

SFU Department of Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus
April 2023 Meeting Agenda

13 April 2023 @ 2:00PM PST
B8218

1. Welcome

- Attendance:
 - Brett Hodinka (Chair)
 - Kaitlin Bruzzini (General member)
 - Genavieve Desjardin (Secretary)
 - Soobin Yim (DGSC)
 - Steven Brownlee (DGSC, TSSU, GSS)
 - Claire Attridge (DGSC)
 - Petra McLeod (General member)
 - Raven Barbera (Associate Chair)
 - blake danis (EDI/Faculty mole)
 - Sherry Young (TSSU)
 - Sara Johnson (EDI)
- Motion to approve March 2023 meeting minutes
 - Motioned by Brett Hodinka
 - Seconded by Steven Brownlee
 - Motion carries unanimously

2. Chair's Report

- May Caucus meeting
 - In lieu of a May grad caucus meeting, we will communicate and important caucus information via Slack this month. We typically hold fewer meetings in the Summer term as a result of many grads having field seasons and/or traveling during this time.
- The Support our Science Movement
 - They are looking for a local SFU organizer to mobilize graduate students to walk out on 1 May as a protest against government inaction on graduate student support
 - I followed up with the primary organizer in Canada (Dr. Marc Johnson, UofT) and found out that our SFU organizer is Dr. Nancy Forde in the Physics Department
 - I will get more information to you in the coming week regarding the 1 May walkout
 - Note: Isabelle Côté would like to know what the caucus decides—she was the one who originally emailed me with this information

3. Ramis Rafay – Grad Caucus slack group

- Ramis wasn't able to make the meeting. Brett talked about using Slack more regularly to make it a more useful tool for the grad caucus.

- Some things to do: each representative/committee member can send their notes via Slack so that our Secretary can add anything to the meeting minutes that might have been missed. Slack could become particularly useful given the impending strike. Feel free to use it to ask questions related to caucus things too!

4. Treasurer's Update

- Core account: \$1649.37
- Trust account: \$3211.35

5. Representatives' Updates

- DGSC
 - The DGSC meeting will be held next week.
 - Megan Barker is moving forward with the proposed 3-credit graduate student teaching course and next steps are to send it to be voted on at the next faculty meeting—stay tuned for more information on this as things progress.
 - Mike Hart is wanting to revamp BISC 800; it may be worth using Melissa Orobko's old survey regarding this course and soliciting comments/ideas from grads on what this course could add or do better.
 - Understanding is that curriculum largely varies based on who is teaching it with some faculty members making it a particularly useful course while others have made it more informal and not as useful for incoming/new graduate students.
- DSC
 - GradCOLA campaign -- During the March 30th Board of Governors meeting the GSS's response to the proposed university budget was discussed before the budget was approved. Several board members, in particular faculty members, spoke about the need to include additional funding for grad students in this budget and not to delay support to future budgets. The budget was passed under the condition that grad student funding would be included in this budget and the proposal be presented in June.
 - As early as June of this year, support could next come in the form of a complete tuition waiver for PhD students. Currently it's limited to PhD students as the University is trying to determine which Master's students would be eligible for this—this is because some Master's degrees are course based, etc. This led to some talk about how this may still be a win for Master's students considering the eligibility criteria is sounding a lot like what is considered work or not (i.e., course-based graduate degrees).
 - If anyone has undergrads applying for a USRA, make sure that student prints the application and gives it to the BISC to avoid lost applications
 - It was thought that DSC awarded a bunch of half GF's to the B-list students back in February but Laurie just asked to re-re-rank them again, so hopefully more clarification will follow and possibly more GF's
- GSS
 - Student health care (GSS; Blue Cross) indicates graduate students are using 105% of its plan and thus a relatively large (5.9%) health care plan increase

should be expected. This hasn't been entirely ironed out yet but this could happen via one of two ways: (1) a flat increase for everyone or (2) a sliding scale based on your personal use of the health care plan—i.e., heavier users of the plan pay higher premiums.

- Blue Cross wants this increase to happen immediately so GSS may use contingency funds to cover the difference for this year.
- TSSU
 - Strike vote – 94% in favor of striking. However, the University put in two backstops to slow down/hamper the strike—basically calling the TSSU to mediation which ended with the arbitrator claiming it was unresolvable. Keep an eye out on updates but soon the next steps are a 72-hour ‘cool down’ period before the TSSU can call the strike officially.
 - Now is the time to use Slack to discuss strike plans, etc. as we continue to hear more from TSSU. Keep an eye on emails from them.
- Faculty Meeting
 - Chair's report – The Faculty chose to move departmental seminars to Mondays rather than Wednesday to allow for more flexibility in faculty meeting attendance from faculty members that have particular conflicts on Wednesday
 - Appointments committee – Tanya Brown was given the Ecotoxicology position and they accepted it; they will be starting in January 2024
 - Advertising for organismal/plant biology (specifically weeds) and insect biologist (specifically pests) – Specifications because it relates to getting the MPM program again
 - EDI Committee – Need more diversity representation on the EDI committee itself from faculty, staff, undergraduates. Wishlist for what the committee can address: EDI statement that will be brought to the department and voted on.
 - DGSC – Mike Hart was asked by Labor Relations (Susanne Stockdill—SFU bargaining rep which is interesting) to change prospective graduate student letter language; from “stipend” to “research funding” or something along those lines (see Faculty meeting minutes for more info)
 - Mike started by saying he is not in favor of this change but plans on doing anyway (more details below)
 - My questions (Brett) – I proceeded to ask about the timeline (i.e., how soon would this change happen) and how much pressure is being applied by Labor Relations to do this
 - Response (Mike) – I don't want to act on ignorance but is going to do what Labor Relations has asked. He stated that there was absolutely no pressure being applied to him to do it and timeline is ASAP (these two statements conflict so I'm not sure what to make of it). He then proceeded to state that he “doesn't want to lose his job.”
 - Little discussion took place; mostly Kathryn Coukell mentioned that this change in language is meant to be more encompassing for prospective graduate students (Mike/Tony didn't agree/said that's not necessarily correct) and then Tony said he was surprised that graduate students—DGSC grad reps Steven Brownlee and Claire Attridge—agreed with Mike on *not*

wanting to change the document language. But again, this is a moot point considering Mike said he was going to do what Labor Relations said.

6. Committee Updates

- Diversity and Inclusion
 - More updates to come from the next EDI committee meeting on Monday. Quick next step is to formulate an EDI statement for the department which has yet to do done. This will be sent out and voted on by faculty. Also, the EDI committee is looking at getting more representation from undergraduate students.
- Events
 - The events committee needs to start thinking about our standard Welcome BBQ in the Fall. Brett can help with this since he has done a lot of the paperwork for past events but the events committee should maybe starting getting things together for this.

7. Adjournment

- Motioned by Brett Hodinka
- Seconded by Claire Attridge
- Motion carries unanimously