800.

 - iii. Update the student handbook.

 - iv. Student-supervisor relationships - incorporate guidelines from the student-supervisor form signed at beginning of program (regular meetings, pay etc.) into a formal checklist to be signed within first month or two of program. It is suggested that it be an assignment in the mandatory BISC 800 course so student are required to go over the form and have it signed by their supervisor.

 - v. Improve the Biological Sciences facilities.

 - vi. Student Finances - Graduate student concerns of low pay have been previously ignored. It is suggested to have the department strongly advocate for lowering/eliminating graduate tuition.

Feedback on the departmental review will be needed by the 15th of July. The caucus will have a document by next meeting and vote on submission. Brett will write up a draft of this form and circulate it to the caucus before next meeting which will be held on July 10th.

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus Meeting Agenda

June 19th, 2013 – 3:30 to 4:30 PM, 7000 level lounge

7. Treasury update

- a. No changes
- b. All outstanding payments have been made

8. Committee updates

- a. DGSC – The English speaking equivalent exam (ELTS) has been lowered so it is now on par with other universities standards (changed from 7.5 to 7).
- b. DSC – Absent
 - i. GSS – No changes have been made to the caucus funding model.
 - ii. Capital levy referendum – There will be an extra \$15 per student and we will be given 12% back to our caucus funds, which will also go up due to changes in the budget. Next week the council meeting will discuss changing this to 10% instead of 12%. The council has found the biology department has been underfunded in the past as all part-time and full-time student were counted and biology has predominantly full-time student. Next meeting the council will discuss whether all caucuses should get 10% per person back, or if smaller caucus should get a larger amount and larger caucuses get a smaller amount. Whether or not to use the number of students from the previous year is also a potential issue if numbers of students enrolling fluctuates between years.
- c. TSSU – At the general meeting last night there was discussion about a joint committee of TSSU representatives that was formed in order to meet monthly and discuss contracts, issues and make agreements in advance.
 - i. For the first five months the committee did not meet and are currently not willing to make agreements.
 - ii. The TSSU wants to discuss the child care bursary. This bursary is administered through university and can only be given to students. The committee would like to give it back to TSSU and have them administer it, however this may be costly. It was also brought to attention that SFU is not meeting the minimum B.C. standards for vacation pay (4% and 6% after 5 years).
 - iii. Priority meetings for TAs - Students without scholarships should have priority. Also, there is currently a limit of 4 TAs a student may apply for. It is suggested that the decision-making process to administer TAs be made more transparent and students should be given more information on how TAs are given, what is taken into account, and whether is it worthwhile to apply to for multiple TAs.
- d. Faculty Mole – Absent

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus Meeting Agenda

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9. Other

- a. There is an opening in sustainable SFU.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn this June 19th, 2013 meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus at 3:44 pm.

Moved by: Chris Mull

Seconded by: Brett Favaro

Decision: **motion carries unanimously**