

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

April 30, 2021, 4:00pm

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, Melissa Orobko

Representatives:

DGSC: Sarah Johnson

TSSU Rep: Steven Brownlee, Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Rachel Munger, Sarah Gravel

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert

Members: Hannah Roodenrijs, Elijah Reyes, Emmanuel Hung

b. Additions to agenda

i. Territorial acknowledgement delivered by Griffin Dare

ii. May territorial acknowledgement will be delivered by Gwyn Case

iii. June territorial acknowledgement will be delivered by Steven Brownlee

iv. Motion to approve March meeting minutes

1. Motioned by Brett Hodinka

2. Seconded by Allison Dennert

3. Motion passes unanimously

2. Representatives updates

a. Treasurer's update (Nancy Yang via Brett Hodinka)

i. Core account: \$2321.27

ii. Trust account: \$1860.00

3. A brief interlude to discuss the return to in-person work on campus in fall

a. SFU recently released plan to return to on-campus work and classes in fall (see <https://www.sfu.ca/returntocampus.html> for more detail). Brett has been compiling questions and concerns from BISC grad students to bring to Michael Silverman (the Dean of Science).

b. Discussion ensues. SFU's 4-step action plan lacks sufficient boots-on-the-ground detail, especially regarding how grad students will return to work in lab and offices spaces. The plan appears to emphasize/prioritize undergrads and undergrad classes, but implementation for grads is worrying unclear. One concern is how to equitably permit return to shared workspaces when full occupancy of those spaces is not possible. Another concern is inadequacy of

current contract tracing protocols, which have proved ineffectual in the past. This is tied to broader concerns about overall poor top-down communication. One suggestion would be to *allow* only those who have had at least one vaccine dose to return to offices and labs *if* they feel comfortable doing so. Another option may be to implement a sign-up system in which students can come to shared workspaces a given number of days each week and must sign up several days in advance. The caucus feels these concerns are worth bringing to Isabelle Côte to ensure BISC has a clear top-down protocol.

- c. Please email Brett (bhodinka@sfu.ca) or contribute to this lovely doc (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CVKABkybxN_ZHw8tGSLTiG2zLrPInIHf4sCsNWimXpE/edit?usp=sharing) if you have additional questions or concerns you would like to see addressed.
4. Representative's updates, continued
 - a. DGSC updates (Sarah Johnson)
 - i. No meeting this month, so no updates.
 - ii. Issues relating to the formation of a departmental EDI committee will be brought up at the next meeting, when it occurs.
 - b. DSC updates (Rachel Munger, Sarah Gravel)
 - i. Grad fellowship submission deadline just passed and applications have not yet been ranked.
 - ii. Several donor award will be coming up in early summer.
 - iii. Rachel followed up with Stephanie Santoso at the Awards Office regarding the caucus's concerns over the President's PhD scholarship and Thesis Completion Fellowship (see last month's minutes). The Dean is currently reviewing terms of reference for these awards and Rachel has requested our concerns be passed on so they can be addressed. The Thesis Completion Fellowship has supposedly been awarded no later than last year, but there is no record or memory of this taking place. Inquiries are ongoing.
 - c. GSS (Allison Dennert)
 - i. The GSS had updates from the Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean Derkson, on several topics, including reconciliation, support for BIPOC students, and the fall return to campus. One interesting tidbit is that the decision to return must be unanimous among all universities in BC.
 - ii. The GSS recently voted to renew our contract with Student Care, which is broker between the GSS and Desjardin, the actual health insurance provider. The contract with Desjardin will soon be up for bid, so this would be an ideal time to make any changes to the contract. If you are interested in seeing changes in health coverage, email the director of the GSS, Emmanuel Naidoo, at grad-services@sfugradsociety.ca and tell them all about it.

- iii. The GSS has endorsed the contract worker justice campaign. You can read more about it and sign the petition here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfJuLNuMM5ZF_bMOzb1LHX5qlycVx7kGSWCEyLrpSZpfOqM4A/viewform
 - d. TSSU rep (Steven Brownlee, Allison Dennert)
 - i. Bargaining update. Much back-and-forth has occurred since TSSU brought a *11-page* proposed contract and SFU brought a *1.5-page* proposed contract to the bargaining table. SFU has continued to bring very short counter-proposals, and is further pushing TSSU to cut their proposal to match, citing the greater flexibility of a shorter, less-specific contract. Apparently research assistants are new and confusing and SFU doesn't know what kind of work we do.
 - ii. In better news, the RAs signed the common clauses, which are portions of the collective agreement that apply to all employment groups. This means, among other things, that RAs will get the same tuition deferral as TAs do. This will come into affect when the TSSU signs the final contract with SFU.
 - e. Faculty mole
 - i. No updates.
- 5. Committee updates
 - a. Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Elana Varner)
 - i. BIPOC scholarship is still on track to launch in June.
 - ii. The committee intends to launch an D&I committee Twitter. This would serve as an excellent tool to boost diverse voices, spread news, and generally share information relevant to the committee's mission. Profile would include a disclaimer noting the views expressed do not represent the broader BISC caucus. The committee is currently developing a style guide to help identify desired content.
 - iii. **Motion to approve the creation of a Twitter account by the D&I committee**
 - 1. Motioned by Brett Hodinka
 - 2. Seconded by Rachel Munger
 - 3. Motion passes unanimously
 - iv. The committee is planning a large meeting with Isabelle Côte regarding the initiatives the committee is spearheading, including a BISC department-wide EDI committee.
 - v. Currently drafting letter to SFU condemning the university's abysmal lack of effort to highlight Trans Visibility Day.
 - vi. The undergraduate survey on systemic barrier, which has been developed in collaboration with Biology Student Union, is almost ready to roll out and should actually start rolling very soon.

- vii. The grad student version is still in the works, but hopefully will also roll out soon.
 - b. Cross-departmental organizing for increased supervisory accountability (Melissa Orobko)
 - i. To recap, this initiative is a collaboration between many departments. It's goal is to make supervisors more accountable for bad behaviour towards grad students. Check out last month's minutes for more details.
 - ii. SFU's bullying and harassment policy is currently under review. CDO organizers have been involved in the process and are pushing for supervisor misbehavior to be included in the policy.
 - iii. A summary of CDO complaints was presented to the Dean's Table. The complaints were not met with surprise (which is good), but they were met with doubt as to how prevalent an issue this is (which is bad).
 - iv. Organizers have been blocked by the secretary of the board of governors from presenting to the SFU Board of Governors. This is unfortunate and also inappropriate, and CDO will continue to push for an opportunity to be heard.
 - v. Will be presenting to the Senate of the Grad Studies Committee in June to request specific actions to support holding supervisors accountable for misbehaviour.
 - vi. Will be meeting with representatives from UBC, which has an independent investigations office, to learn a little about how they handle these problems on the other side of town.
 - c. Workshop Committee
 - i. No updates.
 - d. Events committee
 - i. No updates.
- 6. Chairs update (Brett Hodinka)
 - a. Spring elections!
 - i. **Be it resolved that the biology graduate caucus acclimate the following people to their positions, as they are running unopposed:**
 - Chair – Brett Hodinka
 - Associate chair – Allison Dennert
 - Treasurer – Emmanuel Hung
 - Secretary – Gwyn Case
 - Member-at-large – Melissa Orobko
 - Webmaster – Hannah Roodenrijs
 - Events committee – Brett Hodinka
 - DGSC rep #2 – Steven Brownlee
 - GSS Rep – Allison Dennert
 - GSS Alt – Steven Brownlee

Faculty Mole – Sarah Johnson

EDI committee – Melissa Orobko

EDI committee – Danielle Ogilvie

EDI committee – Elana Varner

1. Motioned by Brett Hodinka

2. Seconded by Elana Varner

3. Passes unanimously, with 1 abstention (Brett Hodinka)

- ii. Be it resolved that the biology grad student caucus nominate the following as candidates for TSSU steward elections, to be held in May 2021

Brett
Steven Brownlee

Allison Dennert

Sherry Young

Melissa Orobko

1. Motioned by Brett Hodinka

2. Seconded by Elana Varner

3. Motion passes unanimously

7. Motion to adjourn April meeting (4:07)

a. Motioned by Brett Hodinka

b. Seconded by Allison Dennert

c. Motion passes unanimously

Gwyn Case – Secretary

