

## Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

March 24, 2021, 3:00pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

### 1. Welcome

#### a. Attendance

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

Chair: Brett Hodinka

Associate Chair: Griffin Dare

Secretary: Gwyn Case

##### **Officers:**

Diversity Committee: Elana Varner, Ranah Chavoshi, Melissa Orobko

##### **Representatives:**

DGSC: Hannah Watkins

TSSU Rep: Steven Brownlee, Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Rachel Munger, Sarah Gravel

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert, Mason King

**Members:** Sherry Young

#### b. Additions to agenda

- i. Territorial acknowledgement delivered by Melissa Orobko, who shared a helpful reminder of what settler colonialism is—that is, the removal or erasure of indigenous people in order to take or use their land—and another helpful reminder that colonialism is not just a thing of the past but rather a continuing and ongoing problem in Canada. She invited us to consider how our own research relates to settler colonialism and how our work may be perpetuating or combating this process. Some resources she shared:

1. [www.nahaneecreative.com](http://www.nahaneecreative.com)
2. [www.raventrust.com/learn-2/](http://www.raventrust.com/learn-2/)
3. <http://4rsyouth.ca/land-back-what-do-we-mean/>

#### ii. **Motion to approve February meeting minutes**

1. Motioned by Brett Hodinka
2. Seconded by Steven Brownlee
3. Motion passes unanimously (14 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions)

### 2. Representatives updates

- a. Treasurer's update (Nancy Yang via Brett Hodinka)
  - i. Core account: \$1,860.00
  - ii. Trust account: \$2,321.27
- b. DGSC updates (Hannah Watkins)

- i. Very short meeting this month. New departmental website was discussed (see Chair's update at the bottom), specifically adding thesis deadline info. Jenny Corey has *promised* that a detailed timeline of when various documents need to be turned in will be included on the website.
- c. DSC updates (Rachel Munger, Sarah Gravel)
  - i. CAGS, Pro-Quest, and President's Scholarship have all been ranked.
  - ii. Some funding remains in the President's Scholarships and the DSC is considering distributing funding to B-list applicants.
  - iii. Followed up with DSC regarding last month's proposed changes to the terms of reference for the President's Scholarship. You will recall that we wanted to allow students further along in their degree to be eligible for the scholarship. While the DSC was on board, the idea was shot down by a higher level because the award is intended to "encourage students to complete their PhD in a timely fashion." Whatever *that* means.
  - iv. Discussion ensues. Suggestions include: pushing for the rarely-offered thesis completion award to be offered more consistently; pushing again for the terms of reference to be changed, given that most students take 5-6 years to complete their PhD and will likely take even longer due to the pandemic. The caucus feels late-stage funding for PhD students is an important issue and hopes the DSC will give it the serious consideration it deserves.
  - v. Additional recent funding opportunities:
    1. CSEE: <https://www.csee-scee.ca/csee-excellence-in-doctoral-research-award-2021/>
    2. PNW shell club award: [http://www.bily.com/pnwsc/web-content/About-Us.html?utm\\_source=Email\\_marketing&utm\\_campaign=Monday\\_January\\_4\\_2021&cmp=1&utm\\_medium=HTMLEmail](http://www.bily.com/pnwsc/web-content/About-Us.html?utm_source=Email_marketing&utm_campaign=Monday_January_4_2021&cmp=1&utm_medium=HTMLEmail)
    3. Gloria Barron Wilderness Society: [http://www.bily.com/pnwsc/web-content/About-Us.html?utm\\_source=Email\\_marketing&utm\\_campaign=Monday\\_January\\_4\\_2021&cmp=1&utm\\_medium=HTMLEmail](http://www.bily.com/pnwsc/web-content/About-Us.html?utm_source=Email_marketing&utm_campaign=Monday_January_4_2021&cmp=1&utm_medium=HTMLEmail)
- d. GSS (Allison Dennert)
  - i. There was a 6-month finance update from the GSS accountant and everything looks good.
  - ii. A shiny new GSS website is coming soon.
  - iii. You should have found a UPass survey in your inbox. Please fill it out!
  - iv. Spring GSS elections are coming soon, keep your eyes on your inbox.
- e. TSSU rep (Steven Brownlee)
  - i. The first actual official bargaining session for RAs finally finally *finally* happened! This is still ongoing, but here's how it works: each side comes

to the table with a proposed contract, and bargainers work to find a compromise everyone can agree on. In this first meeting, a bargaining protocol was put forward and both sides presented their contracts. TSSU's contract was 11 pages long. SFU's contract was one page long. Typical.

- ii. All TSSU members are welcome to attend these bargaining meetings, let Stephen ([sbrownle@sfu.ca](mailto:sbrownle@sfu.ca)) or Allison ([adennert@sfu.ca](mailto:adennert@sfu.ca)) know and they'll get you hooked in.
  - iii. If you have a TSSU appointment, remember to log your hours! As we approach the end of the semester, if you are going over your allotted hours you can stop working or get paid for the extra work you do.
  - iv. TSSU steward elections are in April. This is a great way to get involved, plus you get a \$250 stipend! If you're interested, get in touch with Stephen or Allison.
- f. Faculty mole (Danielle Ogilvie via Brett Hodinka)
- i. No major updates.
  - ii. TAs for spring 2021 will be evaluated as usual.
  - iii. Faculty acknowledged that guidelines for new committee members would be beneficial for streamlining committee transitions.

### 3. Committee updates

- a. Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Ranah Chavoshi)
- i. The committee had a very productive meeting with the head of the department and asked the department to implement indigenous consent training for students conducting fieldwork, to form a departmental-level EDI committee, and to include EDI work into faculty evaluations for tenure.
  - ii. Sent a letter to VP of the SFU DEI commission. They asked for student feedback and we gave it to them!
  - iii. Drafted a survey for BISC undergrads which is pending comments and approval from undergraduate student union. There is also a graduate survey, which will be ready to roll out soon.
  - iv. BIPOC scholarship is still tentatively scheduled to launch in July.
  - v. Mary Catherine is looking for Indigenous students in the Faculty of Science to help organize speaker, with the potential to join an advisory committee sometime down the road. If you're interested, Ranah ([ranah\\_chavoshi@sfu.ca](mailto:ranah_chavoshi@sfu.ca)) has more details.
  - vi. The Faculty of Science is angling to get licenses for the film *Picture a Scientist* so the university (including groups like the BISC caucus) can hold screenings, etc. The faculty is soliciting student feedback, so if you have any questions or comments send 'em to Ranah to pass along.

- vii. Cross-departmental organizing efforts are pushing for changes that will hold faculty more accountable for their treatment of students. They have developed five “asks” and would like input from students before these are presented to the GPS. Thoughts and comments can be sent to Melissa ([melissa\\_orobko@sfu.ca](mailto:melissa_orobko@sfu.ca)). They are:
  1. Supervisory evaluation (already a policy recommendation with GPS)
  2. Comprehensive complaints office (already a policy recommendation with GPS)
  3. Protection from retaliation in the GGRs and support for this work to be done university wide (already a policy recommendations with GPS)
  4. Mandatory anti-oppressive training for students and faculty
  5. Financial compensations and accommodations for students engaging in a complaints process
- viii. There is a focus group (with compensation!) for disabled students regarding your experience on campus generally, and during covid specifically. If you’re interested there’s more info here: <https://www.sfu.ca/students/accessible-learning/programs-and-services/sei-cal-virtual-tea-coffee-chats---focus-groups.html>
- b. Workshop Committee
  - i. No updates.
- c. Events committee (Nancy Yang via Brett Hodinka)
  - i. Nancy is still looking for volunteers to help with planning/organizing virtual events. Get in touch at [bisc-events@sfu.ca](mailto:bisc-events@sfu.ca)
- 4. Chairs update (Brett Hodinka)
  - a. There is a new departmental website in the works and Brett was invited to give comments or feedback. Although Brett lobbied for bringing this to the caucus as a whole, this suggestion was shot down. However, he is still looking for a few additional volunteers to help give feedback. If you’re interested shoot him an email at [bhodinka@sfu.ca](mailto:bhodinka@sfu.ca)
  - b. Reminder that the grad hosted speaker is next week Wednesday at 3:30pm! Be there or be square!**
  - c. Discussion ensues: how to adapt grad hosted speaker activities (like lunch and workshop) to covid times. Top suggestion is to try to set up some kind of sit-and-chat with the speaker shortly before the talk on Wednesday.  
*[Secretary’s note: you will have seen in your inbox on March 26<sup>th</sup> that Andrea Reid will be staying for an extra 45 minutes after the end of the talk to answer questions and chat.]*
  - d. Spring caucus elections are here! A number of positions are up for grabs. You can see them all here and nominate a friend (or yourself):

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1D-yHqxrI\\_XOhWOHsOM-JzTybC3b7lpKaP-lsJW0FCIlg/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1D-yHqxrI_XOhWOHsOM-JzTybC3b7lpKaP-lsJW0FCIlg/edit#gid=0)

- e. Motion to open spring elections.
  - i. Motioned by Allison Dennert
  - ii. Seconded by Steven Brownlee
  - iii. Motion passes unanimously 10-0
- 5. Motion to adjourn March meeting (4:12)**
  - a. Motion to adjourn: Brett Hodinka
  - b. Motion seconded: Allison Dennert
  - c. Motion passes unanimously (10 in favor, 0 opposed or abstaining)

Gwyn Case – Secretary

