

BISC graduate student caucus meeting

October 13, 2022, 2:00 pm PST

In-person in B9242 Conference Room

1. Welcome & Intro

Attendance:

Brett Hodinka (Chair, Events Committee)

Steven Brownlee (TSSU Steward, DGSC, EDI Committee, GSS)

Hanna Roodenrijs (Webmaster)

Sherry Young (TSSU Steward)

Claire Attridge (DGSC)

Emmanuel Hung (Treasurer, Secretary)

Amelinda Firdauzy (DGSC)

Phoebe Grouse (member)

Ramis Rafay (member)

Motion to approve the October meeting minutes

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Steven Brownlee
- Motion passes unanimously

Megan Barker (Senior Lecturer) joined via Zoom to gauge graduate student interest in a graduate course on undergraduate teaching and learning in the sciences

- Details: A for-credit course, practical and theoretical, on university teaching (not TAing) and maybe offered across the sciences departments or even just life sciences (MBB, BPK, etc.).
- There must be some applied aspect to the course – e.g., coming out with a written teaching philosophy, hypothetical syllabus, etc. to have in your dossier.
- Checking in with general membership/grad community: would you be interested in a teaching course? Feel free to reach out to Megan with ideas/perspectives/opinions! Additionally, if you want to talk to someone about how to write a teaching philosophy you can talk to Megan.

Ramis Rafay would like to revive the **BISC slack channel** – an easier channel of communication which could be helpful for the grad community.

- Anyone interested in helping out or joining should feel free to email Ramis at ramis_rafay@sfu.ca

i) Chair's Update

- **Cost of Living Survey**

- Forwarded by Brett; created by the VP of the Physics Department Grad Caucus as a survey for the sciences in general.
- GSS very interested in how this turns out. They want to know how students financially rank between departments. The survey can take 20 mins but the more who fill it out the better.

- **Wage subsidy**

- Turns out that \$13,000 is not the full amount of subsidy money (actually much higher as more is still coming in in the future). Subsequently, any potential disbursement or use of the money is being held off until the DGSC meet again. If we continue with the route of disbursing it equally amongst graduate students, the department wants to know who will be eligible (e.g., some students will graduate or be on leave by the time the prospective disbursement occurs).

2. Representative updates

i) Treasurer's update (Emmanuel Hung)

- Account updates:
 - Core account: \$1,130.08
 - Trust account: \$2,181.27
- Breakdown of BISC grad caucus pumpkin carving event costs:
 - \$63.93 spent on pizza
 - \$17.90 spent on decorations and tools
 - \$42.87 spent on pumpkins
 - all three items covered by caucus Core account (Total: \$124.70)

*Motion for the caucus to reimburse Brett Hodinka from the caucus Core account with **\$63.93** for the purchase of pizza from Uncle Fatih's Pizza and **\$17.90** for the purchase of decorations and tools from Party City for the BISC grad caucus pumpkin carving event held on October 28th, 2022.*

- Proposed by Sherry Young
- Seconded by Claire Attridge
- Motion passes (8 in favor, 0 against, Brett Hodinka abstains)

*Motion for the caucus to reimburse Hannah Roodenrijs from the caucus Core account with **\$42.87** for the purchase of pumpkins for the BISC grad caucus pumpkin carving event held on October 28th, 2022.*

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka

- Seconded by Claire Attridge
- Motion passes (8 in favor, 0 against, Hannah Roodenrijs abstains)

DGSC (Steven Brownlee)

- A townhall meeting for faculty was held in the 7000-level lounge area but only Julian Christians and DGSC members showed up.
- Mike Hart is working on a list of priorities for strategic change in BISC which includes (in no particular order): (i) improvements to MPM/MET programs (including faculty renewal for MPM), (ii) development of clear expectations for completion times (including changes to the APR – see below), (iii) the addition of a new data science graduate course, and (iv) improved institutional support for graduate student income.
- Please let any DGSC members know if you have any suggestions or complaints regarding APRs! Mike is aiming to make the APR form an actually relevant document that holds both the PI and student accountable for thesis requirements and timelines.
- Mike will also propose a rule that limits the intake of new students to labs/Pis who have students that are over the completion time-limit. The rationale being that there seems to be patterns with specific individual faculty members having hanging students.
- In other news, the BISC department was warned that the overall SFU budget is very tight. This is mostly due to an 11% decrease in international student enrollment. However, budget cuts will not be hitting BISC as they are being absorbed by the humanities departments.
- In the aftermath of the external review, the Shrum building interventions call for priority renovations as follows: (i) plumbing (in the wake of all the flooding), (ii) HVAC, (iii) issue with distilled water in labs, (iv) everything else.
- There are talks of potentially moving the BISC department to the South Sciences Building as a short-term solution for the abysmal state of our building.
- Lastly, it seems that faculty are unhappy with the idea of RAs becoming employees as they will need to come up with a checklist of what counts as employee work vs. thesis work for their students. It should be noted that this checklist requirement for PIs to split hairs on what is paid vs. thesis work was SFU's solution to the arbitration decision and was not proposed or desired by the TSSU.

GSS (Steven Brownlee)

- The GSS has signed on to endorse the Cost of Living Campaign

- The campaign aims to fight for graduate student insurance fee reductions, the addition of more graduate housing which is tied to income, and increased graduate pay so that all RAs and graduate students have a guaranteed minimum of \$32K.

TSSU (Sherry Young)

- RA bargaining has been going poorly as SFU is once again centering discussion around what is research/not research and what is an RA. SFU has until January to make a decision on defining research, RA, etc.
- As bargaining continues, the TSSU would like to reach out to members with organized events and the return of “RA stories” – interviews in written and video form (that can be kept anonymous) – to try to share the stories that capture who we are as RAs and how important our role and research really is. TSSU is aiming to reach out to interested parties in the new year.

Motion to adjourn the meeting

- Proposed by Steven Brownlee
- Seconded by Emmanuel Hung
- Motion passes unanimously