

## Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

July 31, 2020, 12:00pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### 1. Welcome

#### a. Attendance

##### **Steering Committee:**

Chair: Yonathan Uriel

Associate Chair: Tess Forstner

Treasurer: Brett Hodinka

Secretary: Gwyn Case

Webmaster: Nancy Yang

Member at Large: Asim Renyard

##### **Officers:**

Events Committee: Elijah Reyes

Diversity Committee: Steven Brownlee, Joanna Enns, Elana Varner, Ranah Chavoshi, Gwyn Case, Sarah Johnson, Steven Brownlee

Workshop Committee: Hayley Reekie

##### **Representatives:**

DGSC: Hannah Watkins, Sarah Johnson

TSSU Rep: Steven Brownlee, Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Sarah Gravel

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert, Mason King

Faculty Mole: Danielle Ogilvie

##### **Members:**

Adam Blake, Em Lim

#### b. Additions to agenda

i. Territorial acknowledgement delivered by Gwyn Case.

ii. Jo will give acknowledgment in August.

##### **iii. Motion to approve June meeting minutes**

1. Motioned by Yonathan Uriel.

2. Seconded by Elana Varner.

3. Motion passes unanimously

### 2. Representatives updates

#### a. Treasurer's update (Brett Hodinka)

i. Core account: \$898.97

ii. Trust account: \$1659.74

iii. Unresolved deposit from D&I committee remains unresolved.

#### b. DGSC updates (Sarah Johnson, Hannah Watkins)

i. Approach Jonny Corey with issues related

- ii. APR checkboxes did not roll out in time for summer APRs. DGSC reps will follow up to ensure a separate slip or similar will be provided to students with summer APRs to indicate if and how the student has been affected by the pandemic.
  - iii. Eligibility for GFs has only been extended for 1 semester at this time. Reps are pushing for 1 year.
  - iv. Students who are being pressured by PIs to return to campus despite safety concerns should approach the DGSC. If you're concerned about consequences/repercussions, please speak to reps (Sarah & Hannah). Your identity will be kept in confidence but their ability to act is limited if you remain completely anonymous.
  - v. Stipend increases are acknowledged by the DGSC as an important issue, but progress is not likely to be rapid.
- c. DSC updates (Sarah Gravel)
  - i. No updates.
- d. GSS (Allison Dennert)
  - i. Based on result of grad student survey, several action items were proposed to GSS but were generally not well received. However there may be some movement on stipend increase.
  - ii. GSS budget has not changed much. New paid director position and committee positions are proposed. Committee positions would be focused on diversity and inclusion.
  - iii. Many biology student concerns (ie, mental health, completion times, etc) are shared widely amongst other departments.
  - iv. UPass fees have been assessed for the fall, but this does not necessarily mean UPass will be reinstated. Unfortunately. If you are struggling with transit fees, remember that there is a bursary through the GSS for transit fees.
  - v. Harjap Grewel is the GSS Advocate, a position that exists just to advocate for grad students. He would like you to remember your degree is your degree, you set your own start and finish times, not your PI. If you have a desired schedule of completion, communicate that to your PI and if they give you sass get in touch with the Harjap ([advocacy@sfugradsociety.ca](mailto:advocacy@sfugradsociety.ca), <https://sfugradsociety.ca/advocacy/individual-advocacy>)
- e. TSSU rep (Steven Brownlee)
  - i. Back in January SFU agreed to reimburse students for the IHF by July 31. If you submitted a reimbursement request have not received reimbursement by the end of the day, get in touch with SFU directly at [tssuishf@sfu.ca](mailto:tssuishf@sfu.ca) and cc TSSU at [tssu@tssu.ca](mailto:tssu@tssu.ca).
  - ii. More RA seats have been requested on the Health & Safety committee but TSSU has received some mixed messages from SFU regarding

whether this is necessarily/permissible. TSSU is seeking clarification on this point and will continue to press for greater representation.

- iii. Incoming international students may be severely impacted by a new policy which refuses to grant entry visas to non-US study permit holders in most cases. This prevents students from obtaining SINs and therefore from working as RAs or TAs. SFU has attempted to find a workaround by employing international student RAs as independent contractors; however, this has significant tax implications for students and violates SFU's agreement with TSSU. TSSU is exploring options, including requesting SFU to hire RAs as dependent contractors. Stay tuned, this is a complicated situation and will be evolving.
- iv. If you are a TA, remember to track your hours. Remember also that you do not have to work more than your contracted hours and that if you do work more than you contracted hours you are entitled to compensation.
- v. Please remember to fill out the collective bargaining survey if you are an RA or grant employee. This information is super important as TSSU works to develop bargaining proposals. Fill it out here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.ca/r/tssurasurvey2>

- f. Faculty mole (Danielle Ogilvie)
  - i. Faculty has expressed interest and support for BIPOC scholarship.
  - ii. Graduate student survey results presented without much results.
- 3. Committee updates
  - a. Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Elana Varner)
    - i. Proposed BIPOC entrance scholarship.
      - 1. Have been meeting with Faculty of Science endowment folks, to discuss how to move forward with proposed BIPOC scholarship. They have expressed a great deal of support and enthusiasm and have offered insight on future directions and goals. \$30,000 is the current goal, and a private donor may be willing to match funds raised internally. Internal fundraising is planned and fundraising a structure will roll out soon.
      - 2. Terms of reference are currently being hammered out. You can see and comment on them at:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i3HIjUInfVSXks9WqBa77E83-HE6ESp\\_DPKuqlxBEOE/edit#heading=h.198pfc97xj3t](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1i3HIjUInfVSXks9WqBa77E83-HE6ESp_DPKuqlxBEOE/edit#heading=h.198pfc97xj3t)
      - 3. There has also been discussion on ways to make the department more welcoming to incoming BIPOC students, including adding D&I work to evaluations for tenure and sensitivity training for PIs advising BIPOC students.

4. Concerns over how raised funds will be invested by SFU have prompted the consideration of some creative extra-SFU solutions.
5. Mentorship is considered an important component.
- ii. A new diversity & inclusion survey will be sent out soon, similar to last year's with some modifications to reflect issues related to the pandemic. A similar survey will also be sent out to undergraduates.
- b. Workshop Committee (Hayley Reekie)
  - i. Three workshops planned for the fall:
    1. Time management for grad students (Aug 13, 11:30-1:00): focused on working from home, scheduling, setting up a good workspace, etc.
    2. Healthy relationships (Aug 13, 4:00-5:30): focused on pandemic-specific aspects.
    3. Thriving in grad school (Aug 14, 11:30-12:30): focused on mental health, stress, and resilience
  - ii. Let Hayley know if there are any issues you would especially like to see discussed, she can pass those on to the workshop facilitators.
- c. Events committee (Elijah Reyes)
  - i. Game night happened on Thursday.
  - ii. Looking for ideas to take the place of the welcome BBQ in Fall. Trivia, virtual poster sessions, and virtual escape rooms were all suggested.
4. Chairs update (Yonathan Uriel)
  - i. Would like to enshrine D&I Committee forever in the caucus constitution. Proposed amendment was read aloud and suggested edits discussed. Text is as follows:

*The Caucus shall have a Diversity and Inclusion Committee consisting of at minimum three officers who will share duties in a fair and equitable manner. The role of the Committee is to uphold the equality and autonomy of all Caucus members, and ensure that all Caucus members are given a voice. Any Caucus member may join the Committee as an un-elected volunteer; volunteers are expected to participate under the same terms as elected committee members. To ensure transparency, the Committee will keep records of all meetings and action items, and provide these to the Caucus Chair and Webmaster on a monthly basis, to be made publicly available on the Caucus blog. The powers and duties of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee are limited to the following:*

*1. To collect anonymous demographic information on Caucus membership, and to share this information with the Caucus and other bodies within the University. i. Transparency of information clause: Before any private information can be collected, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee must make it clear how the information will be collected, how the information will be shared, who the information will be shared with, how the information will be stored, and for how long the information will be stored. The Caucus must reach a consensus vote before any*

*information collected by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee can be shared within or outside of the Caucus.*

*2. To organize and co-coordinate Caucus events to support and showcase marginalized groups within the Caucus membership and the wider University research community (e.g. LGBTQ+STEM Day*

**ii. Motion to approve the amendment to the constitution**

1. Motioned by: Yonathan Uriel
2. Seconded by: Adam Blake
3. Motion passed unanimously (8 abstentions).

**5. Interim election for Caucus Chair**

- a. Yonathan Uriel is stepping down as chair. Nancy Yang has run unopposed for the position and is elected by a unanimous vote. Congratulations Nancy!

**6. Motion to adjourn July meeting (1:30)**

- a. Motion to adjourn: Yonathan Uriel
- b. Motion seconded: Sarah Johnson
- c. Motion passes unanimously

Gwyn Case – Secretary

