



## **Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus**

**November 26<sup>th</sup> 2015 – 3:00 to 4:00 PM**

**In attendance:** Nathan Derstine, Colin Bailey, Philina English, Lindsay Davidson, Kassie Rhodenizer, Heather Coatsworth (Assoc. Chair), Jayme Lewthwaite (Treasurer), Nicola Smith (DGSC rep), Marlene Wagner (International student rep), Joyce Leung (GSS rep), Sarah Thomsen, Leslie Saunders (DGSC rep), Alannah Biega, Marinde Out (Events Committee), Michael Hrabar (Faculty Mole & GSS rep), Luis Malpica Cruz (DSC rep), Pascale Gibeau (Secretary), Dan Greenberg (Chair).

**Absent:** Tanya Procyshyn (Webmaster), Jennifer Bigman (DSC Rep), Rachel Walls (Events committee), Fiona Francis (Member at Large), Josh Pol (TSSU steward), Fauve Strachan (TSSU steward), Paul MacDonald (Events committee), Adrienne Berchtold (TSSU steward), Leon Li (TSSU steward).

1. **Welcome** -- Meeting called to order at 15:03 by Dan Greenberg.
  - a. Attendance
  - b. Additions to Agenda
    - i. Halloween party recap

Halloween party was well attended. Some diverging opinions about the extra money for beer rather than food paid by caucus: for some people, better to have more beer money, but some other people would have preferred caucus to pay food instead. Many do feel like doing a potluck for food brings more food variety, and food of better quality. Might be worth publicizing the potluck better next year.

One suggestion was to not have a costume prize for faculty or group costumes, to keep more money for the pumpkin prizes since those are split among labs?

Estimated budget spent: 180\$ on beer, 12\$ on costume prizes, 25\$ on gift card for pumpkin contest. Purchase of pumpkins 56.55\$.

- ii. T-shirt contest update & funding motion

The vote for BISC logo is closed, and there were two winners, Simon Valdez and Laura Ulrich. Both designs will be printed; one on navy blue, the other on red t-shirts. Cost is a little bit over 8\$ per t-shirt.

Discussion about the colors; caucus decides to hold a quick vote online to choose the two most preferred colors.

Caucus has to buy the t-shirts, and deal with selling them; idea would be to sell them around 15\$ to recover costs and make a bit of profit.

Motion to buy up to 108 t-shirts for a cost of up to 900\$ out of trust account.  
Moved by: Dan Greenberg.  
Seconded by: Pascale Gibeau.  
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Jayme Lethwaite, Joyce Leung, and Dan Greenberg.

iii. Winterfest information & potential for caucus contribution

Winterfest will happen in Halpern Center, on December 11.  
The event costs 10\$, which covers appetizers. Drinks will be for sale for 3\$ per drink (soft drinks are free).

There will be skits or Karaoke (see online website); prizes are available. Individuals can also do songs.

**Everyone needs to buy tickets before Dec 4, and sign up for karaoke by Dec.6.**

To encourage grad student attendance, and to spread funding for social gatherings across more events, it was discussed that the Caucus would fund one free drink for students at the Winterfest party. **November 30 follow-up:** The events catering service for the event is unable to “split the bill” and we are not allowed to subsidize drinks.

Motion to spend up to 150\$ to pay for the first drink of the first 50 grad students to arrive at Winterfest from core account.  
Moved by: Dan Greenberg.  
Seconded by: Leslie Saunders.  
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Jayme Lethwaite, Marinde Out, and Dan Greenberg.

Motion to spend up to 50\$ for prizes for the Winterfest karaoke contest from core account.  
Moved by: Marinde Out.  
Seconded by: Dan Greenberg.  
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Jayme Lethwaite, Marinde Out, and Dan Greenberg.

iv. Motion to cancel December caucus meeting

Motion to cancel the December caucus meeting.  
Moved by: Dan Greenberg.  
Seconded by: Jayme Lethwaite.  
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Dan Greenberg.

- c. Motion to approve minutes from last month's meeting.

Motion to approve the minutes from the October Biology Grad Caucus meeting.  
Moved by: Dan Greenberg.  
Seconded by: Heather Coathsworth  
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Dan Greenberg.

## 2. Treasury update

Trust account: 1691.26\$

Core account: 1546.08\$

## 3. Committee updates

- A. DGSC (Leslie Saunders, Nicola Smith)

The condensed grad student satisfaction survey was presented at the DGSC October meeting. It was well received, and will be sent to faculty too.

As a follow-up, the DGSC will ask the hiring committee for the Terrestrial Ecologist position to consider stats background and potential to teach stats course to grad students.

Isabelle Côté (DGSC Chair) also met with Elizabeth Elle, and Elizabeth is willing to fund a stats grad course. After a survey sent by email to grad students, it was decided the stats course will be postponed to Fall semester (due to offerings of stats courses in other departments in winter).

The other big point discussed was around the lack of mechanisms to hold supervisors accountable to their grad students. The DGSC wants to hear from caucus about ideas of what could be done to improve that, in order to try finding a way by which supervisors would be held accountable while students would be comfortable coming forward. Under Canada laws, complaints can't be kept anonymous, regardless of level the complaints get to (supervisor is entitled to hear).

### Suggestions:

- There should be a hearing committee formed by a third-party, so that supervisors on the DGSC are not potentially fielding their own students' complaints.

- As part of the annual progress report, supervisors could have to complete a form about expectations, and how those were met in the past year. Would establish documentation about relationships students-supervisors, and make the process formal. The form would be reviewed by DGSC, who would follow-up. That would also put some social pressure on supervisors to improve.

- Make the form that lists the expectations that students can have for their supervisors more visible on the website.

Mechanism to use to address issues once established through annual report still remains to be developed. It would be good for BISC grad students to clarify what the protocol currently is: anyone on the DGSC can be contacted if there are issues with supervisors, including student rep's. It is not a formal mechanism, but still it is possible to contact anyone on the DGSC with anonymity. However, once the complaint is formal (in writing), it is not anonymous anymore.

Finally, DGSC recognizes that while directed readings are meant to be flexible, there should be some general rules around them. Faculty input gave the following general rules: between 30-40h of work per credit over the semester, regular contact hour (1h/week for a 3 credit course).

#### B. DSC (Luis Malpica Cruz, Jennifer Bigman)

DSC met last week to rank and decide on President's Award, GIRTAs (Grad Int Res & Travel Award) and TMRAs (Travel Minor Res Award).

Three Presidents Award (out of 7), 2 GIRTAs (out of 2) and 8 TMRAs (out of 10) were awarded.

Most likely there will be another competition opening in Spring to held awards for Summer'16: President's (1 award), GIRTAs (1 full or two half's), TMRAs (6-8).

A few notes to consider and spread to our fellow grads (sent by Tony Williams):

- just a note that TMRAs are only for national or international meetings, not for local ones (retreat & PEEC), please refer to Tony's email for reasons and general views of the DSC on this. Those local meetings are also partially funded by the EBERG group and should ideally be funded by PIs as entry level conference attendance for grad students, negotiate with your PI if you're interested in attending them.

- TMRAs are only for traveling to conferences with a max amount funded of \$500 and this amount should be matched by senior supervisor, therefore talk with your PI before applying and also remember to ask for the reference letter and check if he/she send it. It is responsibility of applicant to comply with all requirements

#### C. GSS (Michael Hrabar, Joyce Leung)

There will be a new health and dental plan for recent graduates.

There still is one opening for rep for GSS (50\$ stipend per meeting attended).

#### D. TSSU (Adrienne Berchtold, Leon Li, Josh Pol, Fauve Strachan)

Updates from Fauve Strachan:

- a) Contract negotiations continue.
- b) A survey was sent out yesterday for completion regarding workloads to be completed by 3:30pm today (hopefully people did it.. it's a little late for a reminder - several were sent out by TSSU).

- c) There is a hearing occurring tomorrow at Harbour Centre so if anyone wants to come, they are welcome to attend. Get in touch with the TSSU (tssu@tssu.ca) for more information.
- d) A general reminder for people to get in touch with the TSSU steward(s) with any questions or concerns that they have pertaining to TSSU. (fstracha@sfu.ca) E.g. questions about getting paid for grade input work, concerns about TAs hip postings, etc.

It has been noted that certain reps have been absent at TSSU meetings throughout the semester. These individuals will be contacted re. their recurrent absences, and may be replaced at next caucus meeting to ensure BISC grad caucus has a good presence at the TSSU meetings.

#### E. Faculty Mole (Michael Hrabar)

Applications are closed for the terrestrial ecology position.

There will be some changes to the undergraduate courses in Environmental toxicology.

Faculty passed a motion to amend funding policy for students rolling up from Masters to PhD; they will get funding guaranteed up to 5 years. Students are allowed to roll up after 9 credits.

#### 4. Adjournment

<p>Motion to adjourn the November 26, 2015 meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus at 16:23. Moved by: Dan Greenberg. Seconded by: Marlene Wagner. Decision: Motion carries unanimously.</p>
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