

BISC graduate student caucus meeting

Attendance

Brett Hodinka (Chair)

Hanna Roodenrijs (Webmaster, Events)

Emmanuel Hung (Treasurer)

Sherry Young (TSSU)

Sara Gravel (Member)

Ramis Rafay (Member)

Allison Dennert (DSS & TSSU)

Florian Reurink (Member)

Amelinda Firdauzy (DSU rep)

Mason King (Member)

Claire Attridge (Secretary)

- 1) Motion to approve November minutes
 - a. Seconded by
 - b. All in favor

- 2) TSSU updates
 - a. Contract Worker Justice
 - i. Their campaign presentation at caucus today had to be canceled
 1. Somebody will come and give a presentation in February
 - ii. A coalition of workers, students, faculty, and larger SFU community members
 - iii. Campaign demands SFU to bring cleaning & food service workers back in house, so hired by SFU instead of contracting out
 - iv. Issues are detailed in the recently released report (<https://contractworkerjusticesfu.ca>)
 - v. Presented at the Board of Governors last Thurs Jan 26th
 - vi. Always looking for new members! Can get in touch with yichienjadeho@gmail.com or contractworkerjustice@gmail.com (7788721222) if interested

- 3) Treasurers' updates
 - a. \$1505.52 (core account)
 - i. Motion to reimbursement Melissa Orobko for Dr. Reed's restaurant gift card (\$100 from core account) at Salmon
 - Seconded by Hanna
 - All in favor

- Abstention by Allison D.
- b. \$2181.27 (trust account)
- 4) DGSC updates
 - a. *Skipped*
 - 5) DSC updates
 - a. NSERC candidates have been received and the rankings are finalized
 - b. Departmental quota for Biology is 9 candidates
 - c. Total of 93 for NSERC 30 for CIHR at SFU
 - d. Onto the next round for NSERC, final review will happen on Feb 25
 - e. Leithan has asked for Emmanuel or Em to be a part of the final review meetings
 - i. May ask others to join in they can't make it
 - 6) GSS updates
 - a. AGM on February 8th at 5 pm
 - i. Prizes for caucuses with the most representation!
 - ii. Will present the financial documents (their money comes from fees paid as graduate students)
 - iii. Chats about the GSS strategic plan will happen
 - b. Presentations at previous meetings have happened from the GSS council from Embark Sustainability, Contract Worker Justice, Sexual Violence Support office
 - c. The 'No Cops on Campus' letter was endorsed by GSS
 - d. You can find their minutes at sfugradsociety.ca
 - 7) TSSU update
 - a. A lot of people are feeling concerned about the mandate for in person TA'ing and research activities so the TSSU has prepared a quick guideline for what your rights are as you try to navigate teaching and research:
 - i. **Sick leave:** If you are working as a Teaching Assistant (TA), Tutor-Marker (TM), Sessional Instructor, or Graduate Facilitator, you have up to 1 month of paid sick leave during each semester of your appointment. If they don't have access through a Collective Agreement, all employees in BC get a minimum of 5 days of paid sick leave, and that includes RAs.
 - ii. **Masks:** Non-medical masks are required in all indoor common areas and learning spaces at SFU, including classrooms. SFU has provided some guidance on mask wearing, including steps to approach people in your classroom who refuse to wear a mask, including your right to leave the room if they continue to refuse. Free masks can be found at Student Central on the Burnaby campus, or at the security desks at the Vancouver and Surrey campuses. The department has also made N95s and face shields available to TAs at the front desk so feel free to go and grab one.
 - iii. **Right to refuse unsafe work:** If you get asked to perform a job or task that you reasonably believe puts you or someone else at risk, you should stop working and report the unsafe condition to your supervisor and let the union know (safety@tssu.ca, or one of your stewards in BISC (Sherry,

Steven, Melissa and Allison). From there your supervisor must immediately investigate and remedy any unsafe conditions before you can return to work. Notifying the union helps us support you and ensure that your rights are upheld throughout this process.

- b. A note for international students: please ensure that you apply for MSP Group Enrollment in order for SFU to pay your International Student Health Fee (ISHF).
 - i. If there has been a break between appointments (i.e. TA in Summer 2021, no position in Fall 2021, TA in Spring 2022), you will need to re-enroll into the group plan.
 - ii. Coverage is back-dated to the first of the month in which you apply, so make sure to enroll before the end of January so that SFU covers your January fee!
- c. On the topic of ISHF, we just wanted to reiterate some notes from a previous email:
 - i. For TAs, TMs, Graduate Facilitators, or Sessional Instructors that are enrolled in the group plan SFU should be paying your ISHF for the term, beginning on the 1st of the month SFU received your group enrollment form.
 - ii. Unfortunately, SFU and Revenue Services BC are behind on processing payments and people are concerned about how this impacts them.

Detailed instructions on how you can ensure that you are enrolled in the MSP Group Plan so that SFU is paying your ISHF:

You can verify that SFU is making these payments by logging into myinfo.sfu.ca and looking at your paystub. If you are enrolled, once per month you will see a line marked "Int'l Sdnt Health Fee" in the "Employer Paid Benefits," which is confirmation SFU is paying on your behalf. More information on your paystub can be found [here](#). If you submitted your group enrollment form and do not see this line on your paystub and are seeing overage balances in your ISHF, please email SFU Human Resources at tssu_bens@sfu.ca and cc us at tssu@tssu.ca

Once you confirm your enrollment, you can ignore the bills/balance owing. You may also contact Health Insurance BC to confirm your group enrollment status; however, in many cases their agents are not yet trained on the group enrollment process and may give incorrect advice. For months you confirm you are enrolled in the group plan, please do not pay bills sent directly to you as Revenue Services BC may not issue a refund.

- d. Deadline to apply for the childcare fund is on Jan 31 2022.
 - i. All TSSU members with children have access to the fund, regardless of if you have an appointment this semester, so we encourage you to apply.
- e. Another RA bargaining update
 - i. Long story short, in December SFU gave us an awful monetary proposal that set a minimum wage of \$17 an hour with no annual adjustments for inflation (living wage in Van, for the record, is \$20 an hour), denies student RAs (aka any RA who is also a student) access to benefits and allows the employer to terminate RAs without valid reason and with minimal notice.

- ii. To add insult to injury, SFU is still trying to exclude all scholarship/stipend RAs, which means that almost none of us here would be in the union or even employees if SFU got its way.
- iii. Entered into mediation with an outside mediator, who told us that SFU has no real interest in bargaining without solving the question of those stipend RAs in their favour.
- iv. Have begun the process of arbitration, where a legal arbitrator will look through the case and all of the information available and hopefully force SFU to agree to what they already agreed to so many years ago.
- v. We'll have more to update you all on as the TSSU is launching a new campaign to pressure SFU in the meantime, so stay tuned.

8) Faculty Mole

- a. The Faculty of Science is conducting an Inclusion Audit for faculty and staff right now, and will be coming up with a similar one for grad students in the next few months. This will involve a short questionnaire with mostly multiple-choice questions and some opportunities to share more detailed experiences in short answer form. The data will be used to develop a "strategic plan" for the faculty, and a task force to carry out this plan.
- b. The department had to freeze the marine ecotox search, because someone in the Faculty of Science messed up BAD and there is a \$2-4 million budget shortfall (seems to be based on the fact that they didn't account for promotions and raises for existing faculty). This is causing a lot of tension between departments and the faculty - there seems to be some insinuation that older folks need to retire but the departments are worried that if there are retirements, there won't be fast enough hiring to maintain the size and function of the departments. Mike Silverman (acting Dean) says the bottom line is that we need more undergrads to be able to bring in more money.
- c. I updated the faculty on concerns from grads about being in person for teaching, and being pressured to come up for non-essential things that could easily be done over Zoom (e.g., lab meetings). I did not get much of a response from faculty about this, so it was hard to gauge their feelings. If anyone has concerns about being pressured to come up to campus for non-essential reasons, please chat with me and Steven!
- d. Somebody fucked up with the way they designed the seminar courses (BISC831, 832, 833) - apparently courses that use the pass/fail system like these can't be counted towards the credits required for the MSc program (looks like they *might* be ok for PhDs, but unclear right now). BISC800 should be ok because the MSc requirements are BISC800 + 11 graded credits. If anyone has taken these courses and is planning on defending soon, please contact Mike Hart (bisc_dgsc_chair@sfu.ca) or Laurie ASAP, and they will find a way to make sure you meet the requirements. If you've taken these courses but are not defending soon, you can still contact Mike, but the DGSC is working on developing a more general solution for everyone affected and it might be worth waiting.

9) Diversity & Inclusion

- a. *No updates*

- 10) Motion to adjourn
 - a. Seconded by Claire Attridge
 - b. All in favor

- 11) Goal will be to standardize future caucus meetings
 - a. Find a time that works for all exec going forward!