

# Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

**November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – 3:30pm**

## 1. Welcome

### a. Attendance

#### **Steering committee**

Chair Pauline Deschodt

Associate Chair Elana Varner (secretary for the meeting)

Treasurer/GSS rep Kari Zurowski

#### **Officers**

Events Committee Allison Dennert, Asim Renyard

#### **Representatives**

GSS rep Sarah Johnson

DGSC/ Events committee Melissa Orobko

DSC rep Serena Wong

#### **Other members present**

Don Wiggins, Rachel Munger, Robert Gochian, Elijah Reyes, Laura Kroesen, Tanya Prinzing and Florian Reurink

### b. Additions to Agenda

#### i. Halloween party recap

- What went well → looking for feedback:
  - Room and the lights were great! Good for viewing pumpkin
  - Would be nice outside, but now too cold
  - Fire pit for next year?
- Previous motioned to spend up to \$400, got \$100 from the department. Alcohol spent \$540 (40 over our goal).
- There is some left over alcohol. → could keep it for upcoming events but need motion to account for this.
  - Asim spent 347.97 for liquor – (not including what was made back) \$265 was made in sales

**Motion** to reimburse Asim \$418.72 for alcohol and pumpkins and party supplies from grad core account

- Allison seconds. Asim and Kari abstain. Passes unanimously. Motion passes.

**Motion** to reimburse \$26.25 from petty cash for venue booking

- Allison seconds. Melissa and Kari abstain. Passes unanimously. Motion passes.

ii. Spring grad hosted speaker updates

- 37 responses from vote
- The winner is Dr. Elena Bennet who studies ecosystem services.

Elena Bennett is an associate professor at McGill University whose lab centers around questions about ecosystem services (ES). From her website: Humanity has always depended on the services provided by ecosystems, non-material benefits such as places for recreation and inspiration (cultural ES), and benefits obtained by regulation of ecosystem processes, such as flood control and climate regulation (regulating ES). A growing body of evidence indicates that most ecosystem management, which attempts to maximize one ES at a time, actually makes ecosystems vulnerable to substantial declines in other services or to increased likelihood of nonlinear, surprising changes in the provision of services. For this reason, recent studies have called for increased attention to managing multiple ES together. However, effective management of multiple ES is impeded by inadequate understanding of the interactions among ES and the slowly changing variables that appear to regulate these interactions. We are interested in how the types of ecosystem services interact across the landscape over long time periods and how we can manage landscapes to provide multiple ecosystem services. Her work is divided into several themes: agricultural ES, urban ES, aquatic ES, human impacts on large-scale nutrient cycling and water quality, next-gen ES models, good Anthropocene, and ecoSERVICES. In 2016 she was named one of six NSERC Steacie Fellows and her publications have been cited over 18000 times since her career.

In addition to her stellar research program, Elena is co-chair of the international project ecoSERVICES, which aims to set the research agenda for ecosystem services for the coming decade, and lead author on the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment, which aims to provide policymakers with objective scientific assessments about the state of knowledge regarding biodiversity, ES, and sustainability tools and methods (similar to the IPCC but for biodiversity). She has won awards for undergraduate teaching, graduate supervision, and campus sustainability, and was a Leopold Leadership Fellow and a Trottier Public Policy Professor. She should have positive interactions with our graduate students and be able to provide a very useful workshop on any of the topics of science communication, leadership, and/or science-policy links.

- Pauline has contacted her. She is away but will be back soon.
- She had the most first choices and the total point vote as well
- Fall grad hosted speaker (UBC zoologist) is being scheduled now

iii. Chair election

- Isabelle Cote is the newly elected chair

- Melissa talked to Tony about getting student input into election process:
  - Only the faculty can vote as per university level.
  - Tony suggested student should talk to their supervisors as the best way to get input heard.
  - A poll of students and posting the results before faculty vote seemed like a bad idea to him. Could possibly be discouraging for the new chair off the bat.
  - Could ask that the students be more informed – not a week of notice when the town hall is being held. Just include students in the process more.
    - Tony had reservations about this, even though there were more students than faculty at the town hall meeting.
    - But this is a concrete thing for the students to ask for. Bringing it to the DGSC is a good avenue – Melissa plans to do this.
  
- Going forward: We need to make sure the chair meets with them as soon as they've been voted in. Meet regularly and ask them questions. Keep a good relationship.

iv. BISC800 discussion

- Looking for more consistent content and predictable schedule.
  - Rotating schedule is a problem – always a full year gap at some point (which is hard on unlucky students) and is difficult to plan if don't know when it is next offered.
  - Many people say it should be offered in the Fall. If new PhD students comes in, they too can automatically do this course.
  - Either in the fall or EARLY spring so that it avoids field season. If people want to rotate they can write that down.
- Creating a student survey to determine best course of action. Specifically voting for when the course should be offered and the syllabus.
- Also want to hear from people who took it already to see what was helpful.
- Discussed the most effective format for this survey to take.
  - The winner seemed to be that each potential syllabus topic can be ranked 1-5 (least-most helpful or important).
  - Plan to leave survey open for a month

v. Workshop committee discussion

- Social media in Science workshop
  - Upcoming workshop has GSS funding of \$350. Further we plan to contact the department for additional funding.
  - Shifting to a library room instead – more comfortable than 9242
  - Will be held on December 10<sup>th</sup> (the workshop committee is waiting to hear back from the library to decide time)
  - We will serve coffee, breakfast items (muffins, bagels, ect), and snacks
  - Aiming to do a social lunch gathering after
    - likely pizza
- There was an additional discussion about proper workshop compensation.
  - The service culture of academia is common place. Normally workshops are put on for free
  - Debate over if this is a culture we want to perpetuate, especially with ‘free’ GSS funding that would not be used otherwise
- We will table this conversation until a special meeting about workshops in general is held.
  - Might be helpful to see how much the library pays people
  - This future meeting will cement and hammer out the general guidelines of workshops after this pilot year is complete

vi. Other

IDEAS is an annual symposium held by E2O to bridge with REM where students share their research on aquatic ecology and conservation. Will be held in January 2019 (in the AQ). Low stress conference but high quality presentations are expected.

**Motion** to give \$200 from core to Rachel for IDEAS2019

Asim seconds. Allision, (new girl with glasses between Allision and Don), Rachel, and Kari abstain. Passes unanimously.

Winter Holiday Party

- December 7<sup>th</sup>
- We’ve offered to help as we have in the past
- They are generally all set
- Would appreciate help with music
  - No volunteers at this meeting. But will advertise to more students.

During events and more generally, there is a lack of utensils in the Grad Lounge.

- People tend to walk away with them over the course of time.
- Might be best to get some just for events to lock away

**Motion** to spend \$25 of petty cash for utensils for Graduate events. I.e. Knives, cutting boards, etc.

Melissa seconds, Pauline and Kari abstain. Passes unanimously.

Most people are away for the holidays when the next meeting would be.

**Motion** to forego the December meeting.

Melissa seconds. Passes unanimously.

Idea was brought forward to have professional seminars:

- The likelihood that we all become professors is slim to none. So, getting advice from professionals on how to transition from academia to a professional setting would be valuable.
- Would be perfect to partner with REM as they would be interested and helpful.
- Either as a seminar series or a few workshops
  - Workshops would be more manageable in terms of organization
  - Could host a panel of 3 or so professionals each time
    - Great for them to bounce student questions off each other for more well-rounded answers.

c. Motion to approve minutes from October's meeting

**Motion** to approve the October meeting minutes.

Allision seconds. Passes unanimously.

## 2. Treasury update

**Core:** \$1426.18

**Trust:** \$1385.67

## 3. Committee updates

### a. DGSC

Jenny Cory is the new chair. Met with chemistry representative as they are hoping to copy our format.

Since the minimum wage is increasing over the summer, but our compensation is not yet, we will not be making minimum wage.

- The university needs to increase the GFs to meet this demand
- Plan is to put pressure on the Dean and the university first
- Possibility to revisit student stipends in Spring for May start?

Student-Supervisor relationships

- Are students aware of the conflict resolution pathways?

- Confidentially report it to the DGSC Chair
  - They will issue a formal reprimand for the supervisor or required actions they must take
- Also, a link on the Biology webpage about relationships
- Margo Moore wrote a guide book in 2010 as well – should be publicly available

b. DSC

The NSERC PhD candidates have been ranked

- Results should be sent soon if not already CGSMS in December to be ranked

Mitacs – originally used to be for STEM. For further information about how to get involved in Mitacs, it might be wise to check UBC's resources and workshops they put on

c. GSS

A woman from sexual violence and prevention spoke

- They provide lots of educational workshops
- There is not a 4 month waiting period like Health services to get help
- All there services are extremely timely

Tuition increases

GSS election is open now until Thursday or Friday

Puppy Therapy has sessions specifically for Graduate students where they provide one on one time for you and a puppy.

SFU has 1700 research support staff employed directly by supervisors, NOT by SFU.

- This is outrageous because that means Post Docs cannot get health benefits through the school
- Aiming to change this which would affect:
  - RAships if the RAship is towards helping out a PI on non-thesis related topics. Then it would count as income. Otherwise RAship would remain a scholarship.
  - TAs will now be taxed. Normally the income is under the bracket where taxes are given back though. So hopefully, functionally it will be no different.

d. TSSU

At the meeting last Wednesday we mostly went over issues with TA applications, which closed last week. In particular, that Supervisors get an email notification about what courses you apply to. TSSU seemed unaware this was happening even though it seems almost all departments do it. No word on action to get rid of it, but TSSU is concerned so maybe more updates to come. The second issue was that some applications have a section to be filled in called "research interests". There was some debate over whether this was appropriate. Although not against university policies, it could potentially hurt or enhance certain applications depending on the answer. Moral of the story: "research interests" are not required to submit your application, so if you don't want to fill it out you don't have to. Next meeting is Thursday at the Harbour Centre.

e. Faculty Mole

- Vote went through to ratify search committee for new hire (environmental bio)
- Faculty were asked to vote (through email after meeting) on approving a spousal hire for the spouse of the new Canada 150 Research Chair (I do not know results yet)
- Office of Major Awards is stepping up their involvement with a new Executive Director of Research Operations (Dr Trevor Davis) and will facilitate major grants & connect PIs to necessary admin within SFU

4. Adjournment

**Motion** to adjourn the November Meeting  
Allision seconds. Passes unanimously.