

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

March 25th 2019 – 3:30-5:10pm

1. Welcome

a. Attendance

Steering Committee

Chair: Pauline Deschodt

Associate Chair: Elana Varner

Treasurer/GSS Rep: Kari Zurowski (unable to attend)

Secretary: Rachel Munger

Webmaster: Catherine Villeneuve

Officers

Events Committee: Allison Dennert, Asim Renyard, Kevin Colmenares

Representatives

GSS Rep: Sarah Johnson

DGSC/ Events Committee: Melissa Orobko, Jayme Lewthwaite

DSC Rep: Serena Wong

Other members present:

Colin Bailey (Faculty Mole), Elijah Reyes, Tanya Prinzing, Tess Forstner, Jaime Chalissery, Hannah Watkins, and Robert Gochian.

b. Additions to Agenda

a. BISC Graduate Scholarship Workshop (was on Mar 13th, 1-3pm, by S. Johnson and Y. Uriel)
Feedback: Approximately 15-17 attended, many of whom said it was a great workshop. Lots of Twitter kudos! Sarah Johnson: Currently, graduate fellowships are open, and a group scholarship meeting in April will be held to facilitate applications should anyone need help. A team will also search for upcoming scholarships.

b. Reimbursement

Motion to reimburse Pauline Deschodt \$27.30 from petty cash for coffee bought on March 13 for the Scholarship workshop.

Moved by: Elana Varner

Second by: Asim Renyard

Result: Passes unanimously. Abstention: Pauline D.

Motion to reimburse Yonathan Uriel \$70.92 (\$20.92 + \$50) from Core account for expenses (groceries and stipend) for the Scholarship workshop.

Moved by: Pauline Deschodt

Second by: Elana Varner

Result: Passes unanimously. Abstention: no abstentions.

Motion to reimburse Sarah Johnson \$50 from Core account as a stipend for the Scholarship workshop

Moved by: Pauline Deschodt

Second by: Elana Varner

Result: Passes unanimously. Abstention: Sarah J.

i. c. Caucus website, updates and reorganization

ii. Catherine: - Going to add list of workshops offered in the past

- Mentor program page? Keep for now with intention of mentoring this Fall 2019.

- Taking down events calendar for now

- Updated formatting of old "Survival Guide for Biology Graduate Students" and will post in a more obvious place

- Going through all pages and organizing relevant content

d. 2019 Grad Symposium

Happening at the end of April or beginning of May (though beginning of May is less desirable since grad students will be headed to the field). There will be an afternoon biology showcase of presentations, with an informal poster session in between talks, with a social event at the end. Short and sweet presentations from labs so that the large general themes of research are conveyed.

Motion to spend \$500 from core account for 2019 Grad Symposium

Moved by: Pauline Deschodt

Second by: Elana Varner

Result: Passes unanimously. Abstention: Asim R, Allison D, Sarah J.

e. IDEAS GSS Grant

Motion to approve payment of \$295 for the receipts provided to Angus Straight (IDEAS Committee Member) from the GSS grant.

Moved by: Pauline Deschodt

Second by: Elana Varner

Result: Passes unanimously. Abstention: no abstentions.

e. Open Call for new BISC Caucus executive positions

Pauline will send out document with list of open positions. If more than one person put their name forward, the Caucus will vote on a member.

Hope to fill up all the executive position. If the positions don't get filled, the GSS can cut off the Caucus. Let's not allow this to happen!

Those gone in the summer should find someone to fill position for them while they are away.

f. Motion to approve minutes from our February's meeting

Moved by: Pauline Deschodt

Second by: Allison Dennert

Result: Passes unanimously.

2. Treasury update

Core Account: \$1087.13

Trust Account: \$993.13

3. Committee updates

a. DGSC

- See below the Caucus minutes for a summary document that Melissa put together as a part of her updates and information.

- Caucus had general discussion and loose vote to see what topics should be kept in BISC 800, and what could serve as workshops.

- Main conclusions:

Writing grants and scholarships: workshop

Mental health + imposter syndrome: workshop AND BISC 800

Post degree-career options: workshop or BISC 800 panel discussion

Time management and different working styles: BISC 800

Online presence: BISC 800

Ethics: animal care, euthanasia, academic honesty, research fraud, etc: BISC 800

Posters: BISC 800, but not a priority

Writing results: BISC 800, but not a priority

BISC 800 topics: The BISC 800 instructor should be able to teach the content or invite someone in who is a better expert on the topic.

Degree requirements:

-BISC Graduate website pages are difficult to navigate and there is contradictory information on several links. Melissa went through calendar and biology website, copied into all same word document. A lot of conflicting information and information stored under the wrong headings. Arne Moore offered to format it into one PDF document. However, this would require an update on an annual basis. Website will need to be fixed no matter what, so it would be excellent to get that under weigh.

-Melissa will meet with Jenny Cory and see how it can be fixed, or Melissa could be compensated to fix the website pages herself. Someone should be dedicated to updating the website.

Chair Election Procedure Committee:

To put forth to the DGSC, to vote on putting forth to the faculty:

"The Biology graduate student caucus proposes that a Chair Election Procedure Committee be struck. The goal of this committee will be to create a procedure for selecting a department chair candidate to put forth to ratification vote, in all future department chair elections. We propose that this committee have no more than 4(?) members, at least 1 or 2 (?) of which is/are a graduate student(s), that it will draft a written procedure for selecting a candidate by October (?) 2019, then open up this procedure to comments by faculty, graduate students, and staff for 2(?) months including by anonymous survey and an open comment meeting, before finalizing the written procedure by February(?) 2020 and presenting this to the Dean of Science for approval."

b. DSC

Serena W: Grad fellowship is open, closes April 16th. Can email both Serena and Yonathan if you have any questions about applications. Remember to include your CV.

c. GSS

Gondola plan is in discussion again.

d. TSSU

Nobody present from the TSSU.

e. Faculty Mole

Colin B: Special Departmental meeting, took place on March 25.

- Unanimous support to hire Dr. Moorecroft for a tenure hire. Hiring him does not take away from the hiring needs of the department.
- Key request has been transferred to Laurie (from Maya).
- Budget is going from \$200 to \$300 for Wednesday Illia post-seminars
- News from Deans Advisory Committee meeting: New committee to manage graduate student enrollment at the university level. New cap on how many new grad students will be admitted on a university wide scale. Within Biology and Science in general, there's a high demand for TAs, so graduate students are very much required for this reason alone. Resist fewer grad students being admitted.
- New advancement director.
- Retires will create gaps in the departments (Felix Braden August 2019, Malo Fernando April 2020, Joan Sharpe August 2020).
- 5 priorities for the hiring plan by the department:
 1. Environmental Microbiology, with expertise in ecotoxicology
 2. Lecturer in plant biology + physiology (teaching plant physiology, algae and fungi)
 3. Lecturer in BISC to replace Joan Sharpe to teach BIC 102 and 106
 4. Cell biology and physiology tenure track position
 5. Evolutionary biology tenure track position

Looks like there will be a movement to try and real back all the new departments coming up and make everything more cohesive.

- 5 Canada Research Chairs, each chair is a hiring opportunity. Statistics department is interested in obtaining a CRC. Potential cross over between a statistics hire and an applied biology statistics expert for higher level complicated statistics. Could also apply to other disciplines like psychology. Current CRCs (outside priorities, though they could be aligned with department hires, as it is easier to fill a CRC position):
 - o Stem Cell Biology (Neurobiology)
 - o Data Science (Dept of Statistics)

4. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the March 2019 meeting (5:08).

Moved by: Pauline Deschodt

Second by: Melissa Orobko

Result: Passes unanimously

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rachel Munger". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and "M".

Secretary – Rachel Munger

Melissa's DGSC Updates and Information

March 25, 2019 BISC Grad Caucus Meeting

Next DGSC meeting: April 24

BISC 800

I will be sending a report on the survey results to the DGSC chair by the next DGSC meeting. The DGSC is supportive of offering BISC 800 every fall semester. They would also like to receive a list of the core course topics that students want as determined by the survey and by consensus at caucus meetings.

Please review the table below to vote on the core topics, sorted by the percent of people in the survey who voted they very much wanted the topic covered:

topic	very much want covered	somewhat want covered	don't care if it's covered
how to publish papers, review papers, and respond to reviewers	73	23	4
writing discussions for papers or chapters	67	25	8
*writing grant and scholarship applications	64	28	8
how to give good talks	62	31	8
*impostor syndrome, mental health, burnout, resources available	62	31	8
student-supervisor relationships	60	28	12
* <i>post-degree career options</i>	58	38	4
writing introductions for papers or chapters	56	20	24
writing abstracts for papers or chapters	52	36	12
*time management and different working styles	50	27	23
<i>writing results for papers or chapters</i>	40	40	20
*creating an online presence (website, social media, etc) how to, and assignment	31	35	35
<i>how to prepare good posters</i>	28	32	40
<i>ethics in biological sciences</i>	27	50	23

Italics = was not covered the Spring 2018 offering of the course with Isabelle Côté

* = offer in workshops instead possibly?!

Assignments? (**bold = was** included in the survey)

- write an abstract of a paper given in class
- **prepare a 10-minute presentation about your research to receive feedback on** (in survey: 50%, 35, 15)
- write draft of introduction for a research proposal
- journal formatting exercise
- **2-page 'professional' website** (31%, 35, 35)

Offer in annual workshops?

- impostor syndrome, mental health, burnout, resources available (62%, 31, 8)
- scholarship and grant applications (64%, 28, 8)
- post-degree career options (58%, 38, 4)
- time management and different working styles (50%, 27, 23) (maybe better if someone from the student learning center comes in, than a prof talking about it?)

Degree Requirements

I am going to meet with Marlene and finds out who does the website to recommend changes. I am proposing having ONE landing page for degree requirements. At the top, say that the SFU Calendar lists the key requirements for each BISC graduate degree program including coursework, and the links below elaborate on how to meet those requirements. Then, have **separate** links for the following:

- Learning Outcomes
- Forms
- Directed Readings in Biology
- Student-Supervisor Relationships
- MSc Students Considering Transferring to the PhD Program
- Annual Progress Report
- PhD Candidacy Exam
- Thesis Defenses
- Confidential Report to the DGSC Chair

Information to expand on or add to the website:

- candidacy exam:
 - samples of Candidacy proposal document
 - guidelines for Candidacy presentation, maybe samples?
 - specific questions commonly asked by the examining committee (I compiled a bunch from UofT: why are these questions important to the study of biology and why are they novel, what appeals to you about this research, what is already known about the theoretical/empirical evidence that addresses your questions including citations, who are the early pioneers in this area, how does your work build on what others have already established, justify your choice of study system for your questions, what methods have been used to answer similar questions, what are the strengths and weaknesses of your methods, provide a figure showing predicted results that answer your questions given different possible outcomes, how might your results impact disciplines outside of your field?)
- guidelines for MPM and MSc students proposal for their first APR
- guidelines for the research proposal for transferring from the MSc to PhD (num of pages, what to include, etc)

PDF document desired? Or just better website organization?

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