

Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus

June 22, 2021, 1:00pm

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

1. Welcome

a. Attendance

Steering Committee:

Chair: Brett Hodinka

Treasurer: Emmanuel Hung

Secretary: Gwyn Case

Officers:

Events Committee: Brett Hodinka

Diversity Committee: Ranah Chavoshi, Danielle Ogilvie, Elana Varner

Representatives:

DGSC: Hannah Watkins

TSSU Rep: Allison Dennert

DSC Rep: Sarah Gravel

GSS Rep: Allison Dennert

Members: Mason King, Katie Leonard

b. Additions to agenda

i. No territorial acknowledgement this month.

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

1. Motioned by Brett Hodinka

2. Seconded by Ranah Chavoshi

3. Motion passes unanimously

2. Committee updates

a. Diversity & Inclusion Committee (Ranah Chavoshi)

i. The scholarship is a go! **The graduate scholarship for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color will officially launch on 30 June** following a talk given by Kyle Bobiwash as part of an Indigenous speaker series. After Kyle's talk the scholarship will be introduced and the fundraising website will go live. The committee's short-term goal is to raise 30k in 2 months, which is ambitious but totally achievable, and the ultimate goal is 60k. While applications and disbursement will be handled by SFU, the committee will retain a lot of input into applicant selection to ensure the scholarship remains about students advocating for students. The precise terms of reference are still being finalized, but priority will be given to Black and Indigenous Canadian students.

ii. The committee could really use your help with fundraising! Please spread the word to people you know. This announcement will also be made on

the committee Twitter (@EdiSfu), so an easy thing to do is to follow them and retweet scholarship info. And don't forget, *you* can donate, too!

3. Representatives updates

- a. Treasurer's update (Emmanuel Hung)
 - i. Core account: \$1860.00
 - ii. Trust account: \$2321.27
- b. DGSC updates (Hannah Watkins)
 - i. No meeting, no updates. There will likely not be a meeting until August.
- c. DSC updates (Sarah Gravel via Brett Hodinka)
 - i. GFs have been ranked, and recipients should receive notification soon.
 - ii. Extra BASS funding was available this year. In light of the last few months' discussion of funding for late-stage students, rather than use this to fund additional GFs, some of this money has been set aside to support late-stage PhD awards. If this plan is not approved, then the extra money will be allocated to more GFs instead.
 - iii. Donor Award applications will be the next to be reviewed.
- d. GSS (Allison Dennert)
 - i. GSS has drafted a letter opposing the exclusion of RAs funded via scholarship from union bargaining, and expressing its support of scholarship-funded RAs. If you hadn't heard, SFU is trying to exclude RAs who are funded by scholarships from being included in TSSU's RA bargaining. *Lame.*
 - ii. The GSS held a round-table discussion regarding return to campus plans for the fall. Similar to discussions within the caucus, this was another opportunity for students to have their voices heard. Overall, the concerns raised were similar to those brought up during our own caucus meeting, such as availability of data on vaccination within the SFU community, safe office work plans, and parking costs.
 - iii. The points raised during our discussion last month on leaves of absence were brought to the Director of Academic Relations.
- e. TSSU rep (Hannah Watkins)
 - i. No new bargaining has taken place since last month because the head of SFU's bargaining team had to step down for personal reasons and has not yet been replaced.
 - ii. TSSU is taking advantage of this lull to offer bootcamps to get people up to speed on the bargaining process. The next bootcamp is on 12 July and you can sign up here:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfDgOqDUcGTMQk9y6gikXEfGT91g93aLZ1i9xtgMuyZqAE9Dg/viewform> This is a great opportunity to prepare yourself for the final battle with SFU, which is looming on the horizon.

- iii. If you're craving a little extra social interaction, the TSSU organizes a weekly "RA and Play" virtual work event (<https://www.facebook.com/TSSU.ca/posts/4376525549045367>) as well as regular movie nights. Check it out!
 - f. Faculty mole
 - i. No updates.
- 4. Committee updates, continued
 - a. Workshop Committee
 - i. No updates.
 - b. Events committee (Brett Hodinka)
 - i. Brett has some fun ideas for trivia in the works. There will be an email sent 'round soon to gauge interest. Hopefully in-person activities will be starting up again soon!
- 5. Chairs update (Brett Hodinka)
 - i. By end of term, any "extra" money must either be spent, moved to trust, or lost. A great way to deal with the extra funds would be to donate them to the shiny new scholarship.
 - 1. **Motion to donate \$2,000.00 in graduate student caucus funds (core, trust) to the newly created Biological Sciences Black and Indigenous People of Color scholarship.**
 - a. Motioned by Brett Hodinka.
 - b. Seconded by Hannah Watkins.
 - c. Motion passes unanimous (Emmanuel Hung abstains).
 - ii. Interim election for secretary position.
 - 1. Because there will not be an August meeting, this is last chance to elect a new secretary before the current one departs for greener pastures; unfortunately, no one has volunteered as tribute. A proposed solution is to have representatives and committees provide bullet-point updates, to be compiled by Brett.
- 6. Presentation on bird strikes at SFU.
 - a. Katie Leonard gave a brief and thoughtful presentation on the danger to birds posed by window strikes at SFU as a result of poor architecture. She points out that birds are declining globally and that window strikes are part of the cause, representing a major source of avian mortality. While SFU has made a statement of commitment to tackling environmental issues and supporting sustainability, the Burnaby campus is currently full of design elements hostile toward birds. Not only has the university failed to address this, it continues to add and remodel buildings with these lethal features. Meanwhile, other universities (notably UBC) have taken real steps to reduce window collisions by establishing funds for updating old architecture and developing guidelines for future bird-friendly

buildings. As students, we have the power to enact change within our institution; what should the caucus do about this issue?

- b. Discussion ensues. One option is to apply pressure to facilities to enact retrofitting (like painting windows). However, facilities already have their hands full and they may not be the best people to approach with this. Going to the sustainability office, perhaps with a letter signed by the caucus, may produce better results. Further options include hosting a speaker for the biology department on bird strikes, and supporting a competition between labs for creative bird-friendly window decorations. Katie's talk is a gentle reminder that, as the new scholarship shows, the caucus has tackled challenging issues in the past and proved successful, but we have not yet invested real effort into issues of sustainability.

7. Motion to adjourn June meeting (2:04)

- a. Motion to adjourn: Brett Hodinka
- b. Motion seconded: Mason King
- c. Motion passes unanimously

Gwyn Case – Secretary



PS: This is my last month as Secretary of the caucus. Thanks for reading all of my minutes; I had fun writing them and I hope you had fun reading them. Farewell!