



Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

September 22, 2016 – 15:30 to 16:30 PM

In attendance:

Heather Coatsworth (Associate chair), Kyle Bobiwash (Chair), Marinde Out (Secretary and TSSU Steward), Joyce Leung (Events Committee), Kolitha Halangoda (Events Committee), Leon Li (GSS rep), Kevin Hegeman (DGSC rep), Dan Greenberg (Faculty Mole and temporary DGSC rep), Jennifer Bigman (DSC rep), Pauline Deschodt (DSC rep), Nicola Smith.

Absent:

Jayne Lewthwaite (Treasurer), Allannah Biega (GSS rep), Mike Hrabar (GSS rep), Nicholas Salcedo Porras (TSSU Steward), Tanya Procyshyn (TSSU Steward), Richard Johnston (TSSU Steward), Adrienne Berchtold (TSSU steward), Danielle Hoefele (Events Committee), Pascale Gibeau (member at large), Leslie Saunders (DGSC rep), Vanessa Guerra (Webmaster), Eveling Taverna Fernandez (International Student rep).

1. Welcome -- Meeting called to order at 15:33 by Heather Coatsworth

a. Attendance

b. Additions to Agenda

i. Grad Hosted Speaker Update

Margaret Lowman (<http://canopymeg.com/>) accumulated the most points, and as such is first in line to act as our 2017 grad hosted speaker! She responded to our request and she is available. The event is going to take place on March 15th 2017. The room, accommodation and flight from San Francisco are already booked. Closer to the event we'll need volunteers for budgeting, logistics and organizing a lunch.

ii. Welcome back BBQ recap

BBQ went well. Approximately 65 people attended the event at peak time. According to the treasurer's latest records, there was \$60 in the cashbox, but extra money came in from t-shirt sales so there was approximately \$200 cash in the cashbox before the BBQ. Now there is \$649.05 in the cashbox.

The event committee spent \$400 on beer/drinks and there was one leftover six pack of beer.

The committee spent \$175 on food, \$76 on various supplies like the piñata and candy. For future reference: The games (Get-to-know-you-Bingo, card game) were well received, and are recommended for next year's event. Please buy the less sweet ciders (not Peach but Apple). Also, try to book the pub, so people won't leave the event too early. The GSS has caucus funding available for Orientation events (<http://sfgradsociety.ca/caucuses/caucus-funding/>). The event ran from 4 pm to ca. 8:30 pm this year.

iii. Halloween BBQ planning

The yearly Halloween caucus event is probably going to take place on October 27th 2016 (a Thursday).

Last year's budget was \$300. The location needs to be decided, and depending on that, a liquor license might need to be acquired.

One option is to do a potluck and pumpkin carving contest in the pub, or use a lounge for a potluck and pumpkin carving contest and then go to a pub.

The caucus will provide some snacks, while additional snacks could be arranged by the attendees in the form of a Halloween themed baking contest.

Motion to spend up to \$450 for the Halloween Event from the core account.
Moved by: Heather Coatsworth
Seconded by: Dan Greenberg
Decision: Motion carries with abstentions from Joyce Leung and Kolitha Halangoda.

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

Motion to approve the minutes from the August Biology Graduate Caucus meeting.
Moved by: Heather Coatsworth
Seconded by: Dan Greenberg
Decision: Motion carries with abstention from Kevin Hegeman.

2. Treasury update (Jayme Lewthwaite absent, update by Heather Coatsworth)

1. The Core account is: \$1850.00. After Kolitha Halangoda gets reimbursed for the Welcome BBQ the total will be \$1600.
2. The Trust account is: \$1084.71

3. Committee updates

A. DGSC – Dan Greenberg and Kevin Hegeman

- The DGSC has a new chair: Margo Moore. The former chair was Isabel Coté.
- The university is considering scanning graduate theses (as is done for undergraduates) for plagiarism through <http://turnitin.com/>
- The university is working on a system to create a university-wide standardized Annual Progress Report, in which progress will be tracked of taken courses, reviews, and annual progress reports.
- The Senate changed certain regulations for newly enrolled graduate students, for example the maximum number of years until degree completion, and the conditions for applying for extensions. The DGSC needs to clarify these new conditions.
- The university does not want to give credits for pass/fail courses anymore, which would affect the Skills for the Successful Scientists course (BISC 800). The DGSC/BISC department is not agreeing with this new policy and is going to fight it.
- The Department of Statistics has introduced two new Introduction in Statistics courses for the Spring 2017.
- The survey results from former DGSC representatives showed that current statistics courses given through the Biological Sciences Department are teaching R, but not the statistical knowledge needed by students, so graduate students are falling lacking comprehensive statistics training. Although a committee of BISC and REM graduate students are organizing advanced statistics workshops, these only work as a temporary “Band-Aid” solution. The new Terrestrial Ecology position got cancelled because of funding issues. If this new professor gets hired, he or she is hopefully going to teach a quantitative statistics course for grad students.

B. DSC – Pauline Deschodt and Jenny Bigman

There is a lot of confusion regarding the application timeline of scholarships and the DSC is currently trying to clarify this. The committee is working on creating a standardized yearly timeline to show which scholarships will be available, and when the application period starts and ends. This overview will be spread by email and posted on the BISC Graduate Caucus website when it's ready.

C. GSS – Allannah Biega, Leon Li, Mike Hrabar

Info emailed by Allannah Biega:

The GSS is going to send out a mega survey. Make sure that you fill it out! In that way the GSS can focus their efforts and money on relevant concerns and desires of graduate students.

D. TSSU – Richard Johnston, Nicholas Salcedo Porras, Tanya Procyshyn, Adrienne Berchtold, Marinde Out

Info emailed by Tanya Procyshyn:

- TA appointments went smoothly in most departments - there have been no complaints about the awarding of TA positions in Biology so far. Because of rights won in the new Collective Agreement, departments **must** provide TSSU with all of the information they used to determine which TAship went to which applicant. Any grad student who did apply for a TAship in Biology and didn't receive one -- or who questions the process by which TAships were awarded -- should contact one of the stewards.
- TSSU is still in disagreement with the Biology office about the printing of TUGs. In other departments, it is standard that once TUGs have been completed/approved (even if they are electronic TUGs), a copy is printed and placed in your mailbox so that you have a physical copy for your records.
- TSSU members with children under the age of 13 are reminded that the deadline to apply for the childcare bursary is Sept 25, 2016. More information can be found here: <http://www.tssu.ca/childcare/>

E. Faculty Mole – Dan Greenberg

- Bernie Crespi's application to the Canada Research Chair Tier 1 in Evolutionary Genetics & Psychology is moving forward.
- The construction of a new Biology Building is going to be delayed because the Surrey Campus has priority. If the university gets additional funding from the provincial government, the construction might proceed. In the meantime, the department is going ahead with hiring architects and making other arrangements, so the situation is very cautiously optimistic. SFU's president Andrew Petter said in a Senate meeting that the Biological Sciences Department gets priority on the Burnaby Campus.
- News from the Appointment Committee: the search for a new faculty member (Terrestrial Ecology position) was cancelled in the spring because of funding cuts to Faculty of Science. Other Faculty of Science departments had new hires, however. The Biology position comes with extra costs because labs need to be extensively retrofitted, which amounts to a large portion of the hiring cost. There is space for the new lab's graduate students in the Centre for Wildlife Ecology and lab space in Arne Mooers' lab. The shortlist of potential hires contains great candidates, who might potentially become Canada Research Chair nominees and bring in extra funding for the department. If the BISC department can convince the Dean of Faculty of Science to fund a new hire then a new search will be conducted.

- This year we had a lot more new undergraduate students.
- The Master of Environmental Toxicology (MET) program needs greater support now and in the near future. A new instructor is needed to teach MET courses and supervise students. There is no funding for new staff however. There was discussion of ways to fund a new toxicology faculty, including sharing with other departments or combining toxicology and microbiology searches.
- Elizabeth Elle (the departmental chair) recommends that graduate students strategically plan out their funding, particularly with respect to Graduate Fellowships (GF). If you want to TA specific courses, check when they are taught and arrange your Graduate Fellowship applications around that. If you select every semester for a GF, it could be assigned to any of them and that may conflict with your expected TAing.
- New rule: students who get all their funding from TAships will be selected for at least 5 base unit courses instead of 4.
- Hosting policies are changing. The receptions after BISC seminars now must include food with alcohol. There will be maximum one drink per person, and five people per jug. Sad emoticon.

Question from the group; would it be possible to see the number of base units while applying for TAships? Then students can avoid surprises like a 6 base unit TA-ship. The TSSU stewards will check this out.

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the September 22nd 2016 meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus at 16:30.

Moved by: Heather Coatsworth

Seconded by: Leon Li

Decision: Motion carries with abstention from Heather Coatsworth.