

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus
February 22, 2021, 3:00pm
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome

a. Attendance (12 total)

Steering Committee:

Chair: Brett Hodinka

Associate Chair: Griffin Dare

Treasurer: ---

Secretary: --- (Melissa Orobko temporarily stepping in)

Webmaster: ---

Member at Large: ---

Officers:

Events Committee: ---

Diversity Committee: Steven Brownlee, Elena Varner, Ranah Chavoshi,
Melissa Orobko

Workshop Committee: ---

Representatives:

DGSC: Hannah Watkins

TSSU Rep: Steven Brownlee, Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Rachel Munger

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert

Faculty Mole: Danielle Ogilvie

Members: Cole Rankin, Elijah Reyes

b. Motion to approve January meeting minutes

1. Motioned by: Brett Hodinka
2. Seconded by: Hannah Watkins
3. Motion passes unanimously

2. Representatives updates

a. Treasurer's update (Nancy Yang (absent), delivered by Brett Hodinka in replacement)

- i. Core account: \$1860.00
- ii. Trust account: \$2321.27

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

- i. No updates – meeting tomorrow

c. DSC updates (Rachel Munger, Sarah Gravel (absent))

- i. Just ranked two undergrad awards: Biol. Research Awards, and Sharon Clements awards
- ii. Now ranking USRA awards for the summer. Hoping that each lab can put forward 1 USRA application.

- iii. From last month's meeting: President's PhD Scholarship, why was the limit 12 semesters? DSC sent her to Debbie, sent to Stephanie(sp?) from GPS. Blanket statement: We need to follow the ToR approved by the Senate committee for awards. Maybe ToR should be changed? Rachel will look into that. And possibly new scholarship or re-distribute existing funds??
 - d. GSS (Allison Dennert)
 - i. 1) GSS's Annual General Meeting will take TOMORROW: Tuesday, February 23 at 4:00pm "As in the past, we will provide cash prizes to the Caucuses who have the most participants in both absolute and relative terms. But to qualify for these prizes, all caucus members must be registered in advance for the AGM (by noon/12pm on the 23rd). All Caucus members should RSVP as soon as possible, here: https://sfu-gss.formstack.com/forms/gss_agm_2021 (the Zoom link and meeting information will be sent to all registered participants by Tuesday morning at the latest)."
 - 1. Two people will also be speaking about union organizing efforts at other universities.
 - ii. 2) UPass Update: Unfortunately council was forced to vote on UPass eligibility for summer 2021. Council voted to keep in-person eligibility from Spring 2021. GSS Exec will send out UPass survey to members later in the spring to assess how it's going. "Be It Resolved That the GSS Council approve as permanent the spring semester changes to eligibility requirements for the U-Pass BC program, such that only those graduate students taking in-person classes or engaging in in-person research will have access to the pass; Be It Further Resolved That the GSS Council shall revisit the eligibility requirements of the U-Pass BC program as pandemic and remote education dynamics change in future semesters."
 - iii. 3) Transit subsidy incoming: students will be asked to hang on the transit-related receipts and submit them to receive needs-based reimbursement in the absence of a UPass.
 - e. TSSU rep (Steven Brownlee)
 - i. General Membership Meeting Wed Feb 24 @ 4:30. <https://sfu.zoom.us/j/68962559951?pwd=emtBSmYzSUrVmJwNDN4LzF6ZzZpZz09>
 - 1. There will be important budget questions to consider as well as deal with some ongoing by-law changes, plus close the nomination period for TSSU executive elections. (<https://www.tssu.ca/spring-2021-executive-nominations-open/>)

2. If you're interested in running for these pretty well paid positions, see <https://www.tssu.ca/spring-2021-executive-nominations-open/>
 3. There's also going to be a candidate meet-and-greet on March 2nd at 12:30 PM once nominations close, where you can win cash prizes if you attend!
- ii. Update on RA bargaining. SFU is continuing to refuse to come to the bargaining table to begin the process of getting us rights as workers and employees at the university, and now they are even attempting to walk back their legally binding agreement and exclude the vast majority of science graduate students from consideration.
 1. In response the TSSU has started a petition to pressure the university into getting to the table, sticking to their legal agreement and provide backdated benefits, including payment for the International Student Health Fee for RAs. SIGN AND SHARE, to anyone, not just at SFU!
<https://www.researchiswork.tssu.ca/2021-update/>
- f. Faculty mole (Danielle Ogilvie)
- i. The CARES package program went over well, not many other updates.
 - ii. Request for Danielle to suggest to faculty that committees create documents that pass down to subsequent committee chairs and members, to ensure that procedural and institutional information is not lost, because that may be hindering the ease and success of those committees.
3. Committee updates
- a. Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Ranah Chavoshi and Melissa Orobko)
 - i. Met with President Johnson last week, expressed and was received well that Black students are not considered historically marginalized communities.
 - ii. The BIPOC Scholarship: it's happening, just with delays and at a glacial pace, but IS moving forward.
 1. Reached out to SoCA, FNSA, Indigenous Student Centre (thru Thomas Leischner Student Engagement Coordinator) re: scholarship. May shift to a focus group where students of Colour, Indigenous and Black students share the problems and barriers they've faced in undergrad, and grad school – to help change the ToR to ensure that it is safe and beneficial, and to help ensure that students do not have to identify themselves publicly.
 2. Waiting on Rachel Lowry for rewrites to our ToR. Require that students do NOT have to identify publicly because that's very problematic due to racism.

- iii. Are requesting a meeting with Isabelle (Dept Chair) soon to discuss:
 - 1. status of formation of BISC faculty EDI committee
 - 2. suggest a department-wide EDI committee with faculty, grad students, possibly staff and post-docs, to be as representative as possible
 - 3. possible departmental EDI awards (recognition, non-monetary) – MBB is doing these, we are reaching out to them
 - 4. add EDI criteria to tenure track and hiring
 - 5. what hiring is coming up, and can there be targeted, ideally cluster, hiring of Indigenous and Black faculty
 - 6. revisit opening voting for department chair up to grad students and staff, not just faculty (Melissa worked on this years ago, will review notes from then)
 - 7. possible stipends for EDI committee
 - 8. Mention the issues that we will bring to DGSC with the goal of decolonizing the BISC department, in line with SFU's commitment to reconciliation:
 - a. Hiring a consultant who is Indigenous to advise the department on how to do this, including reviewing the merit of our subsequent requests since we acknowledge that we are not experts in decolonization nor are Indigenous ourselves.
 - b. Have targeted hiring for Indigenous faculty members (the President of SFU is working on making this easier).
 - c. Ensure there is a course available as an elective for BISC undergraduate and graduate students (whether it's a BISC course or in another department) on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing biological science, and how to do decolonize biological research and science. In line with the advice of Indigenous scholars, this course should not be mandatory.
 - d. In BISC 800, bring in a guest speaker about decolonizing biological science, especially field work. Ideally this would be taught by someone who is not Indigenous (since the course is mandatory) but has much experience working meaningfully and respectfully with Indigenous communities, and also discuss the paper "Towards reconciliation: 10 Calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada" (Wong et al., 2020) [link; attached].
 - e. Dedicate one departmental seminar per year to an Indigenous or Black researcher.

- f. Ask BISC and/or REM professors who have experience collaborating with Indigenous communities about field work if they would feel comfortable providing advice to students about how to do that well.
 - g. Create or source a guide document about how BISC researchers should approach field work on Indigenous lands in the spirit of reconciliation.
 - iv. Support for a request from students for a workshop on how to decolonize your science and research! (Blake may already be working on this)
 - v. SFU is soliciting input on the search commencing soon for VP PEI (People Equity Inclusivity) on what we would like that VP to do, what qualities we'd like them to have, etc. Great avenue to provide input to influence EDI policies on campus. Link: <https://www.sfu.ca/pres/executive-searches/Search-for-VP-People-Equity-and-Inclusion/VPPEI-Position-Description-Candidate-Profile.html>
 - 1. Anyone can fill out the survey themselves, or send stuff to us to include in an email from the entire committee!
 - vi. If is concerned about the recent data breach, and the 4 others in the past 2 years, reach out to Melissa (melissakorobko@gmail.com) about possible steps.
 - b. Workshop Committee (absent)
 - i. No updates.
 - c. Events committee (absent)
 - i. No updates, but Nancy asks people to help support her in planning social events!
- 4. Motion to adjourn June meeting (3:58)**
 - a. Motion to adjourn: Brett Hodinka
 - b. Motion seconded: Elijah Reyes
 - c. Motion passes unanimously

Gwyn Case – Secretary

