

Molecular Biology and Biochemistry (MBB) Graduate Caucus Meeting Minutes

July 6, 2023. In-person meeting, SSB 6178

Attendance

Present: Stephanie Sonea (stephanie_sonea, President); Eva Momchilova (eva_momchilova; Secretary); Matthew Volpiana (mathew_volpiana; Social Coordinator); Aleksa Nenadic (aleksa_nenadic; Treasurer); Brandon Fonseca (brandon_fonseca; GSS Rep); Iqra Yaseen (iyasin, DGSC Rep)

Absent: Shaianne Stein (shaianne_stein, Vice President)

Meeting Calls to Order, Appointments, and Approvals

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 10:06 in SSB 6178.

Appointment of Chair: Stephanie Sonea was chair at the meeting.

Appointment of Secretary: Eva Momchilova was secretary at the meeting.

Business

1. TSSU strike update, bargaining and question period (by TSSU representatives):
 - 2 strike actions so far (SSB and Harbour Centre)
 - Benefits are still in place and are not actively being threatened to be taken away
 - TSSU's policy on picket passes: if need to do thesis work, it's part of their policy that they would give out a picket pass
 - RAs are not part of the strike action (not certified bargaining members) but are expected by TSSU as TSSU members to participate in solidarity
 - Overtime ban on teaching is still in place (more than 40h/week)
 - This doesn't affect TAs much; more geared towards sessional instructors/etc
 - The current strike actions involve TAs and sessionals/instructors
 - Striking for: increased yearly wages (tied to inflation) and compensation for larger classes for those instructors
 - Striking for: avoiding concessions, such as:
 - Remove/alter sessional instructor seniority system
 - Remove/alter the TA priority system (where graduate students get priority over external students and undergraduate students)
 - General TSSU actions and bargaining efforts:
 - To become a certified bargaining member you need collective agreement **or** be recognized by the labour board
 - SFU has not accepted RAs as union members; TSSU has
 - The distinction (by SFU) for RAs is scholarship RAs and wage RAs
 - SFU has accepted wage RAs as employees (undisputed employee)
 - SFU has not accepted scholarship RAs as employees (disputed) – grad students tend to be on scholarships
 - TSSU is in support of an agreement with the supervisor, regarding the work you do as a student on thesis/other projects
 - Right to refuse unnecessary work/overwork

- TSSU is in support of creating a separate budget/fund for the cost of living adjustment/raises for graduate students at the university level
 - Departments will get a portion of that funds to cover that cost of wages
- Signing RA cards can be now done online:
<https://www.researchiswork.tssu.ca/sign/>

2. MBB Summer BBQ

- a. Date/time: July 27th; 12pm event start
- b. Budget: \$500 for food/drinks from department (non-alcoholic)
- c. Food list: will be finalized later
- d. Alcohol list + SEP: Matthew has filled out the SEP; \$250 budget for alcohol; list will be finalized later
- e. Advertisement: email + posters
- f. Survey: in email, ask people to email back with dietary restrictions

Meeting Closing

Next Meeting: July 20th at 10am; SSB6178

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned by the chair at 11:48.

Minutes: Minutes will be sent to all departmental graduate students and submitted to the GSS.