

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

September 24th, 2018 – 3:30pm

1. Welcome

a. Attendance

Steering committee

Chair Pauline Deschodt (secretary for the meeting)

Treasurer/GSS rep Kari Zurowski

Officers

Events Committee Allison Dennert, Asim Renyard

Webmaster Catherine Villeneuve

Representatives

TSSU Steward Rachel Canham

DGSC/ Events committee Melissa Orobko

DSC rep Yonathan Uriel and Serena Wong

Other members present

Sarah Johnson, Don Wiggins, Hannah Watkins, Rachel Munger, Robert Gochian

b. Additions to Agenda

i. Welcome BBQ recap/ Halloween event

Welcome BBQ:

- Went really well, good selection beverages, food and ice breakers (bingo and piñata)
- GSS grant received
- Alcohol sales, we made \$229.00
- All documents related to BBQ organization are now available for next year event committee (secret link)

Motion to reimburse Melissa \$292.78 for the BBQ expenses (beverages, food)

- I. Allison 2nd
- II. Motion passes (absentions : Melissa and Kari)

Motion to reimburse Allison \$25.84 from petty cash for the BBQ expenses (beverages, food)

- I. Rachel 2nd
- II. Motion passes (absentions : Allison and Kari)

Motion to reimburse Melissa up to \$50 for the liquor license and extra expenses

- I. Allison 2nd
- II. Motion passes (absentions : Melissa and Kari)

Halloween :

- Date: because of Eco-Evo retreat on the weekend of the 26th, the Halloween party will be held on Tuesday, October 30 at 5pm
- Location: TBD. Areas between biology/ chemistry or biology/ physics (9000 level) too bright. Possibility to get a room in Maggie benson or use room B8219 (small but no windows)

Motion to spend up to \$400 for the organization of the Halloween party

I. Asim 2nd

II. Motion passes unanimously

ii. Fall Grad hosted speaker updates

Dr Mary O'Connor from UBC Zoology.

Monday, Dec 3rd departmental seminar

Title: Toward a unified science of ecology change advances and challenges in biodiversity and metabolic scaling

Tuesday, Dec 4th seminar/ workshop grad student career- topic TBD

Spring grad hosted speaker, Pauline will be sending soon an email asking for nomination. The Spring Grad hosted speaker does not have to be local.

If you have any suggestion already, send an email to Pauline (pdeschod@sfu.ca). She will need the name of the nominee and a little paragraph explaining the research of the nominee and why it would be a choice for a grad hosted speaker.

iii. Workshop September 2018 recap

- Feedback after the first workshop organize by the workshop committee
 - It was interactive, work in small group was appreciated, attendants got useful practical tips.
 - Thank Megan Barker for taking care of running the workshop (go back to her if we want to re-do it next year)
 - What would be needed: more specific material/ scheduling of biology TA
- Theme student would like to have as workshop:
 - Practical stats and R, modelling, QGIS
 - TA workload management/ Grad time management
 - How to handle cheating/plagiarism
 - Tips for starting a thesis
 - Career skills/networking
 - Navigating student supervisor relationship
 - Science communication
 - How to write good scholarship applications
 - How to be a good grad student

- Most of the topics are reviewed in BISC 800: skills of successful scientist (now compulsory for Master students) but we would like more consistency or regularity in the course. Melissa will bring it back at the next DGSC meeting
 - Next meeting topic:
Mental health in grad school, late winter (have counselling person to give a talk and maybe TSSU)
Scholarship applications workshop, run by Yonathan in the Spring
- iv. Facebook page
Link to our facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2541902675>
Feel free to remind your labmates and other grad student to join the page!
- Goal: advertise events and workshops, platform for students to ask questions, surveys, ...
- v. Mentor meeting
The idea is to bring new and more experienced students together and bring back the mentorship program.
Possibility of scheduling regular meetings during the term for students to get together and ask questions to students who have been around for longer.
The department was willing to provide coffee or snacks for these meetings.
- vi. Other- Department seminar, fall 2018
Students have noticed that a lot of the spots this term were filled by SFU faculty. We wrote a letter during the caucus meeting in order to ask why and how we can avoid this in the future (more nominee from students? Not enough money to invite external speakers?, ...)

Email draft:

Dear Joan and Ron,

We are emailing on behalf of the BISC Graduate Caucus to inquire about the fall departmental seminar speakers. We have noticed that there are more internal SFU speakers on the schedule this semester than usual: 6 out of 11 available spots (after the Finlayson Biodiversity Speaker & Grad-hosted Speaker). We are concerned about this, since the purpose of the seminar series is to engage other academics and researchers outside of our university for the benefit of students and faculty.

We are wondering if there is a reason for this, for example budgetary concerns? Since this is a very important issue for students, we are hoping that in the future, external speaker nominations could be given priority over internal speakers.

Thank you for your time and looking forward to your response,

The BISC Graduate Caucus

- c. Motion to approve minutes from June's meeting
 - I. Allison 2nd
 - II. Motion passes (abstention: Rachel)
2. Treasury update
 - Core Account: \$2100
 - Trust Account: \$1385.67
3. Committee updates
 - a. **DGSC**
 - no meeting yet. Turn over 2 spots in the committee.
 - Right now on the committee:
 - Julian Christians, Gerhard Gries, Arne Mooers, Jim Mattsson, Jenny Cory, Melissa Orobko (student rep) and Jayme Lewthwaite (student rep)
 - b. **DSC**
 - no news right now.

Reminders:

- Debbie sent an email, do not click on "submit application" before the reference letter is completed otherwise the letter cannot be upload properly in the system
 - Always upload a CV for each award you are applying for even if it's not asked
- c. **GSS**
 - Fall Surrey social on Surrey campus
 - Mental health event organized by GSS, new app called my SSP. The GSS is asking student to try it and give feedback on it
 - d. **TSSU**
 - The TSSU is looking for students to join committees (stipend positions), the opportunities are posted in the grad lounge and see TSSU website for more info
 - TSSU anniversary -stay tune for events in December
 - e. **Faculty Mole**
 - The bio department is going to start looking for a Dept. Chair to replace Interim Chair Tony Williams and this search will likely be internal.
 - New Dean from Faculty of Science (Paul Kench) came to talk and discussed that he will be looking at the proposed faculty hires for bio. They had been put on hold by last dean, but he assured us they will move forward.

4. Adjournment

- I. Allison 2nd
- II. Motion passes unanimously

