

Society of Biology Graduate Students (SOBGS) Annual General Meeting

5:30 pm, March 3, 2016
BGS 2084

In Attendance:

23 members

Minutes:

5:35 Meeting called to order

5:35 Chairperson Jacqueline Lebenzon request move into constitutional amendments
Moved — S Mcfarlane; Seconded — T Wu

Constitutional Amendments:

5:35 New position: AAFC (Agriculture and Agri-food Canada) Representative — Chairperson J Lebenzon
Rationale:

The Biology Department at Western University extends beyond the boundaries of the Western Campus. Approximately 25% of the Biology graduate students in any given year are primarily based at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) centre, a government research facility located about 8km from the Western campus. There are currently 14 supervisors of these graduate students at AAFC who are both adjunct faculty members of Western and government research scientists with laboratory facilities situated at the Centre. The distance from campus effectively isolates these AAFC-based graduate students from many of the campus-based activities and restricts access to many graduate student opportunities that would normally emerge from open dialogue, such as cross collaborative research or networking. To address these problems, an SOBGS AAFC representative will work to bridge the effective gap and help to provide an avenue for dialogue between the graduate students at AAFC and those of the main campus.

An AAFC representative on the SOBGS executive board will also speak for the unique needs of the AAFC Graduate students to the Society and the Biology Department. An SOBGS AAFC representative will also liaise with the SOBGS Research Committee Representatives and the relevant operations managers to spur cross collaborative efforts and to facilitate better access of the campus students to the equipment at the AAFC and vice versa. An SOBGS AAFC Representative would serve as a liaison between the Graduate students at AAFC and the Society.

The role of the SOBGS AAFC Representative would require leadership and commitment to change. A highly motivated Biology graduate student whose laboratory and supervisor are primarily located at AAFC, would be responsible for I) Creating and maintaining a Graduate society community at AAFC II) Helping to connect the AAFC students to opportunities and activities on Campus III) Act as official representative of AAFC Graduate students in all relevant SOBGS voting.

SOBGS Constitutional Amendments Required:

1. Section 5: The addition of "Section 5.1.12 SOBGS AAFC Representative"
2. Section 12: The addition of the following description for the representative position:

12.13 SOBGS Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Representative

- 12.13.1 Elected through the formal election process of the Society.
- 12.13.2 Must be a current Biology Graduate Student whose laboratory and primary supervisor are located at AAFC
- 12.13.3 Work to improve the Biology Graduate student experience at AAFC
- 12.13.4 Organize meetings with the AAFC Biology Graduate students (at least two/term)
- 12.13.5 Communicate concerns received from the Biology Graduate students at AAFC to the Biology Department or the Society
- 12.3.6 Liaise between Biology Graduate Students at the AAFC and the Society 12.3.7 Work towards addressing any unique needs that may arise for the Biology Graduate students at AAFC
- That duty could include;
 - a) Communicating with the TA instructors to consider the difficulties of commuting to campus and working to enable an effective solution
 - b) Facilitating attendance at seminars, workshops and other departmental activities
 - c) Informing AAFC students of social events held by the Society and coordinating access to these events.
- 12.3.8 Facilitate the access of on-campus students to the facilities at AAFC and vice versa
- 12.13.9 Has voting rights at SOBGS Elected Representative Meetings (1 vote)

- 5:45 M Dick:** Does this amendment have a cost? Concerns were raised previously about using funds to benefit only a subset of students.
- 5:45 Chairperson J Lebenzon:** I don't think this position has a cost. Currently, social committee is the only committee that receives funds.
- 5:46 A Chin-Fatt:** The AAFC representative's duties include meeting with graduate students, and organizing travel and events. There should be no major expenses associated with this role. AAFC students are biology graduate students — this amendment is about ensuring they are included in events on the main campus, and ensuring that there is a formal liaison for connecting the two campuses.
- 5:47 L Des Marteaux:** Are there travel costs for this position?
- 5:47 A Chin-Fatt:** While travel is a major barrier for AAFC students when attending main campus events (e.g. the bus trip can take 2 h), this is an issue that is independent from this position.
- 5:47 T Kelly:** Is there a need for an alternate, in the event that the cost of travel would be too great for the representative?
- 5:47 T Tully:** I don't think that someone who wasn't committed to travelling would take on the position.
- 5:47 J Croft:** I don't expect SOBGS would be able to address the travel issues of AAFC students.
- 5:48 A Chin-Fatt:** This position won't fix the travel problems — but it does recognize these problems
- 5:48 Chairperson J Lebenzon** requests vote on constitutional amendment
- 5:48 Moved** — L Des Marteaux ; **Seconded** — V Bui
21 In favour; 1 Against; 1 Abstention; Motioned passed
- 5:48 Chairperson J Lebenzon** requests move into Budget Report
- 5:48 Moved** — M Dick; **Seconded** — K Woolfson

5:48 SOBGS Budget Report — Chairperson J Lebenzon

- Chairperson J Lebenzon presented budget report as outlined in AGM package.
- After an error was noted in the AGM package budget, the excel sheet version of the budget (i.e. correct budget) was shown to the membership by Chairperson J Lebenzon

5:54 S Anthony: There is a difference in the numbers provided in AGM package, and in the excel sheet of the budget. Are we voting on the excel sheet numbers?

5:54 Chairperson J Lebenzon: Sorry, the correct numbers are in this excel sheet. I will make correction to the AGM package.

5:59 T Tully: I'm concerned about the number of faculty estimated to attend the biology formal. About one table of faculty (~10) attended last year.

6:00 J Lebenzon: The year isn't over, and fundraising will bring in additional funds.

6:00 J Croft: We aren't going to end up in the red if we are short on faculty members at the biology formal.

6:00 Chairperson J Lebenzon requests approval of budget

6:00 Moved — C Dooner; Seconded — K Woolfson
21 In favour; 0 Against; 2 Abstained; Motion passed

6:01 Chairperson J Lebenzon requests move into Committee reports

6:01 Moved — A Duarte; Seconded — *Cleo* (i.e. K Doughty)

Committee Reports:

6:02 Chairperson Report — Chairperson J Lebenzon

- BGRF showcased high-quality work from the department. Bio-booths were a successful outreach component added this year
- M Santia Lima has been elected this years BGRF chairperson.
- For the future BGRFs we've secured support from the department through 'The Laudenbauch Fund' which will allow us to host a higher profile keynote speaker.
- Jenna Quinn from RARE charitable research reserver gave a presentation to faculty and graduate students about funding opportunities RARE can offer the department.

6:05 SOGS Representatives Report — K Turnbull

- Attendance at SOGS meetings was high in 2015, grant size of \$962 to SOBGS from SOGS
- Morag Dick and former reps thanked for excellent work over the last year
- SOGS approved the 2016-2017 budget at the AGM in February. Notably, the Grad Club and SOGS are both expected to have a surplus for the year. The 2016-2017 budget will include an increase in grad student fess for a Grad Club levy fee (\$1.67) to fund capital investments.
- The SOGS departmental grant rate will increase from \$2 to \$3/student/term. SOBGS cam expect more support form SOGS in the coming year
- The SOGS graduate handbook/day-planner has been discontinued in 2016 due to lack of use.

6:08 S Anthony: I'm part of the SOGS GradCast podcast — we interview other graduate students about their research — it's a great way to learn about the work being done on campus.

6:08 Undergraduate Education Committee Report — S Anthony

- Planning BUGS/SOBGS meet-and-greet at the grad club with outreach committee member K Woolfson.
- BIOL 2290 is being overhauled and BUEC would like input from graduate students who have TA'd this course. Considering moving a writing module from this course to somewhere else. However, there is a need to have students learn to write through their undergraduate degree.
- Format of BIOL 4410 is changing, but will not affect the number of TAs.
- BIOL 1200 courses have been removed. BUEC wants to create a non-major's biology course, specifically for health science students who don't have many future lab courses.
- Creation of specializations for non-major students. A second option for students who are not completing an honours during their 4th year. Students will graduate with a BSc with a specialization in a specific area.

6:15 Caryn Dooner: Why is BUEC removing 1200 courses?

6:15 Susan Anthony: BUEC wants to make a biology course specific for health sciences students who don't have many other lab opportunities. They exact changes aren't clear at the moment.

6:15 Trish Tully: Can graduate students/TAs provide suggestions for the course?

6:16 Susan Anthony: I will be looking for feedback, and I will make suggested, however, not clear the extent to which our feedback will be considered.

6:17 Trish Tully: Aren't the specializations diluting the meaning of the regular Biology BSc?

6:18 Jacqueline Lebenzon: This is something that has already been decided on by BUEC.

6:18 Seminar Committee Report — C Dooner, A Rayhan, T Tully

- Graduate student lunch has been enthusiastically attended by students and speakers. Pizza is ordered through Great Hall Catering — currently not providing non-dairy, or vegan options.
- Coffee and tea have been well received. Coffee is shared with BioCafe.
- Snacks were not well received initially (Oreos contain palm oil - an ingredient that is unsustainably harvested). Snacks now purchased from Bulk Barn and receiving a better response.
- Nomination of graduate-invited speakers will happen in the spring. Rather than have a small group of students attend dinner with the speaker, a better approach may be having a faculty member offer to host students and the speaker for an after dinner cocktail event.

6:20 S Anthony: How is the attendance at graduate student lunches?

6:21 A Rayhan: Generally good, but changes from speaker to speaker.

6:24 Outreach Committee Report — K Woolfson

- Fall preview day was a success — reused Bio-Booth displays from the BGRF
- Let's Talk Science Lab Tours were well received by visiting high school students
- Planning SOBGS-BUGS Mixer where undergrads can speak to graduate students about their experiences
- SOBGS website updates include meeting minutes and keeping the representatives list up to date.
- Contact with the city of London is planning to start an eco-camp. Working with children's education - Will be sending out an email for those interested.

6:26 Research Committee Report —M Sanita Lima, A Chin-Fatt

- Currently identifying strategic research clusters (i.e. labs that have joint research activities, shared research interests, etc.). Will be requesting further information from graduate students.
- Developing a database that identifies the key techniques used in each lab - with the hope of fostering cross-collaborative research.
- Working on a department-wide blog that will showcase publications of our department. The blog would use content submitted by graduate students.

6:32 Graduate Education Committee Report — Chairperson J Lebenzon (for M Miri and J Toxopeus)

- Participated in departmental ranking of NSERC/OGS, Lumsden Fellowship, donor award, and travel award applications
- BGEC is re-evaluating the mandatory milestones and opportunities for student development in the program. Two surveys distributed: graduate course survey (fall term) and milestones survey (winter term)
- Due to financial constraints from the FoS, the number of international graduate students for departmental support has been capped.
- BGEC is developing a new rubric for ranking incoming students. The new rubric will likely be used for students applying for a fall 2016 start.
- Scores for proof of English proficiency have been normalized for new applicants
- BGEC now celebrates student successes in a monthly email

6:35 Social Committee Report — J Bielask-Da Silva, K Doughty

- Halloween party was a success (ca. 30 students & faculty attended)
- Two bake sales have raised ca. \$280 (with no expenses)
- Holiday Gift Basket raised ca. \$290 (\$90 earned)

- Coffee house is planned for March at the grad club, still requesting performers
- Bio Ball is planned for April (1920's theme), venue is booked by Chairperson (Mocha Shrine Center)

6:40 Sustainability Committee Report — J Croft

- Composting program for BGS a success, compost bin emptied regularly
- Working with Chemistry and Geology departments to start their own composting programs
- Lobbying Facilities Management for a compost bin at the BGS loading dock
- Working on a fundraiser for SOBGS selling biology travel mugs. Paper coffee cups remain a major contributor to waste.
- Household item drive in August was a success
- Posters distributed to grad offices to remind students to turn lights off at the end of the day

6:44 T Tully: Is it possible to obtain our own (BGS) compost bin outside?

6:44 S Anthony: Can we also look into composting the greenhouse waste?

6:44 V Bui: Is it possible to have more bins across BGS?

6:44 C Dooner: If there were multiple bins around BGS, we would likely need to start a volunteer subcommittee.

6:45 J Croft: I currently carry the compost to empty it. There needs to be more departments participating before we can get a compost bin outside of BGS.

6:46 Meeting adjourned