

## **BISC graduate student caucus meeting**

February 09, 2023, 2:00 pm PST

*In-person in conference room B8271*

### **1. Welcome & Intro**

#### **Attendance:**

Brett Hodinka (Chair, Events Committee, Faculty Meeting Rep.)

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

Emmanuel Hung (Treasurer, Secretary)

Claire Attridge (DGSC)

Ramis Rafay (Events Committee)

Em Lim (DSC)

Gena Desjardin (member)

Blake Danis (member)

Sam Meraj (member)

Hanieh Shakeri Moghaddam (member)

Sarah Johnson (member)

Soobin Yim (member)

*Motion to approve the January meeting minutes.*

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Em Lim
- Motion passes unanimously

#### **i) 2023-2024 Elections**

- The nominees for the 2023–2024 BISC Graduate Caucus executive are running unopposed for all positions and are as follows:
  - **Chair:** Brett Hodinka
  - **Associate Chair:** Raven Barbera
  - **Treasurer:** Sam Meraj
  - **Secretary:** Gena Desjardin
  - **Member-at-Large:** Emmanuel Hung
  - **Events Committee:** Ramis Rafay, Hanieh Shakeri Moghaddam
  - **Webmaster:** Ramis Rafay
  - **Departmental Scholarship Committee (DSC):** Em Lim (Senior Rep.), Emmanuel Hung (Junior Rep.)
  - **Faculty Meeting Rep:** Blake Danis
  - **Departmental Graduate Studies Committee (DGSC):** Soobin Yim, Claire Attridge

- **Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU) Steward:** Steven Brownlee, Sherry Young, Sam Meraj, Hanieh Shakeri Moghaddam
- **Graduate Student Society (GSS) Council Reps:** Steven Brownlee, Raven Barbera
- **Diversity and Inclusion Committee:** Jess Hercus, Em Lim, Sarah Johnson, Blake Danis

*Motion to approve the above listed students at the relevant acclaimed positions listed for the Biological Sciences Graduate Caucus for the 2023-2024 academic terms, beginning March 1, 2023.*

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Ramis Rafay
- Motion passes unanimously
  
- Note: As it stands, the Workshop Committee has essentially been dissolved. Moving forwards the Workshop Committee's activities will be absorbed by the Events Committee. Brett will contact Elisa Osorio and Daniel Salcedo, who signed up for the Workshop Committee, and gauge their interest in contributing to the Events committee instead.

ii) Chair's Update (Brett Hodinka)

- **BISC EDI Committee – Graduate Rep. Volunteers**
  - Faculty members on the EDI Committee should no longer be looking for reps – Blake Danis and Sarah Johnson (and possibly others) have been in touch with EDI Committee faculty members as prospective volunteers. Brett will touch base with Tony regarding any further need for applicants.

iii) Treasurer's update (Emmanuel Hung)

- Account updates:
  - Core account: \$1,649.37
  - Trust account: \$3211.35

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

- Official announcement of the BISC Grad Caucus Slack server! Here is the temporary link to join (access given to anyone with an SFU email address):  
[https://join.slack.com/t/gradssfubiolo-i8a7188/shared\\_invite/zt-1nm58sllu-sPe118EaATTa7VsGU\\_5qBQ](https://join.slack.com/t/gradssfubiolo-i8a7188/shared_invite/zt-1nm58sllu-sPe118EaATTa7VsGU_5qBQ)
- If you have any comments or suggestions regarding adjustments and additions to the Slack group, please contact Ramis at [ramis\\_rafay@sfu.ca](mailto:ramis_rafay@sfu.ca)

- Sarah Johnson will contact Yonathan Uriel (previous admin) to delete the old Slack group.

## 2. Representative updates

### DGSC (Steven Brownlee)

- An email from Kathryn was sent out to all BISC grads regarding disbursement of the wage subsidy (see past meeting minutes) in the form of a **one-time payment of \$300 (disbursed on Feb 24)** to each eligible student.
  - o Eligibility criteria: **eligible** = active students in the 4 grad programs in spring '23; **ineligible** = on leave in spring '23 OR defended in fall '22 and just working on corrections.
  - o If you think you are eligible but are not, please contact DGSC reps ASAP. New students (or students who have not TAd or been supported by their supervisor's grant) who are not yet on SFU payroll will need to enroll in payroll before they can receive the award (do so ASAP!). Students already on payroll should receive a direct deposit automatically.
- Following the previous meeting, grad reps have encouraged faculty to adapt or add condensed courses (4/5-weeks long) – DGSC faculty members were highly receptive to this.
- There is currently an issue in the DGSC concerning what the department believes **the role of a DGSC graduate student representative** should be.
  - o The BISC Grad Caucus constitution states that DGSC student reps should be available to students who would like to disclose supervisory issues and related conflicts.
  - o DGSC faculty feel that the student reps should not be involved in discussions of student-supervisor conflicts and, if approached, should recuse themselves from the situation after bringing it to the awareness of a DGSC faculty member.
  - o It is likely that, regarding this issue, the 2 DGSC student reps will be outvoted by the 6 DGSC faculty members.
  - o Notably, no one on the DGSC committee has signed confidentiality waivers.

### DSC (Em Lim)

- The DSC has recently finished ranking NSERC-CGSM award applications.
- There is current discussion on potentially adding a new department guideline for NSERC-CGSM applications regarding program application deadlines (e.g., if you want to be considered for an NSERC-CGSM you will need to have applied to your program by X deadline).
  - o Since ranking happens before students apply to SFU, some of the applicants may not actually end up going to SFU. This leads to inefficiencies in the ranking process as well as notification of award disbursement to alternates.

### GSS (Steven Brownlee)

- As mentioned in previous the meeting, the current finance director dropped out very suddenly. As a result, GSS processing of financial transactions may be slowed for the time being until a new director is elected.

### TSSU (Steven Brownlee)

- Due to consistent delays in both TA and RA bargaining, the TSSU is floating the idea of a strike as an option. For this to occur, the TSSU would have to hold a vote for whether or not we should strike.
  - o For RAs: a strike wouldn't realistically change much since their paid work is so tied in with own thesis work.
  - o For TAs: there is a strike fund to dip into (so members will not be striking without pay)

If you have any questions or comments regarding this possibility, please contact a TSSU steward.

### Faculty Meeting Rep. (Brett Hodinka)

- Melissa may re-open sign-ups for the ongoing Marine Ecotoxicology lunch seminars (for the selection of a new faculty member) to encourage more participants.
- Tony's chair report mentioned the **possibility that the MPM program will have to stop taking in new students** unless faculty positions are renewed. Dr. Cory and Dr. Lowenberger have both recently retired and the remaining MPM faculty are also close to retirement.
- The conversion of the courtyard "dinosaur path" to a "Mesozoic arborium" is fully greenlit and plans for how to implement these improvements are underway.
- BISC results are in for the faculty response to the paperwork/survey sent from SFU admin to determine if their grad students' work is thesis related (scholarship) or unrelated to their thesis work (employment) (see Dec. 8 meeting minutes). Since the survey was designed to encourage faculty to tick the "scholarship" rather than the "employee" box (disregarding the extensive amount of peer-mentorship and additional research/work done by grad students that is not thesis related or compensated), it is unsurprising that the results uncovered that 98% of students for faculty are on scholarship while only 2% fall under the category of employee. These results were submitted to SFU admin – it is uncertain where it goes from here.

### *Motion to adjourn the meeting*

- Proposed by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Steven Brownlee

- Motion passes unanimously