

BISC graduate student caucus meeting

April 14, 2022, 2:00 pm

Hybrid Meeting (In-person at 7000-level Grad Lounge and on Zoom)

1. Welcome & intro

Attendance:

Brett Hodinka (Chair)

Steven Brownlee (TSSU Rep)

Sherry Young (TSSU Rep)

Amelinda Firdauzy (DSC Rep)

Claire Attridge (Secretary)

Elijah Reyes (member)

Ramis Rafay (member)

Hanieh Shakeri (member)

Hannah Watkins (Faculty Mole)

Motion to approve the March meeting minutes

- Proposed by Steven Brownlee
- Seconded by Elijah Reyes
- Motion passes unanimously

IDEAS 2022 Symposium

- E2O is soliciting donations to help cover the costs of the IDEAS 2022 symposium
 - o Happened in person on April 1, 2022
 - o They have ~ \$1000 left to cover
- Asking for donations in brackets of \$100, \$200, or \$300
 - o Are we onboard to help cover costs of IDEAS 2022? In which donation bracket?
- Considered to be financially feasible by the treasurer (Emmanuel Hung)
 - o Payee is Celeste Naomi

- This donation would come out of our core account
- Fiscal cycle ends: August 31st
- More so to show support than anything (the remaining costs will be covered by the E2O supervisors if necessary)

Be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus transfer \$200 to Celeste Naomi as support for the IDEAS Symposium, which took place on April 1 2022.

- Proposed by Steven Brownlee
- Seconded by Claire Attridge
- Motion passes unanimously

End of spring/summer event (BBQ) for BISC grads?

- Halloween 2021 event cost ~ \$380
- We could likely estimate a similar cost for this event

2. Representative updates

i) Treasurer's update (Emmanuel Hung)

- Core account: ~~\$744.48~~ \$1,405.52
 - This is increased due a clerical error
- Trust account: \$2,181.27

ii) DGSC update (Steven Brownlee)

- **Defense guidelines**
 - Concerns around the guidelines scheduling defenses and what is required to complete that step
 - Planning on meeting with Mike and Laurie to sort out the website info and make one central source for grad students to check that is consistent and contains all the information you need
 - Has anyone had any bad experiences with this project or have any info that they'd like Mike to know?
- **Not meeting minimum stipends**

- Disturbing reports in the graduate survey we sent out of people who are within the guaranteed minimum cutoff time period (4 years for PhDs, 2 for masters programs): at least 24k a year
- Brought this up to Mike, and he'd like us to canvas you to see if you know of anyone or are yourself not receiving the minimum
- Feel free to get into touch with Hannah or Steven if you may be affected by this (hannah_watkins@sfu.ca, sbrownle@sfu.ca)
 - Information will be kept confidential and only shared with Mike/rest of DGSC with your permission
- **Extra money in the department?!**
 - The department spent less on TAs and got money back because it was subsidized by the government during the pandemic
 - Extra ~ \$13,000 floating around
 - Can spend it on any of the following examples, a mix of multiple examples, or others...

Example 1: All graduate students get a small amount

Example 2: Awards for travel grants, TA awards

Example 3: Purchases for grad students (e.g., patio space renovations, equipment or items for lounge spaces...)

Example 4: Indigenization of research workshop support (plan has been stalled because there is little money for it)

*Would become a course that individuals could take to decolonize their own research practices (important for ecology students especially)

- Mike's suggestion is to spend it sooner than later (so that the university doesn't somehow take it back or 'redistribute' it
 - Aka. Not scholarships, something more immediate and general for the department/grads
- We don't have to make a decision right now

- DGSC has been tasked with making the final decision, we can provide input as the Caucus

iii) DSC (Amelinda Firdauzy)

- Committee received email from Laurie ~ 2 weeks ago about TARA awards
 - Decided to give all applicants the awards
 - Not sure when this will be announced
- GF awards for 2022/2023 have been announced (due by April 20th)
- NSERC CGS-M and CIHR results have been announced (as of April 1st)

iv) GSS (Steven Brownlee)

- A lot of endorsement letters and hiring committee updates at the last meeting
- GSS endorsed a letter aimed at halting the transmountain expansion & the 'Tuition Freeze Now' movement
 - Both very relevant for the Caucus and graduate students
- GSS forming committee to hire a new admin
- New subsidy and professional development grants being launched for BIPOC students
 - Will hear more in the coming weeks

v) TSSU (Sherry Young)

- The RAs went to a meeting with the senate to make noise & give out pamphlets
 - Basically, to get across that bargaining is slow and the contract is very much needed now
 - Joy Johnson was supposed to be there, but cancelled her attendance last minute (TSSU had prepared a letter for her)
 - The next big senate event is happening on May 19th
- Discussions with a mediator are still ongoing
 - The bargaining process was ~ 1/2 or 2/3 done as of the fall
 - Most of the contract structure has been agreed
 - Problem right now = Who is included as an RA?

- The university thinks that graduate students receiving RA payments should not count, as they are studying and not working
- Are not willing to budge on this matter (this would substantially change the number of individuals who will receive benefits)
- We have gone to arbitration on this (two arbitration dates to settle this dispute are coming up in July 2022)
- Are BISC faculty worried about conflict between this RAship matter and the stipend increase efforts?
 - Our PIs are not technically our employers
 - The university is paying for our benefits as RAs
 - We could get rights and benefits and it wouldn't be at the cost of our PIs
- Event happened at Metrotown for the tuition freeze (April 14 2022 @ 1230)
 - For all students, but with a specific focus on graduate students

vi) Faculty Mole (Hannah Watkins)

- Long presentation from research project managers for how grants are managed (does not affect students in any way...)
- Decision has been made on the Dean! We don't know who it is yet.
 - One of the candidates has been selected
- External Review was done and went well
 - ~ 6 weeks (as of last Monday) until the report will be received)
- Convocation in May for folks who graduate during COVID and didn't get a convocation, then the regular one in June
- "People have so many opinions and none of them matter" – Hannah Watkins
- Faculty was silent following Hannah's presentation on the proposed tuition increases...

3. Committee updates

Only thing to note: Sherry Young has offered to lead a photography workshop for storytelling in sciences. Stay tuned for more!

4. Caucus elections

Be it resolved that the Biology Graduate Student Caucus acclamate the following people to their positions for the 2022 Caucus elections, as they are running unopposed:

Chair: Brett Hodinka

Associate Chair: Allison Dennert

Treasurer: Emmanuel Hung

Secretary: Emmanuel Hung

Member-at-large: Hannah Watkins

Webmaster: Hannah Roodenrijs

Events Committee: Brett Hodinka, Sherry Young, Ramis Rafay

Workshop Committee: *Dormant?*

DSC Representative 1 + 2: Em Lim, Amelinda Firdauzy (Elected originally in November 2021, will continue on until next cycle of elections)

DGSC Representative 2: Claire Attridge

GSS Representative/Alternate: Allison Dennert, Steven Brownlee

Faculty Mole: Brett Hodinka

D+I Committee: DH Ogilvie, Elana Varner, Em Lim

- Proposed: Steven Brownlee
- Seconded: Elijah Reyes
- Motion passes unanimously

Motion to adjourn the meeting

- Proposed by Steven Brownlee
- Seconded by Hannah Watkins
- Motion passes unanimously