

DEPARTMENT OF EARTH SCIENCES

Departmental Meeting

Monday, February 29th, 2016 at 1:30 pm

In attendance:

Kevin Cameron, Shahin Dashtgard, Gwenn Flowers, Dan Gibson, Cindy Hansen, Dirk Kirste, James MacEachern, Dan Marshall, Reid Staples, Derek Thorkelson, Brent Ward (Chair), Matt Plotnikoff, Tarja Vaisanen, Bonnie Karhukangas, Snowy Haiblen (Grad Rep), Elise Harrington (Undergrad Rep)

Absent: Diana Allen, Andy Calvert, John Clague, Robbie Donald, Doug Stead, Glyn Williams-Jones

1. **Approval of Agenda:**

Motion to approve revised agenda

Approved unanimously

2. **Approval of Past Minutes:**

Motion to approve minutes of November 2nd, 2015 Seconded: K. Cameron

Approved unanimously

3. **Business from previous minutes:**

5. Nothing released for the Strategic Research Plan to date.

9. Standardized grading: the Dean cannot force a standardized marking scheme, but it can be strongly recommended by the Dept.

DISCUSSION: D / C- grade cut off most important issue as this affects if students can use course as a pre-requisite, and this varies around the department. General consensus was to not impose a uniform grade scale. The Chair does review final grades and does discuss with instructor if unusually high/low.

4. **Chair's Report:**

i. Eileen van der Flier-Keller will be starting on July 1st. Thanks to the TPC for the rapid processing of her material. She is scheduled for 1 course per year with EASC.

ii. New Hire: The Dean has re-instated our search process (she met with our search committee who described our excellent candidates). The Search Committee is working on reducing the long list to a short list to bring forward to the department for ratification. Hoping to set up interviews for near the end of the spring semester before people head to the field.

iii. DAC Updates:

- FAM Faculty Allocation Model – there will be a Faculty of Science meeting in March to explain.

- Funding to the Faculty of Science over the last 4-5 years has essentially been flat.

DISCUSSION: Where did our funding deficit come from that cause the cancellation of all new hires? Do we know how Science compares to other faculties?

iv. Big Data: Initial funding 10 million. Canada's first excellence research fund may flow from this. SFU has 1 of 4 sites. Glyn & Brent went to townhall meeting with Joy McPherson. Faculty of Science now has a member on the committee for representation. (Luke Bornn STATS)

- v. TPC: Would like a summary letter for salary review etc., and to see standard formatting for CV's (SFU CV system). Will also try to send out the factual portions of letters to the candidates prior to the TPC review meeting so candidates can ensure correct. There may also be a 0.5 step used. Other departments are using this, and it is not as catastrophic as previously thought. This would allow for more 1.5 or 2.0 step to be allocated if warranted.

4. **Undergraduate Committee:** S. Dashtgard

- i. EASC 107 wording change *see attached.

DISCUSSION: Shahin will circulate by email to the faculty for review, If no concerns with the wording, he will go ahead and submit the changes.

- ii. Online first year courses: there is funding available to set this up. See Glyn Williams-Jones for more information.

DISCUSSION: How will the online courses be assigned to instructors? This is a new format that will have different requirements / availability needed. Instructors will be assigned to oversee course, mainly dealing with any problems, and will be paid directly by CODE. A grad student will be in charge of the day to day running of the course, and will be paid directly by CODE, this will not come out of our TA budget.

- iii. EASC 305 – we will be using this as a format for Big Data. If anyone else is interested let Shahin know.
- iv. Transfer requests: where do we want to draw the line for transfers? Shahin concerned that we may be allowing some sub-par courses as equivalents. Could affect our credibility.

DISCUSSION: Should we have a department strategy in regards to how they are processed? Is there an agreement between SFU and Douglas College? For now will leave at the discretion of the Undergrad Committee.

5. **Graduate Student Funding:** S. Haiblen (Grad Rep)

- i. Minimum funding for graduate students.

A letter was circulated to the department signed from most of the grad students about a proposed increase in funding for students. *see attached. Snowy presented a power point (*see attached) showing the current cost of living calculator, a student funding survey, stats about guaranteed/average funding and estimated funding from other Universities.

DISCUSSION: Should the Grad Committee Chair meet with students to help understand where funding comes from? No, the offer letter to students gives the funding information.

ACTION: Snowy will forward the survey (anonymously) to the Grad Committee for review.

6. **Graduate Committee:** G. Flowers

(Gwenn was scheduled to teach and had to leave the meeting prior to review of her submission)

The Graduate Studies Committee report was circulated prior to the meeting *see attached.

A few items were highlighted:

- i. #3 Annual Progress Reports – There are some instances where this is not happening. We should all aim to make sure these meetings happen, it is in the best interest of the students as well as faculty.

- ii. #4 Graduate Fellowships – There is an increasing number of applications from new students and from students whose supervisor does not necessarily support their applications. Going forward, applications from new students will no longer be considered and wording will be added to the signature line on applications that makes clear of the supervisor's endorsement.

DISCUSSION: What about employment while holding a GF? Maybe the question of intent to work should be added to the application?

7. **10 Year Course Enrollment:** *charts attached

- i. 1st year course trends have not been showing much (if any) increase. What can the department do to increase enrollments? Would offering courses online help? What are other departments doing about increasing enrollment? What is it about other courses that draw in numbers – time it is offered? GPA?

ACTION: Undergrad committee to examine what options can be done to help increase numbers.

8. **Safety:** M. Plotnikoff

- i. Reminder – Environmental Health & Safety requires that all chemicals/hazardous materials have proper signage.
- ii. Field Safety Plan / Acknowledgement Form – reminder to have the forms filled out for all field work. Forms do not have to be filled out for every individual trip to the field. If multiple trips are planned the same form can be used for all. The vehicle planning schedule for the summer will be up soon.

9. **Library:** D. Kirste

- i. Update: Library funding has been reduced – prioritized journal subscriptions

10. **Seminar Series:** D. Kirste

- i. Time Slot – our current seminar time of Thursday at 3:30 pm conflicts with UBC.

DISCUSSION: The conflict prevents cross-attending the talks, and using the same guests that are visiting. How about moving to a morning time – 10:30? This would allow a lunch with the speaker after the talk, and departure before rush hour. ALL PhD candidates should regularly be attending the talks.

ACTION: Tarja will look at the fall scheduling to see if the talks can be moved to Fridays at 10:30am.

11. **A.O.B.** (any other business)

- i. Faculty service letters

DISCUSSION:

- Currently the Faculty service letters are distributed directly to the Faculty members whereas the staff letters are given to the chair for presentation to the staff with a congratulatory message.

MOTION: Faculty letters will go directly to the Chair for presentation to individual faculty members.

Moved: D. Gibson Seconded: D. Marshall

Motion Approved (2 abstentions)

- ii. Reorganized Lab: maps/storage now available, secure storage
- iii. Geobazar: Matt will set up old items for faculty/students to go through – any items remaining will be thrown out.

Motion to Adjourn: Unanimous

Open Meeting ended at: 3:15 pm