



## **Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus**

**February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2017 – 15:30 to 16:30 PM**

### **In attendance:**

Kyle Bobiwash (Chair), Heather Coatsworth (Associate chair), Jayme Lewthwaite (Treasurer), Alannah Biega (GSS rep), Joyce Leung (Events Committee), Leslie Saunders (DGSC rep), Mike Hrabar (GSS rep), Seb Pardo, Alexandra Vela, Kari Zurowski.

### **Absent:**

Leon Li (GSS rep), Richard Johnston (TSSU Steward), Jennifer Bigman (DSC rep), Danielle Hoefele (Events Committee), Nicholas Salcedo Porras (TSSU Steward), Tanya Procyshyn (TSSU Steward), Kolitha Halangoda (Events Committee), Eveling Taverna Fernandez (International Student rep), Marinde Out (Secretary and TSSU Steward), Adrienne Berchtold (TSSU steward), Kevin Hegeman (DGSC rep), Dan Greenberg (Faculty Mole), Pauline Deschodt (DSC rep and Member and Large), Vanessa Guerra (Webmaster).

**1. Welcome** -- Meeting called to order at 15:34 by Heather Coatsworth.

**a. Attendance**

**b. Additions to Agenda**

**i. Grad Hosted Speaker (\$ from GSS)**

Jeanette Ordóñez (Administrator for GSS) informed the caucus that the GAC approved funding for our Graduate Hosted Speaker event in the amount of \$400. This will be used alongside the money from the department to pay for the costs associated with speaker hosting, as well catering for events during Dr. Lowman's stay.

**ii. Grad Symposium (ideas?)**

After the grad symposium last year, it was suggested that some of the money at the end of the year be used for raffles towards memberships etc. (ie. \$25 vouchers). After discussion at the meeting, it was decided that the money should be used towards a social, with focus on activities and games that foster an inclusive and mingling atmosphere. Suggestions included scavenger hunts, get to know you games, Easter egg hunt and general outdoor games. An outdoor barbeque venue with caucus supplied food and drink seemed to be the preferred setting. There was little interest in creating an academic tie into the event.

### **iii. Gender Neutral Washrooms**

Multiple graduate students have proposed turning the 7000 level washrooms adjacent to the graduate lounge, into 2 gender neutral washrooms. The biology department does not have any gender neutral bathrooms available for use at this time. Since both bathrooms already have an entrance door, an individual stall and a sink, the work required to complete the proposal should be minimal. Only signage and minor changes would need to be made. The caucus will consult the department chair, Elizabeth Elle, as well as the committee that spearheaded the campaign for gender neutral washrooms on campus for more information on the procedures to complete this.

### **iv. How to act as grad rep on new hires**

A member at large raised concerns about how graduate students were chosen to act as graduate reps on department hires. The caucus consulted with two graduate students who acted as graduate representatives on hiring committees, one as a teaching hire, and one as a research hire. The teaching hire graduate rep reported back to caucus that the position was advertised (via e-mail) to the entire department, and that they provided the department chair (Elizabeth Elle) with their CV and a casual cover letter stating why they would be a good fit for the committee (research overlap, interest in pedagogy etc.). The department chair relayed the acceptance of the position back to the applicant. The research hire graduate rep outlined the criteria for the position: i) the student is registered in a PhD program at SFU in the department, ii) the student's primary supervisor/PI is not on the search committee, and iii) the student's research subject has significant overlap with the research hire positing. Based on these criteria, and knowledge of the graduate student body, the search committee chose the graduate rep. It was suggested that this process become more transparent and consistent. During discussion, it was suggested that a brief description of the role be provided to students of interest, with the aim to decrease student versus student competition as much as possible, allow any interested graduate students who meet the required criteria to apply, as well as have the position be graduate rather than department elected. The caucus has made a note of these concerns, and will talk to Elizabeth Elle about making the process more consistent and transparent.

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

<p>Motion to approve the minutes from the January Biology Graduate Caucus meeting. Moved by: Heather Coatsworth Seconded by: Joyce Leung Decision: Motion carries on unanimously.</p>
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## **2. Treasury update - Jayme Lewthwaite**

Since the last treasury update, \$100 has been taken out of the core account for sponsorship for the Professional Pest Management Association of BC's (PPMABC) annual conference.

3. Core: \$1048.74
4. Trust: \$1084.71

## **Committee updates**

### **A. DGSC – Leslie Saunders and Kevin Hegeman**

Updates provided by Leslie.

Updates from the January Meeting:

#### 1. Terrestrial Ecologist Prof position

- All applicants will be able to teach an advanced stats class. Grads are encouraged in their evaluations of the new profs to recommend those who are able to teach an advance stats class. Should also ask direct questions regarding this to the candidates during the interview seminars and lunches. All feedback will be carefully considered by the search committee.

#### 2. Expectations of new grads and their supervisors

- List of questions will be shared with new students and included in the BISC acceptance letter.

- No formal APR check box as of yet. We will try the 1 page letter and perhaps survey the new student orientation to remind students to go through it with their supervisors. Could also be brought up at the September faculty meetings. It is always encouraged that the caucus talk to the DGSC reps about issues with their supervisors/grad student life. Important things to ask yourself would be: "Are you feeling like you are unable to achieve your milestones?" "Is your supervisor hindering your goals?"

- Within this letter, it will be stated that there is a list of expectations that you are encouraged to discuss with your supervisor.

- The list will also be included under the "Perspective students" tab on the BISC website.

#### 3. The DGSC wants to survey PDFs (post-doctoral fellows) in the department

- The DGSC will brainstorm a list of questions to ask the BISC PDFs and will invite the PDFs to a meeting in the near future. This is in response to the DGS now incorporating PDFs under the list of those they oversee.

### **Updates from the February Meeting:**

#### 1. STAT Update from Elizabeth Elle

- There is a STATS consulting service available to biology students who need advanced stats assistance (it does cost money – supervisor could subsidize/pay).

- STAT has no capacity to add courses.

- STAT wants to become part of IRMACs/Big Data HUB so there are hopes that through this that BISC and STAT may be able to set up a joint workshop.

- New prof candidates appear to be the best option to obtain teachers at the grad level.

## 2. Student-supervisor update

- Margo will show the student-supervisor guideline letter at the next faculty meeting. It will immediately be included with acceptance letters for new BISC students.

## 3. Surveying the PDFs

- DGSC met with PDFs to talk about PDF-specific issues regarding their acceptance and life at SFU. There is a need for the biology department and DGS to better communicate to improve pdf accommodation.

- **\*\*\*Request form the DGSC for BISC grads to include pdfs in their event invites!\*\*\***

### **B. DSC – Pauline Deschodt and Jenny Bigman**

Update from Jenny provided via e-mail. The DSC is currently ranking the application for TMRAs, GIRTAs, and the Presidents PhD Scholarship. They would like to remind people that the TMRAs are for national and international conferences (versus local ones like PEEC) and to check eligibility for awards before applying.

### **C. GSS – Alannah Biega, Leon Li, Mike Hrabar**

Updates from Mike and Alannah. The GSS is hiring new executive positions. The positions require ~ 50 hours of work per month, and pay \$4,600 per semester. Three of these positions are annual (May 2017 – May 2018), and one is bi-annual (April 2017 – January 2018). Check out the GSS website or the e-mails from the GSS for more information. The Upass renewal cycle is coming up this year. The GSS voted on a motion to not go to referendum this renewal cycle so long as the cost of the Upass does not increase. The success of this rate freeze is subject to all other participating schools agreeing to the same.

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

Update from Tanya provided via e-mail. Arbitration between the TSSU and Biology took place earlier this month regarding calculation of base units for BISC 101/102 TAships. All of the evidence and testimony from two grad student witnesses was submitted and heard by the arbitrator. The TSSU executive reports that the arbitration went very well. A decision is not expected until May or June, as there is on-going arbitration about base hour calculations between the TSSU and Mechatronics department.

If you are ever concerned that the base unit calculation for *\*any\** course that you are TAing is incorrectly calculated, or that you are expected to work more than your allocated hours, please contact one of the TSSU stewards!

### **E. Faculty Mole – Dan Greenberg**

No meeting.

## 5. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017 meeting of the Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus at

Moved by: Heather Coatsworth

Seconded by: Joyce Leung

Decision: Motion carries on unanimously.

