

SFU Department of Biological Sciences Graduate Student Caucus
March 2024 Meeting Agenda

22 March 2023 @ 1:00 PM PST

ROOM: B9242 or online

1. Welcome

- Attendance

Miranda Dennis (Chair)

blake danis (EDI)

Raven Barbera (Associate Chair)

Vanessa Hum (Secretary)

Jess Hercus (Faculty Mole Steward for TSSU)

Steven Brownlee (Events, TSSU)

Emmanuel Hung (Member at large, DSC)

Tony Williams (BISC Department Chair)

Em Lim (DSC)

Claire Attridge (DGSC)

Kaitlin Bruzzini (Member)

Sherry Young (TSSU Rep)

Sam Meraj (Treasurer)

Soobin Yim (DGSC)

- Motion to approve February meeting minutes
 - Motioned by Miranda Dennis
 - Second Emmanuel Hung
 - Motion passes unanimously

2. Chair's Report

- Chat about student/faculty engagement with Tony Williams
 - It has been challenging to get people involved in things
 - Happening at a faculty and graduate level
 - When faculty don't come in, then their students don't come in
 - Encourage grad students and faculty to go to seminars
 - It would be nice to hear from your personal PI the encouragement to go to the seminars
 - A regular schedule and routine would be useful
 - Some committees are functional, and some are not due to lack of faculty and grad student engagement (ex. Grad Caucus, EDI Committee)
 - Students not attending seminars like Les Ecol, Department Seminars, lab meetings, etc.
 - Too many events or meetings per week, feeling of not having enough time to work on your own work
 - Not on campus to attend the meeting
 - Meetings/seminars are not regular
 - Missing emails, events are not that well organized for new students

- Better advertisement
- Posting something by the grad lounge
 - Weekly schedule or email copy
 - What is happening in the BISC department this week
- Of the 130 BISC Grad students there are about 50 that are somewhat engaged
- Les Ecol
 - Was traditionally for grad students
 - Bring your lunch, casual environment for students
 - Les Ecol problems:
 - If once a week is too frequent, doing talks less frequent to have more ‘exciting’ speakers would possibly help build interest
 - No schedule organized or posted anywhere
 - We don’t hear about the meeting until the morning of
 - Students are not aware of what Les Ecol is, what the goal of Les Ecol is, etc.
 - Students are not encouraged by their supervisors to go
 - Potential Les Ecol improvements:
 - Lab specific – cycle through labs (ex. Arne’s lab and what is going on there, a couple people present)
 - Bi-weekly or monthly meetings (less frequent meetings)
 - Or make more of an effort to try to get people in, find someone engaged
 - Grad Caucus may not have the capacity to do Les Ecol weekly
 - Les Ecol official logo to help students have a visual
 - Posted set schedules in Grad Lounges
 - Encourage bring your own lunch, or pizza provided (once a month?)
 - Hybrid: speakers and lunch, talk + social time to talk with the speaker
 - Survey questions
 - What are the barriers to attendance?
 - Why are students not attending things like Les Ecol?
 - Which of the following seminars do you attend?
 - What would you like to see at Les Ecol?
 - Miranda’s questions
 - Do you think grad caucus should take on Les Ecol?
 - Do you think Les Ecol can be reformatted?
 - Set up a schedule, have a vision, book people in advance
- Are there any other issues in the BISC Department?

- Disconnect within the department across labs and working groups
- The pressure to attend an event and the shaming for not attending a meeting
- Solutions:
 - Welcome event, labs come together casually to talk to the new incoming students
 - Buddy or mentor/mentee system existed prior to covid
- Maybe getting our professional headshots and a blurb about ourselves on the wall near the grad lounge
- **If anyone has thoughts about community engagement in the department or fun initiatives they'd like to pitch, please email miranda.dennis@sfu.ca**
- GSS Strategic planning survey
 - GSS has sent out a survey for feedback regarding their strategic planning survey
 - **Message/email Miranda (miranda.dennis@sfu.ca) if you have questions or thoughts, even if you only have thoughts about some of the questions**
- Pizza lunches
 - When? Mondays
 - What? Grad Caucus hosted pizza lunches for the department seminars
 - We need graduate students to show up
 - Goals:
 - Have more graduate students showing up
 - Networking opportunity in a casual environment
 - Not for every Monday department seminar, only the seminars that have interest from the grad students
 - Something that shouldn't feel like another scheduled seminar/meeting that we need to go to
 - Location of lunches may be important to encourage attendance
 - In BISC building rather than Biercraft
 - Even if a few people show up that benefit from the pizza lunch and are engaged, it is better than zero people

3. Treasurer's Update (Sam Meraj)

- Core balance is \$751.72 The Summer semester amount is not yet added.
- Trust balance is \$4,860.72.
- Please note that the balances are based on the payments made by the GSS as at March 14, 2024.

4. Representatives' Updates

- DGSC (Claire Attridge and Soobin Yim)
 - Sent out a survey, and have not gotten enough responses to really make an impact <https://forms.gle/MA71tUAABkSvNMr29>
 - **Need more responses for the graduate student body**

- They will resend the survey
- DGSC Meeting on Tuesday, so topics will be discussed then
- Then more about the outcome of the survey to come
- DSC (Em Lim)
 - USRA got ranked, each lab gets their top picked student
 - 2nd, 3rd and ranked for remaining spots
 - One USRA left over this year
 - GFs were ranked a while ago, should hear back
 - CGSM is now single ranked
- GSS (Steven Brownlee)
 - Last GSS meeting was Mary O'Brien, new Dean of Graduate Studies came to give a talk about what she is doing and her plans for her time in the role
 - She wants to figure out what our priorities are for graduate studies and what to improve
 - Mission, Vision, and Goals of graduate studies discussed
 - Formal consultation process to come
 - May be an opportunity to bring up things that are easier to fix within graduate studies, like administrative fixes or grad courses
- TSSU (Jess Hercus)
 - For anyone that lost their scholarship portion during TA strike, we will get that back - \$231000 back to Tas 200 31 thousand – keep an eye out for that
 - We will not get back for July 19th when everyone got pay deducted for working or not
 - Sister Union Party tonight 3 - 7 pm at Trout Lake
 - UBC CUPE Union with UVic
 - Health and Safety
 - If you have major issues with temperature or water in your lab
 - Reach out to Sherry Young (sherry_young@sfu.ca) and cc Luiza Gomes (lgomes@sfu.ca)
- Faculty Meeting
 - We are supposed to cut our sessional positions to zero
 - Research faculty to reach more labs and in general
 - Erin Barley now the new Associate Chair officially
 - Minimum grad funding policy
 - SFU said if we don't agree we can't send admissions out of grad students
 - New regulation when transferring from Masters to PhD if transferring within one year
 - One extra year of minimum funding
 - We are only supposed to TA only 8.34 base units per year
 - Upping the limit to 10 base units per year possibly?

- Trying to get students to graduate sooner, reducing students from transferring from Masters to PhD

5. Committee Updates

- Diversity and Inclusion
 - Meeting has been decided, first one since Fall 2023
 - 2-3 of faculty members are ending their term
 - Nominations were due last week
- Workshop
 - No updates
- Events
 - No updates

6. Adjournment

- Motioned by Miranda Dennis
- Seconded by Em Lim
- Motion passes unanimously