

BISC graduate student caucus meeting

January 19, 2023, 2:00 pm PST

In-person in conference room B8271

1. Welcome & Intro

Attendance:

Brett Hodinka (Chair, Events Committee)

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

Emmanuel Hung (Treasurer, Secretary)

Elijah Reyes (member)

Hannah Roodenrijs (Webmaster)

Ramis Rafay (Events Committee)

Sruthee Govindaraj (member)

Em Lim (Scholarship Committee, DEI Committee)

Pauline Deschott (alumnus/guest)

Motion to approve the December meeting minutes.

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Elijah Reyes
- Motion passes unanimously

i) Chair's Update

- Note: Caucus meetings will now be held in conference room B8271
- **BISC EDI Committee – Graduate Rep. Volunteers**
 - o Faculty members on the EDI Committee are asking for grad rep volunteers ASAP as the committee has largely dissolved with most grads on the committee having graduated.
 - o Interested members would serve as both officers for the Caucus EDI committee and graduate liaisons on the departmental EDI Committee.
 - o If you're interested in these positions, reach out to Kevin Lam at klamf@sfu.ca or Isabelle Côté at imcote@sfu.ca!
- **Spring General Elections**
 - o The BISC Grad caucus will be holding votes at the upcoming meeting for elected positions on the caucus executive.
 - o Nominations are now open and all are invited to self-nominate on the [sign-up sheet](#) for a 1-2 year-long position until **February 9th** (one week before our next meeting).
 - o You may nominate yourself for any position (currently filled or not). That said, we have several unoccupied positions that need to be filled! Note, a brief

description for each position is available if you hover over the position title in the [sign-up sheet](#).

- If you have any questions regarding Spring elections or any of the positions, please email Brett Hodinka at brett_hodinka@sfu.ca.

Motion to open spring election nominations for 2023.

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Hannah Roodenrijs
- Motion passes unanimously

ii) Treasurer's update (Emmanuel Hung)

- Account updates:
 - Core account: \$1,649.37
 - Trust account: \$3211.35
- The GSS is currently transitioning between people for the director of finance position.

iii) **Gauging interest in a BISC Biorender account** (Pauline Deschodt)

- [BioRender](#) is an application used for producing publication-quality scientific figures.
- Representatives of BioRender reached out to Danielle and Pauline from the Cory lab regarding potential interest in setting up a department-wide Biorender account.
- A BISC BioRender account could be tied with product provisions already provided by the university (rather than covered by additional graduate fees).
- Next steps:
 - BioRender reps are interested in holding an information webinar where they would also give out free trial subscriptions. Brett or Pauline will send out a survey/poll for a prospective date to host the webinar for interested students and staff.
 - Brett will bring it up at the upcoming departmental meeting.
 - Further steps need to be taken to obtain a price quote.

iv) Following up on BISC Slack group (Ramis Rafay)

- Ramis has looked over details concerning the old slack group. Rather than reaching out to long-graduated past admins, it seems easier to simply form a new slack group.
- We are now looking for admins for channels within the group.
- Hannah suggests that maintenance of the BISC Slack group could fall under webmaster duties.

2. Representative updates

DGSC (Steven Brownlee)

- Wendy Palen runs her population modeling course as a condensed 4-week course.
- Mike was curious to know whether grads were interested in more condensed courses (either condensing current courses or adding new courses that are in a condensed format). Condensed courses can make things easier for instructors, presumably allowing for more graduate courses being offered (and more frequently).
- From the meeting: the current general consensus in the caucus is that people are **open to the option for more condensed courses being added**. Overall preference for or against a condensed course format seems quite variable student-to-student.

DSC (Em Lim)

- The DSC is ranking NSERC-CGSM applications. This time around there is an 8 student quota.
- The DSC has finished ranking president's PhD scholarship applications.

GSS (Steven Brownlee)

- The previous meeting saw some small bylaw changes and a finance update.
- The GSS is doing well financially, having received a \$40k donation to the Emergency Grocery Card Program (see December 8th meeting minutes). The GSS is waiting to learn whether this donation will be recurring before continuing with further financial planning— either making additional grocery cards available or diverting money from the card program to other initiatives.
- **Professional development grants** (\$500) to go to conferences are now back – the GSS had previously shifted away from providing these grants due to COVID.

TSSU (Steven Brownlee)

- **Bargaining** for TAs has now also started up. Previously the SFU bargaining team was incapable of working on both RA and TA bargaining.
- **RA bargaining** is stalled as usual – nothing new to update on this matter.
- If you are not from BC and are paying an **international health fee**, [the TSSU can help you get health coverage](#)! Please feel free to email the TSSU to get help to navigate getting your money back. Note: You can also do this retroactively!

3. Committee updates

i) Events (Brett Hodinka – General group discussion)

- A highly successful **BISC Graduate Symposium** was held previously, however, additional symposia were not organized due to COVID. The Grad Symposium served as a way for labs to introduce themselves to the BISC community in a fun way via a no-pressure show

where grad students (either individually or in groups) gave 3-5 minute talks explaining their lab's work in a show-and-tell style.

- The past symposium received lots of support from faculty and the department and, if brought back, could serve as a fun Spring event in alignment with Tony's directive for boosting departmental collegiality.
- Organization of the event would involve booking a room, organizing food and drinks, and forming a schedule of talks (sign-up form).
- Brett will bring this prospective event up at the upcoming faculty meeting and gauge graduate and staff interest in giving talks.

Motion to adjourn the meeting

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Elijah Reyes
- Motion passes unanimously