



Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

January 21st 2016 – 3:00 to 4:00 PM

In attendance: Philina English, Jayme Lewthwaite (Treasurer), Nicola Smith (DGSC rep), Joyce Leung (GSS rep), Sarah Thomsen, Leslie Saunders (DGSC rep), Marinde Out (Events Committee), Luis Malpica Cruz (DSC rep), Pascale Gibeau (Secretary), Dan Greenberg (Chair), Kollitha Halangoda, Amanda Kissel, Paul MacDonald (Events committee), Adrienne Berchtold (TSSU steward), Leon Li (TSSU steward), Jennifer Bigman (DSC Rep), Rachel Walls (Events committee), .

Absent: Heather Coatsworth (Assoc. Chair), Marlene Wagner (International student rep), Michael Hrabar (Faculty Mole & GSS rep), Tanya Procyshyn (Webmaster), Fiona Francis (Member at Large), Josh Pol, Fauve Strachan (TSSU steward).

1. **Welcome** -- Meeting called to order at 15:01 by Dan Greenberg.
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Additions to Agenda
 - i. T-shirt sales update

Winterfest was a success, and well attended.

The T-shirt sales went well at Winterfest in December, and caucus is almost breaking even with costs.

Because grad students helped with the cleaning after Winterfest even though we were not supposed to, the Department is covering drink tickets to compensate for the costs saved.

- ii. Motion to sponsor annual meeting of PPMABC

The annual meeting of the Professional Pest Management Association of BC (PPMABC) is happening in March 2016 (9AM-3PM, in IRMACS). The annual theme is new innovations in pest management, specifically about use of new forms of biocontrols in the field. Good venue for grad students interested in applied ecology, invertebrates, agriculture, forestry.

BISC Grad caucus has sponsored the PPMABC in previous years, in exchange for giving students free admissions to the talks (for up to 20 grad students).

Motion to sponsor PPMABC for up to 200\$ out of trust account.

Moved by: Paul MacDonald.

Seconded by: Adrienne Berschtold.

Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Jayme Lewthwaite, Paul MacDonald, and Dan Greenberg.

iii. Elections for open positions

Motion to elect Alannah Biega as GSS rep to fill in the empty position.
Moved by: Dan Greenberg.
Seconded by: Jayme Lewthwaite
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Dan Greenberg.

iv. 2016 Grad Symposium

The Grad Symposium brings everyone from the department together at the end of the semester. It is a fun event, social but with an academic twist, that mixes people from different labs to talk about research in fun activities. Last year's theme was "maximise your group fitness", and groups were formed to propose hypothetical research projects, while having problems presented half way through. Prizes were awarded to winners, and fun was had by all.

Potential dates: suggested to choose a Thursday in early April; April 7th as a tentative date.

Caucus needs a new committee to organize it. Call is out to volunteers!

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

Motion to approve the minutes from the November Biology Grad Caucus meeting.
Moved by: Dan Greenberg.
Seconded by: Leslie Saunders.
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Dan Greenberg.

2. Treasury update

Core account: 1546.08\$
Trust account: 1147.26\$

3. Committee updates

A. DGSC (Leslie Saunders, Nicola Smith)

Nicola Smith looked into the outline of current chain-of-command for student-supervisor relations, and resolve conflict: currently existing is talking to the DGSC chair, supervisory committee, and then, chair of Department.

Outside of department, a student can talk to the GSS student advocate, the associate-dean of grad studies, or the ombudsman.

No formal process, everything is done informally on a case-to-case basis.

There are workshops on managing supervisor relationship.

GSS student advocate could come to caucus meeting to explain what she does (if conflict taken outside of Department).

Within the department (from Isabelle Côté): no written document either (no flowchart of steps to follow), nothing formalized.

Nicola Smith will propose at the next DGSC meeting to sit down and create the outline of steps to follow, so that it is formalized and easier to find for a student that needs help. The document with clear steps can then be put up on the grad caucus website or Department website, so that it is easy to find for students in need.

B. DSC (Luis Malpica Cruz, Jennifer Bigman)

DSC currently ranking Masters NSERC proposals.

Competition for the travel awards for conference in spring and summer 2016 is open now until mid-February.

C. GSS (Michael Hrabar, Joyce Leung)

The GSS AGM is happening on Feb 3rd at 2pm. The quorum is 100 people, and everyone should go. There will be a social event at highland pub after for the students that attend all the meeting, and prizes for the caucuses that bring more people and more people proportionally. GSS also looking for volunteers to help run the AGM. Please check the website for more information.

Other notes from last meeting:

- Proposition to offer free transit for refugees coming to SFU.
- GSS voted on respective voting rights of incoming and outgoing directors (2 weeks overlap between the two directors).
- Also mentioning the possibility to organize event jam-session or karaoke night.

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

There has been an agreement resolved with childcare bursary program. Once new collective agreement comes into effect, the bursaries will get distributed by TSSU rather than SFU administration. Survey will come out soon to ask students about their opinions regarding changing terms of reference for the childcare bursaries.

Bargaining update: job actions in the fall encouraged some forward momentum in negotiations with SFU administration. Parties still finalizing agreement on major issues.

One rule was changed for TA applications: grad students are now eligible to all available TAs, not only those that they ranked.

TAs are now treated like faculty for intellectual property of material developed during teaching.

There will be executive nominations coming up at the next meeting in February.

TSSU is forming a committee to look into the human rights violations while TAing, to assess what the process should be when violations are brought forward about human rights or harassment/bullying.

E. Faculty Mole (Michael Hrabar)

No meetings were held recently.

Update about search for the open faculty position as Terrestrial Ecologist: search was cancelled because of unforeseen budget shortfalls, due to less funding coming from the province to the university than anticipated.

4. Extras

i. Course in stats and R

Issue: training in advanced statistics in R is lacking in Biology and at SFU in general. There are workshops in R that occur sporadically here and there, which often have waiting lists. There are 2 courses in the Stats department that offer some training in R. One is an undergraduate course (300 level). Both the workshops and this undergraduate course do not teach statistics, just basic training in R. The second course taught in the Stats department is STAT 650 (by Carl Swartz), which is concurrently taught to undergraduates and as an 800 level course in Kinesiology. This course offers some R code for exercises, but is not an R-based course and is also instructed in JMP and SAS.

There has been considerable concern addressed by graduate students in Biology about this matter, with the main complaint generally that sufficient training is not provided to do adequate, more advanced, statistical analyses, and that groups like Stats-beerz alone cannot accommodate this gap.

One solution proposed: offer a workshop by a visiting scholar who is an expert in the field to come to SFU, ideally between Spring and Summer semesters. Explore the possibility that credits could be awarded to those that want them, and possible funding sources (e.g. SPICES grants?).

Next steps:

- Bring to DGSC at the meeting next Monday.
- Send around a survey completed by graduate students to decide who would be appropriate, and then, determine the availability and interest by the scholar.

Motion that DGSC considers organizing a workshop in coming months on stats in R, in addition to the planned course in stats and R for the fall

Moved by: Dan Greenberg.

Seconded by: Adrienne Berschtold.

Decision: Motion carries unanimously.

5. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the January 21, 2016 meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus at 16:02.

Moved by: Dan Greenberg.

Seconded by: Philina English

Decision: Motion carries unanimously.