

BISC graduate student caucus meeting

1) Department Outreach & Engagement Committee voting

- Katie voted in unanimously

2) Attendance (12 total)

- Hannah Watkins (DGSC Rep & Faculty Mole)
- Hannah Roodenrijs (Web Master)
- Melissa Orobko (TSSU Steward & EDI Committee Officer)
- Katie Leonard (Newly elected rep for Outreach & Engagement Committee)
- Steven Brownlee (everything)
- Amelinda Firdauzy (Member)
- Em Lim (Member)
- Ramis Rafay (Member)
- Brett Hodinka (Chair)
- Claire Attridge (Member)
- Sarah Johnson (BISC DEI)
- Elena Varner (BISC DEI)

3) Motion to approve September's meeting minutes

- Hannah Watkin seconds this motion
- All in favor

4) Treasurer's updates

- Current account holdings:
 - o Trust account: \$2181.27
 - o Core account: \$1850.00 (remaining)
 - \$300 less than previously
 - \$200 (Frankie Katz) & \$100 (Tiara Cash) honorarium paid out
 - Waiting for another \$100 honorarium to be processed and paid out to Balqees (undergraduate student)

5) Representative updates

- Mike Hart is new chair for the DGSC
- Asked if there is anything we, as the caucus, want to accomplish through the DGSC!
 - o Should be issues that directly impact grad students (e.g., Courses, admissions...)
 - o Can send ideas to Hannah or Steven via email
- There is a meeting next Mon (October 25th)
- Some ideas discussed for new initiatives / possible changes:
 - o Some training for unconscious bias, for the whole committee

- BISC800 – unformalized, quality of instruction varies depending on individual professor
 - Could be formalized as a package of standardized material for any professor teaching the course
 - Would provide more specific & consistent information
- Changes to degree requirements & expectations
 - Ex/ Minimum of PhD 3 data chapters now (used to be 4)
- Surveys of covid impacts to graduate students
 - Would give better idea of how to allocate funds
- Department undergoing external evaluation (audit)
 - Most recent was 3 years ago, but next has since been delayed because of covid
 - From DGSC perspective - will provide an update on the state of grad studies
 - A totally external person can come in to review goals for the department and the state of affairs
 - May not involve the caucus opinion at all (Hannah will keep us updated)

6) DSC

- We have lost all DSC members as of now
- Email from Laurie saying that two DSC members are desperately needed
 - We have one interested currently (Ammelinda), but need to find another
 - The 2 reps could split the workload
 - Normally one is senior, other is junior, but as of right now we will have to have 2 new reps at once
- Estimated ~ 5-10 hours per week
 - Work would be enhanced during incoming scholarship periods (NSERC, internal)
- Shouldn't induce any conflict of interest if the reps are also applying for the scholarships
 - Would just not read/evaluate your own
- Sarah Johnson offered to provide assistance & support this term
- Em Lim is interested, but needs to consider the decision until the next meeting.

7) GSS

- Steven is replacing Allison until she is back from the field (week of Oct 25th)
- Meeting last week (Oct 11th)
 - Two of the GSS administrator positions need to be filled by active students
 - Unsure of exact workload, good side gig for \$\$\$
- GSS looking for people to join their committee
 - Stipend positions (\$50 per meeting)
- SFU350 painted a temporary washable mural at convocation mall to protest SFU's lack of action against the climate crisis
 - Was removed by Sept 29th as promised (prior to convocation)
 - SFU's response to the mural was to propose non-academic disciplinary measures
 - Sole purpose to prevent students from using their right to peacefully protest

- The GSS executive committee followed up by demanding more concrete action by SFU to address the climate crisis, and to allow students to express freely
- SFU quickly backed down after Twitter spillover, but initial response to silence vocal students is still concerning
- Shows a low commitment of the university to address the climate crisis
- So, should the GSS more formally protest SFU's intent for disciplinary action against student's right to protest peacefully?
 - The idea would come from the GSS itself, they just want to know what we think of the idea/plan
 - They as a body carry more weight than us each writing individual letters
 - Overall, the caucus has responded to support a GSS letter (Steven will pass this on to Allison when she returns)

8) TSSU

- RA bargaining process
 - Fall 2019, TSSU ran unionization drive for RAs (graduate students included in this)
 - University agreed to recognize TSSU as a bargaining unit for which RAs could bargain to join a union and get an agreement
 - Has led to constant delays, lack of effort by SFU, slow progress overall
 - Were supposed to bring proposals for specific wages, health benefits, sick leave... etc. at September meeting
- September 22nd: TSSU presented specific monetary plan
 - Proposal of RA base wage = equivalent to TA ship wage
 - SFU worried that they would be paying too much (the proposed \$25/hour) for 'unskilled work' and RAs just "washing beakers"
 - Also worried that PIs can't afford RAs if wages go up
 - BUT really, PIs can't afford to just hire 'bottle washers'. RAs conduct a wide range of skilled and unskilled duties.
 - Overall, very frustrating.
- SFU trying to waive the agreed-upon ultimate deadline which was agreed to in back in 2019
 - If we don't get a deal by the end of the year, plan was for TSSU to go into arbitration process
- TAs, TMs, Graduate Facilitators, Sessional Instructors applied for MSP group enrollment
 - SFU should be paying international student health fees (ISHF) for the term beginning on the 1st of each month
 - SFU and revenue services BC are behind on processing payments
 - For months you are enrolled in the group plan please DO NOT pay bills directly sent to you as revenue services may not provide refunds for this
 - Check www.tssu.ca/mssp#bills for info
- TA positions for spring posted on Nov 1
 - Good idea to start applying ahead of time & talking to your PI about spring semester funding plans

9) Faculty meeting (faculty mole)

- No current mole that has been to any meetings

10) EDI updates

The scholarship TOR timing:

- Waiting on Advancement Office (Rachel) to provide us a copy of the TOR. We emphasized strongly that we will need to see an updated draft of the TOR by mid-November at the very latest to ensure that there is enough lead time for community involvement before the first disbursement à Not sure if we've heard back yet!

Scholarship fundraising:

- Alumni fundraising call center à called on behalf of the IBPOC scholarship for a week! And the calling campaign put us just shy of \$39,000. They raised like \$6 grand in a week!

Meeting with Corina in CHEM:

- Corina à a Chem professor. Interested in establishing a similar IBPOC scholarship. Melissa and Blake met with them to field questions. They gave suggestions of how to proceed and shared our experience about the process.
- She is going to talk more about it with her dept chair, grad committee (which she's on), women in chem, grad caucus. And start working on the words for the fundraising page
- We really strongly recommended having funding approved or in hand for compensating folks in the Black and Indigenous communities for any work on it
- and hearing that GEOG is interested in a similar scholarship, and might be potential in REM too

The tensions over the construction of a pipeline on wet'suwet'en land are rising again.

- Looking for people to join the committee (there's some turnover happening)
 - o In any capacity at all! Can be low commitment.
 - o Share ideas, come to one (or more) meetings, ...etc.
 - o Can contact at bisc-edi@edu.ca
- Video of enforcements and equipment being confiscated of the wet'suwet'en
 - o If you want to support reconciliation, indigenous sovereignty, land back... spread awareness of this happening
 - o Ask Melissa Orobka for any questions relating to this

11) Events committee update

- Delayed welcome/Halloween event!
 - o Applied for funding from GSS to match caucus contribution (plenty of funding!)
 - o Original plan to do it this week, but was too last minute.
 - o Follow up plan = Next week (week of Oct 25th)
 - One of Weds/Thurs/Fri (27th, 28th, 29th)
 - Timing would be late afternoon (4 pm or so)
 - o BBQ style food (poll will be sent out for drink preferences & dietary restrictions)
- Need someone with BC identification to do a liquor course

- All events committee members do not have ID from BC
- Melissa will do this!
- COVID planning
 - We will need a list of all people going
 - RSVP will be sent out by Hannah
 - Reply if you at all think you might attend
- Sending in date options ASAP (Oct 27th-29th, backup of Nov 1st-2nd)

12) Interim elections

- Secretary, DSC reps (x2), faculty mole
 - Secretary nominee: Claire Attridge
 - DSC reps: Ammelinda Firdauzy, Em Lim
 - Faculty mole: Hannah Watkins
- Next round of general elections is in April 2022
 - Interim positions will hold until this time
- Brett motions to confirm all nominees to their new positions
 - Sarah Johnson seconds the motion
 - All in favor of the motion
 - Abstentions by Em Lim, Claire Attridge, Ammelinda Firdauzy, Hannah Watkins

Be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus ratify the nomination of the candidates listed below for the position of Secretary and Faculty Mole, effective until April 30 2022, and be it also resolved that the Caucus acclamate them to their roles, as they ran unopposed.

Be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus ratify the nomination of the candidates listed below for the position of DSC Junior and Senior representative, effective until April 2022 and April 2023, respectively, and be it also resolved that the Caucus acclamate them to their roles, as they ran unopposed.

DSC: Em Lim, Amelinda Firdawzy

Faculty Mole: Hannah Watkins

Secretary: Claire Attridge

13) Faculty meeting

- Next meeting happening on November 1st
 - Can email Hannah about anything we want brought up at the meeting prior to the 1st

14) Spring grad hosted speaker

- Email Eirikur to stop emailing Melissa about this
 - Brett & Allison are responsible
- When to run nominations?
 - Brett will allow for a week (+ one more) to provide nominations
 - Follow up poll for voting will come out by Brett

- Voting will be by ranking style (more representative of the group opinion overall)
- Polls will come out by email before the next meeting by Brett
 - One for nominations, one for voting (by ranking rather than for one person)
 - Ranking system more representative of the group opinion

15) Motion to adjourn

- Seconded by Em Lim
- All in favor unanimously