

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus  
November 26, 2020, 2:00pm  
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome

a. Attendance

**Steering Committee:**

Acting chair: Steven Brownlee

Associate chair: Tess Forstner

Treasurer: Brett Hodinka

Secretary: Gwyn Case

**Officers:**

Events Committee: Elijah Reyes

Diversity Committee: Steven Brownlee, Elana Varner, Ranah Chavoshi,  
Blake Danis

**Representatives:**

DGSC: Hannah Watkins

TSSU Rep: Steven Brownlee, Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Sarah Gravel

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert, Mason King

Faculty Mole: Danielle Ogilvie

**Members:**

b. Additions to agenda

i. Territorial acknowledgement delivered by Mason King

Message and discussion on voter disenfranchisement among indigenous peoples. More information here:

<https://www.narf.org/voting-rights-and-indian-country/>

<https://vote.narf.org/obstacles-at-every-turn/>

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

1. Motioned by Allison Dennert

2. Seconded by Rana Chavoshi

3. Motion passes with 12 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions

2. Representatives updates

a. Treasurer's update (Brett Hodinka)

i. Core account: \$1,860.00

ii. Trust account: \$2,558.71

b. DGSC updates (Hannah Watkins)

i. This month's meeting was excellent and very positive. Proposed graduate student stipend increase is continuing to move forward (!). Related to this immediate increase, there were also discussed long-term plans for continued gradual stipend increases over time.

- ii. Also discussed was shortening the required period of time between thesis submission and thesis defense, as BISC students have an unusually long wait period.
- c. DSC updates (Sarah Gravel)
  - i. Some extra money was discovered for 4 scholarships which had already been ranked and submitted and will be paid out in spring of next year.
  - ii. Committee is currently reviewing the President's PhD Competition. Next up will be the NSERC CGSM Master's applications starting in the new year.
- d. GSS (Allison Dennert)
  - i. GSS director elections are happening this fall, with more elections to come in the spring. Nominations happened back in October and elections will open December 1, so keep your eyes peeled for emails with more information on how you can vote and who you can vote for. If you're eager for immediate information, you can follow this elegant and finely-crafted link: <https://sfugradsociety.ca/elections/>
  - ii. SFU continues to propose tuition hikes and the GSS continues to oppose tuition hikes. The GSS will soon be producing a strongly worded letter opposing increases in costs for students.
  - iii. The GSS website will soon be getting a makeover!
  - iv. The current U-Pass situation may be reopened for discussion in next month's meeting, but is unlikely to change due to the need for both undergraduates and graduates to agree on any alterations.
- e. TSSU rep (Steven Brownlee)
  - i. SFU has increased its Covid impact scale, which may produce new challenges for graduate students. If you have any concerns about the new safety requirements or are experiencing friction with your supervisors, Allison ([adennert@sfu.ca](mailto:adennert@sfu.ca)) and/or Stephen ([sbrownle@sfu.ca](mailto:sbrownle@sfu.ca)) can help.
  - ii. A survey from the TSSU anti-harassment committee is in the works to assess members' experiences with harassment at SFU and how covid has impacted that. Stay tuned for updates, but if you'd like to help out or otherwise participate immediately you can contact Allison or Stephen and be put in touch with the relevant people.
  - iii. If you are an international student who applied for the MSP group enrollment, SFU should be paying your IHF. However, some people have been experiencing issues with this, apparently due to miscommunications between SFU and the province. If this is a problem you are experiencing get in touch with [tssu\\_bens@sfu.ca](mailto:tssu_bens@sfu.ca) and cc [tssu@tssu.ca](mailto:tssu@tssu.ca) to get things sorted out. As always, Stephen and Allison are also willing to help because they're awesome.
- f. Faculty mole (Danielle Ogilvie)

- i. The next faculty meeting is this Monday (the 30<sup>th</sup>), so if there are any pressing issues you feel should be brought to the attention of the faculty get in touch with Danielle ([dogilvie@sfu.ca](mailto:dogilvie@sfu.ca)).
- 3. Committee updates
  - a. Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Ranah Chavoshi)
    - i. Diversity scholarship landing page is moving forward and is almost ready to go live! The committee received a great new photo from Nicola Smith to use on the webpage, which will allow fundraising to move forward. The committee plans to have a presentation for next meeting to show off the page.
    - ii. An EDI roundup has been created by Melissa on Google docs to compile relevant resources. If there are specific pieces of information you would like to see included, let Melissa ([melissa\\_orobko@sfu.ca](mailto:melissa_orobko@sfu.ca)) know. You can check out all these awesome resources here:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jS6hf-gEPIZ7\\_P7m4eINyiM\\_uRRJldCLGatbhrsbiHQ/edit#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jS6hf-gEPIZ7_P7m4eINyiM_uRRJldCLGatbhrsbiHQ/edit#)
    - iii. Discussion of honorariums. Several people have contributed time and materials to help create and generally make awesome the diversity scholarship landing page, and the committee would like to ensure their contributions are acknowledged. Concerns raised included ensuring the caucus is properly budgeting for honorariums in the long-term, and whether to keep the amount fixed (perhaps at \$100) for all honorariums or to adjust the amount relative to the work being acknowledged.
    - iv. **Motion: be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus approve a \$200 honorarium for Franki Katz as compensation for copywriting work on the BISC BIPOC graduate scholarship landing page**
      - 1. Motioned by Melissa Orobko
      - 2. Seconded by Elana Varner
      - 3. Motion passes with 9 in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions (Brett Hodinka and Ranah Chavoshi; Franki Katz not present).
    - v. **Motion: Be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus approve a \$100 honorarium for Nicola Smith as compensation for letting us use a photo of her as part of the landing page for the scholarship website.**
      - 1. Motioned by Melissa Orobko
      - 2. Seconded by Elana Varner
      - 3. Motion passes with 9 in favor, 0 in opposition, and 1 abstention (Brett Hodinka; Nicola Smith not present).
    - vi. The committee in particular and the caucus in general would like to acknowledge our appreciation for the message of inclusion and respect published on the BISC departmental webpage in honor of Transgender

Awareness Week. It was a fantastic gesture and we were glad to see it—so glad to see it we'd like to look at it some more:

The poster features a navigation menu on the left with the following items: ACADEMIC HONESTY, GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS, UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM, SCIENCE CO-OP, INFORMATION PORTALS, OPPORTUNITIES IN BIOLOGY AT SFU, and CONTACT US.

The main title reads: *In this department,*  
**WE BELIEVE**

The poster displays six icons with corresponding text:

- SCIENCE is real**: Icon of a microscope.
- LOVE is love**: Icon of a heart with a rainbow gradient.
- BLACK LIVES matter**: Icon of a raised fist.
- FEMINISM is for everyone**: Icon of a female symbol.
- BIOLOGY is cool**: Icon of a bird, a DNA helix, and a plant.
- IMMIGRANTS are welcome**: Icon of a blue and green maple leaf.

Modified from a design by Sunny Katta. Take the pledge to be an ally to marginalized and underrepresented communities: <https://sunnykatta.com/pledge>

This week is Transgender Awareness Week, with Friday 20 November being Transgender Day of Remembrance - an annual observance that honours the memory of the transgender people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-transgender violence. In the Department of Biological Sciences, we believe that discrimination of any kind is unacceptable and that diversity should be embraced and celebrated.

The majority of faculty and staff are currently working remotely. It is strongly recommended that email be used as the primary method of contact as phones are infrequently monitored and some have been temporarily disconnected.

Buttons for navigation:

- For BISC Grad Students**: BISC VIRTUAL CONVOCATION (Join us in celebrating!)
- For Faculty**: COVID-RELATED INFO (Faculty login required)
- For BISC Grad Students**: COVID-RELATED INFO (Grad student login required)

**Events**  
THE NEXT 5 UPCOMING EVENTS ARE LISTED BELOW. CLICK HERE TO SEE MORE.  
BISC Seminar: System Change for Sustainability: Behavioral values may unlock innovative, certification, regulation, and more. 2020: Fisheries Biodiversity Speaker, Kai Chan, UBC, via Zoom. 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM November 18th 2020

**Kudos**  
Biological Sciences Fall 2020 Commencement Ceremony  
Roxie Loughton SFU Staff Achievement winner - Lifetime Achievement  
Elana Varner accepts SMT Western Regional Fresh Competition  
Vincicus Cavacchini Awards, James Chalmers,

**In the News**  
September 22, 2020  
Abundance of Salmon Key to Feeding "Underdog" Sturgeon Fish: SFU Research  
September 21, 2020  
Kevin Lant's online teaching experience featured in CEE blog post  
September 16, 2020  
Study Suggests Sea Lice on Salmon is Under-reported at R.C. Salmon Farms

- b. Workshop Committee
  - i. No updates.
- c. Events committee (Elijah Reyes)
  - i. Elijah will be shifting to an advisory role for the new crop of events committee members.
  - ii. *(PS: there is plenty of room for more people on the committee!)*
- 4. Associate chair update (Tess Forstner)
  - a. Grad hosted speaker for 2021
    - i. The graduate hosted speaker for Spring is the amazing Andrea Reid!. Caucus first choice Ayana Johnson was unfortunately unavailable,

however second choice (but by no means second best!) Andrea has confirmed for March 31.

- b. Canva subscription
  - i. Nancy Yang has pitched the idea for the caucus to upgrade to a full subscription of Canva to improve caucus communications and outreach, especially with regards to organized fun put on by the events committee.
  - ii. Discussion ensues. Comments include that the free version of Canva is highly functional and extra features may not be worth the extra money; however, the relatively low cost could have a relatively large benefit. Monthly subscription raised as short-term alternative to more expensive annual subscription. Discussion tabled until next meeting, pending follow-up with Nancy.

## 5. Elections

- a. **Motion: be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus ratify the nomination of the candidates listed below for Chair, Events Committee, and Diversity and Inclusion Committee effective until April 30 2021, and be it also resolved that the Caucus acclimate them to their roles, as they ran unopposed.**

Brett Hodinka: Chair

Nancy Yang: Events Committee Officer

Elana Varner, Ranah Chavoshi, and Melissa Orobko: Diversity and Inclusion Committee Officer

- i. Moved by Allison Dennert
- ii. Seconded by Hannah Watkins
- iii. Motion passes with 7 in favor, 0 opposed, many abstentions (Tess Forstner, Melissa Orobko, Ranah Chavoshi, Brett Hodinka).

- b. **Motion: be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus announces the opening of the nomination period for elections to the position of Treasurer and Associate Chairs starting today and ending one week from now. Be it also resolved that the Caucus hold elections to this position at the December caucus meeting.**

- i. Motioned by Allison Dennert
- ii. Motion passes with 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstention (Tess Forstner)
- iii. Nominations will be open for one week, starting right now. Nominate yourself, a friend, or a frenemy here:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1q8QdOPEecMHsp\\_VHujy8xQ9gMj9xP-JjEbsgLTDHFzM/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1q8QdOPEecMHsp_VHujy8xQ9gMj9xP-JjEbsgLTDHFzM/edit#gid=0)

## 6. Motion to adjourn November meeting (3:15)

- a. Motion to adjourn: Allison Dennert
- b. Motion seconded: Melissa Orobko
- c. Motion passes unanimously

Gwyn Case – Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gwyn Case". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.