

# Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

**May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018 – 4pm**

1. Welcome

a. Attendance

**Steering committee**

Chair	Pauline Deschodt	Present
Associate Chair/Workshop Committee	Elana Varner	Present
Treasurer/GSS rep	Kari Zurowski	Present
Secretary	Rylee Murray	Present
Member at large	Kristen Walters	Present

**Officers**

Events Committee	Allison Dennert	Absent
Events Committee	Asim Renyard	Present
Events Committee	Kevin Colemanares	Present
Webmaster	Catherine Villeneuve	Absent

**Representatives**

TSSU Steward	VACANT	
DGSC rep	Jayne Lewthwaite	Present
DGSC rep/Events Committee	Melissa Orobko	Absent
DSC rep	Yonathan Uriel	Absent
DSC rep	Serena Wong	Present
Faculty Meeting Rep	Jenny Bigman	Absent
Workshop committee	Rachel Canham	Present

**Other members present:** Mason King

b. Additions to the Agenda

i. Graduate student orientation September BBQ

1. Welcome BBQ friendly GSS grant deadline Aug 1st for up to \$750

- a. Events committee needs to look at budget and see if they need/want the money

- b. GSS needs a description, and a budget for the grant

- i. Things: BBQ supplies, entertainment/ice breaker, alcohol, etc

2. Ideas for ice breaker: scavenger hunt - with a prize (Biology t-shirt)
3. Marlene will keep in touch with the date for the orientation
- ii. Graduate student mentoring program
  1. Ways to make it more interactive?
    - a. Elana - pair new students with old, and then a monthly stipend for beer and chips with the mentors - so that it's a more sustained thing.
    - b. Asim - movie night with mentors and ask questions about how to navigate the department.
- iii. Summer BBQ discussion
  1. Pauline - Used to be Fridays that were not payday coffee, turn on the bbq from 11:45 to 1:15 and sit outside and BBQ food, needed to have someone just turn it on, make sure there's propane.
  2. Caucus decides to do it Thursday afternoons at 3.30pm, offset from weeks that there is payday coffee
  3. Put out the ultimatum to grad students that the BBQ is available for any grad student to use any time - and reminder that cooking utensils are grad lounge 7000 level in drawers.
  4. Propane tanks under the concrete awning on the patio beside the BBQ - Melissa Orobko to coordinate BBQ turn on and propane.
- iv. New picnic table updates
  1. Rylee to check in how much longer from Elizabeth, Barb, and purchasing.
  2. Can we fit this in with next Thursdays first summer BBQ?
  3. Talk to Elizabeth about food and booze reimbursement to get people there
  4. Need to find tools to put everything together: if you have any to lend, contact Rylee.
- v. Trivia nights
  1. Some MBB students want to have trivia night, probably be good to have cross department to make it a bit bigger and connect departments.
  2. Ask Cassandra (in Margo's lab) about how much she spent on the Illia night of trivia
- vi. Other summer discussion items
  1. Joan Sharp is asking for when our fall grad hosted speaker will be attending ASAP
  2. Pauline and Elana to meet with Joan and Ron Ydenberg to see which slots are available and then solicit people for nominations for grad hosted speaker asap
- vii. Workshop committee discussion
  1. Elana - goal is to pinpoint areas that students feel is lacking in their education

2. Planning on first workshop to be in sept - about how to TA: the do's and donts, Barb Sherman would like to come talk to the workshop about the common things she sees students having problems with - how to option for fewer base units and what to do if you are given fewer than you asked for, TSSU person to come and explain pay stub. Also it could touch on how to lead a successful tutorial? How to get students engaged and learning? - Invite Joan Sharp? Could also talk about some of the logistics of dental, health care etc.
3. Elana - to solicit nominations or suggestions of what people want for other workshops and then have vote - have students offer what they think they could do that people would like
4. Workshop committee to meet at a later date
- c. Motion to approve minutes from April's meeting
  - i. Asim seconds
  - ii. Motion passes unanimously
- d. Motion to forgo July 2018 caucus meeting
  - i. Serena seconds
  - ii. Motion passes unanimously
2. Treasury update
  - a. Core                   \$359.41
  - b. Trust                   \$1026.26
3. Committee updates
  - a. DGSC
    - i. Jayme - wasn't able to attend - but from the minutes:
      1. Margo asked Mike Cheng to do some number crunching because minimum wage is increasing in June 2018. For grad stipends to match the new minimum wage levels (\$12.65/hr x 70 hours bi-weekly), we need an increase from the current \$21,000 minimum to \$23,000 minimum (note that we haven't had a stipend increase since 2013). Minimum wage will be going up continuously to \$15.20/hr until 2021, and there is nothing in place (currently) to have our stipends reflect that increase. Seems like there was a lot of discussion around where that money should come from; professors are frustrated because their NSERC grants are not being increased and so there is increased burden on them. Some want the university itself to be responsible for paying the increases. We will be talking about this issue again at next week's meeting.
      2. Median completion times: Dave Carmean did some number crunching as well on median completion times. For a PhD student, median completion time is 18 semesters. For M.Sc, it's 9, for MET it is 11 and for MPM, it is 10. Median and average completion times were similar (i.e. data was not skewed).

- ii. The grad student survey has been taken into account and is reflected in the 5 year academic plan which has been posted on the Biology website
  - b. DSC
    - i. Serena - TMRAs aren't being accepted until the fall, but can apply retroactively after you travel in the summer
  - c. GSS
    - i. Kari - looking for new admin assistant, and a new speaker (chair - gets \$50/meeting. Go to July meeting if you're interested in the position, vote in August, position starts in September
  - d. TSSU
    - i. Pauline and Asim- haven't had a meeting yet. Rachel Canham has will probably go to the next meeting
    - ii. Vote in Rachel next meeting (June) to be TSSU rep.
  - e. Faculty Representative
    - i. Jenny can't be there for next one - they have not had a meeting recently
- 4. Adjournment
  - a. Jayme seconds
  - b. Motion passes unanimously