

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus
April 20, 2020, 2:30pm
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome

a. Attendance

Steering Committee:

Chair: Yonathan Uriel

Associate Chair: Melissa Orobko

Treasurer: Brett Hodinka

Secretary: Tess Forstner

Webmaster: Adam Blake

Member at Large: Pauline Deschodt

Officers:

Events Committee: Elijah Reyes, Asim Renyard

Diversity Committee: Ranah Chavoshi, Steven Brownlee, Joanna Enns, Elena Varner

Workshop Committee: Yonathan Uriel

Representatives:

DGSC: Melissa Oroboko

TSSU Rep: Tess Forstner, Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Serena Wong

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert, Ranah Chavoshi

Faculty Mole: Hannah Watkins

Members: Nancy Yang, Robert Gochian, Gwyn Case, Sarah Gravel, Mason King

b. Additions to Agenda

- i. Territorial Acknowledgement: Elena Varner volunteered to do the one for the next meeting

ii. **Motion to approve minutes from March meeting**

1. Moved by Yonathan Uriel
2. Seconded by Ranah Chavoshi
3. Motion passes unanimously

2. 2020-2021 Elections

The nominees for the 2020-2021 BISC Graduate Caucus executive are running unopposed for all positions and are as follows:

- Chair: Yonathan Uriel
- Associate Chair: Tess Forstner
- Treasurer: Brett Hodinka
- Secretary: Gwyn Case
- Member at Large: Asim Renyard
- Events Committee: Elijah Reyes, Kevin Colmenares, Jamie Chalisery
- Webmaster: Nancy Yang
- Departmental Scholarship Committee (DSC): Rachel Munger (senior), Sarah Gravel (junior)
- Faculty Meeting Rep: Danielle Ogilvie

- DGSC: Sarah Johnson, Hannah Watkins
- TSSU Steward: Steven Brownlee (rep 1), Allison Dennert (rep 2)
- GSS Council Rep: Allison Dennert (rep 1), Mason King (rep 2)

1. **Motion** to approve the above listed students at the relevant acclaimed positions listed for the Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus for the 2020-2021 academic term, beginning May 1, 2020.
 - a. Moved by Adam Blake
 - b. Seconded by Allison Dennert
 - c. Motion passes unanimously
 - d. Abstain: Yonathan Uriel, Melissa Orobko

Note to all new BISC caucus committee members and representatives: approach the previous graduate student who held your position so you can receive advice and tips from them

3. Treasurer's Update: Brett Hodinka

- a. Core account: \$ 1096.41
- b. Trust: \$1509.74

4. Representatives' Update

- a. DGSC: Melissa Oroboko
 - i. No updates
- b. DSC- Serena Wong
 - i. Everything is a little bit delayed. Grad fellowships will be \$7000 in September, and will open soon
- c. GSS- Allison Dennert
 - i. It does not appear that the university will budge on providing tuition relief for students while they are unable to provide the services that our tuition pays for. It is likely that more announcements will be made on this in the coming weeks.
 - ii. The GSS has a great resource page that's being updated weekly on info for grad students, including where to apply to find relief. They also have plans to provide an emergency bursary for grad students, based on our needs. Please visit the info page and *answer this survey* to let the GSS know how they can help you during this time.
 1. Info page: <https://sfugradsociety.ca/information-on-the-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>
 2. Survey: https://sfu-gss.formstack.com/forms/preferences_for_agm_and_gss_space_copy
 - iii. There are *enormous* changes with Translink to the UPass program. For April, if you have not used your UPass you may apply for a refund for April (details to come in a GSS email to students soon). For the summer semester (and beyond), Translink is unfortunately forcing a program suspension, meaning that students who need cheap to access transit will not be able to use a UPass. Buses are now free but many of us still need access to skytrain so the GSS is creating a relief fund to help students who still need access. *If you still require a transit pass*,

please email Biology GSS Rep Allison Dennert (adennert@sfu.ca) with the number of zones (1-3) and months you anticipate needing supplemental transit support and she will pass this on to the GSS for their information. The GSS is collecting data on student needs now and will roll out the relief fund in the coming weeks. It is unclear when the Translink UPass program will continue.

- iv. There is a very unfortunate forced increase in our benefit plan fee from Student Care (our provider). The GSS was forced to vote increase the Health Plan Fee by ~\$10, from ~\$460 to ~\$470 (in accordance with this year's inflation). The GSS has plans to supplement the remainder of the increase with their own contingency funds so that students will not be forced by Student Care to cover the entirety of this increase. As of now, your health coverage will not change in the 2020-2021 academic year. If have any questions, please contact Allison Dennert, Biology GSS Rep (adennert@sfu.ca). Mona Mehdizadeh, GSS Director of Graduate Services, may be better able to answer specific questions (grad-services@sfugradsociety.ca).
 - v. Info on compassionate leave for international students: The GSS, TSSU, and certain caucuses are STRONGLY recommending that international students consult an immigration lawyer before taking compassionate leave. Taking this leave could have enormous consequences on your visa, post graduation work permit, and applications for permanent residency in the future. Legal help is available through the SFU International Student Advising, and various other free immigration consultants on the TSSU and GSS websites. <https://www.sfu.ca/students/isap/contact.html>
 - vi. Food bank moving to restrict access to citizens and permanent residents; GSS has signed a letter in opposition.
- d. TSSU – Tess Forstner and Steven Brownlee
- i. RA unionization front: not much happening, university has completely stalled
 - 1. TSSU is considering taking legal action
 - ii. International student solidarity network. Sign up here: <https://forms.gle/cG56fwQaY1EN63KE8>
- e. Faculty Meeting – Hannah Watkins
- i. Revamping all departments on the SFU website
 - ii. All summer courses will be online
 - iii. Should be no loss in TAs, and may even have more TAs available
 - iv. New institutional zoom license
 - v. Lab access: no one is supposed to go up to campus unless approved, increased security
 - vi. No more direction on field research
 - vii. No broad guidelines about defenses. Laurie communicates on an individual basis about defenses.

5. Committee Update

- a. Diversity and Inclusion Committee
 - i. No update

- b. Workshop Committee
 - i. Potentially opening up the scholarship workshop again over zoom
- c. Events Committee
 - i. No update. No parties!

6. Adjournment

- a. **Motion to adjourn to April meeting (3:37pm)**
 - i. Moved by Yonathan Uriel
 - ii. Second by Brett Hodinka
 - iii. Motion passes unanimously

Tesia Forstner - Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tesia Forstner", written in a cursive style.