

# Society of Biology Graduate Students

April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Annual General Meeting

BGS 2084

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## **Meeting Agenda**

1. Ratification of agenda
2. Budget Report
3. Committee Reports
  - a. Chairperson
  - b. SOGS Representatives
  - c. PSAC Local 610 Union Representative
  - d. Graduate Education Committee
  - e. Undergraduate Education Committee
  - f. Seminar Committee
  - g. Outreach Committee
  - h. Research Committee
  - i. Social Committee
4. New business/ open forum

## Budget Report

<b>Actual Spending 2013-2014</b>		
<b><u>Revenue</u></b>		
<b>SOBGS</b>		
SOGS	\$954.75	94% attendance
Biology Formal Tickets	\$2,445.00	
Left over funds	\$459.36	As of September 30, 2013.
<b><u>Fund Raising</u></b>		
BGRF (donations)	\$1,000.00	
BGRF (Joint Research Fund)	\$500.00	
Biology formal	\$1570.00	
<b><u>Department Subsidies</u></b>		
BGRF	\$1,654.62	Meals and refreshments.
Laudenbauch	\$400.00	Travel expenses for the BGRF Speaker
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$8,983.73</b>	
<b><u>Expense</u></b>		
<b>BGRF</b>		
	\$1,940.70	Meals and refreshments
	\$873.81	Poster Board Rental
	\$383.04	Guest speaker expenses
	\$231.27	Venue, Printing, and Supplies
	\$125.80	Prizes
	\$3,554.62	
<b>Biology Formal</b>		
	\$3,757.90	Windermere (~ 70 people)
	\$48.00	General costs for decorations
	\$100.00	DJ
	\$100.57	Audio Equipment Rental
	\$30.00	Printing Tickets
	\$4,036.47	
<b>Social events</b>		
	\$170.00	Halloween
	\$180.00	Festivus
	\$100.00	BBQ (anticipated)
	\$450.00	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
	\$50.00	Other – Discretionary
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$8,042.09</b>	
<b><u>Surplus/ (Deficit)</u></b>	<b>\$942.64</b>	For September 2014

<b>Proposed Budget 2014-2015</b>		
<b><u>Revenue</u></b>		
<b><i>SOBGS</i></b>		
SOGS	\$884.78	80% attendance
Biology Formal Tickets	\$2445.00	
Left over funds	\$700.00	As of September 30, 2014 (minimum).
<b><i>Fund Raising</i></b>		
BGRF (donations)	\$1,000.00	
BGRF (Joint Research Fund)	\$500.00	
Biology formal	\$1,000.00	
<b><i>Department Subsidies</i></b>		
BGRF	\$780.81	Meals and refreshments.
Laudenbauch	\$400.00	Travel expenses for the BGRF Speaker
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$7,780.56</b>	
<b><u>Expense</u></b>		
<b><i>BGRF</i></b>		
	\$1,940.70	Meals and refreshments
	\$383.04	Guest speaker expenses
	\$231.27	Venue, Printing, and Supplies
	\$125.80	Prizes
	\$2,680.81	
<b><i>Biology Formal</i></b>		
	\$3,600.00	Venue
	\$50.00	General costs for decorations
	\$100.00	DJ
	\$100.00	Audio Equipment Rental
	\$30.00	Printing Tickets
	\$4,080.00	
<b><i>Social events</i></b>		
	\$170.00	Halloween
	\$180.00	Festivus
	\$100.00	BBQ
	\$450.00	
<b><i>Miscellaneous</i></b>		
	\$50.00	Other – Discretionary
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$7,210.81</b>	
<b><i>Surplus/ (Deficit)</i></b>	<b>\$569.75</b>	For September 2015

## Committee Reports

### Chairperson Report

#### 1. Alcohol policy

I have worked with Mark Bernards to have alcohol at one SOBGS event; this year it was Festivus. Working within the regulations of the on-campus alcohol policy, we needed a Great Hall bartender (cash bar) and catering (pizza, outside food was not allowed) in a room where there was one entrance/exit. Mark has committed to helping with the cost of the bartender for any future at events. A cash bar may be a better option at the Halloween party and there may be a possibility of Grad Club catering services under the on-campus alcohol policy.

#### 2. Biology Graduate Research Forum (BGRF)

This year's BGRF was Saturday October 19th. It was well attended and the speaker was well liked. Planning is underway for next year. The new BGRF chairperson is Kayla Gradil. Cost of the BGRF is likely not sustainable because of a large subsidy from the department. One major cost is the poster board rental. I acquired poster boards from Dentistry which no longer had storage for them. These poster boards are in storage the Collip Building and some are in need of repairs.

#### 3. Department review

The department had an external review this fall. External reviewers meet with graduate students on November 28th at a luncheon. Major concerns were the stipend, courses, seminar speakers, clarity of program in handbook, professional development and career counselling. External examiners recommended graduate stipend increase (especially year X), clearer handbook, workshops for professional development, courses that emphasize technical skills. The department plans to develop a plan to address the external review at the biology retreat (April 24 and 25).

#### 4. Professional development workshops

I helped Brent Sinclair organize workshops targeted mainly at PhD students. Catering was provided by the department. These workshops were: post-doc (December 2), networking and communication (February 5), non-academic career paths (March 11), and CV and resume workshop (April 8). There was generally high interest, especially at the evening session. I sent out reminder emails to those that signed up because there were issues with attendance.

Thank you,  
Aimee Lee Houde  
[ahoude@uwo.ca](mailto:ahoude@uwo.ca)

## **SOGS Representatives Report**

Dear Biograds,

The Society of Graduate Students holds council meetings once a month to discuss issues that affect graduate students across campus. By having our councillors attend these meetings, the biology department gets paid a few hundred dollars per semester, and this money is put into SOBGS's general account. We are pleased to report that SOBGS's councillors this year have had a high level of attendance (94% for the most recent funding period; please see Table 1 for additional details). Currently we are represented at SOGS meetings by Morag Dick, Tim Hain, Emma Hobbs, Magda Konopka, and Meghan Murphy. Paul George, Aimee Lee Houde, John Loggie and Brian Sutton-Quaid have represented Biology as alternate representatives. Joel Slade was the principal representative until he resigned prior to the March council meeting, at which time Tim Hain was elected by acclamation to replace him.

Kevin Godbout is the current SOGS president, and he was recently re-elected by acclamation for a second term from 2014-2015. Since taking office, Mr. Godbout has sought feedback from students using a few referendums, most notably a vote over the issue of post-residency fees. Given the strong student support for the issue, we expect Mr. Godbout to campaign the university administration for a reduction in student fees for graduate students who have reached certain milestones such as a successful comprehensive exam. Another of Mr. Godbout's priorities for the coming term is getting the university to recognize the Grad Club as an educational space. Currently, SOGS pays the university about \$120,000 per year to use that space because it is considered "ancillary." If the Grad Club was re-labeled as educational space, this would greatly reduce costs. Graduate students would in turn benefit either through lower prices or greater net revenue, which could be put into travel grants and bursaries.

In December, Western announced that it would not renew its contract with Access Copyright for the licensed use of copyrighted materials. SOGS had taken a position against Access Copyright and graduate students can expect to benefit from the end of this contract. The university administration maintains a website with information about their relationship with Access Copyright here: [copyright.uwo.ca](http://copyright.uwo.ca). SOGS benefited directly from the contract not getting renewed: the university made \$29,000 available to the Society. Council has voted to spend this money through its bursary program over the next 3 years.

One of SOGS' most used services is the student health plan. We can happily report that all Western University post-docs can now opt-into the SOGS health plan for the remainder of the academic year (until September 1). The decision to extend this opt-in option beyond this year will be debated at a future council meeting.

Unfortunately, hanging over SOGS' accomplishments this year is the negative news that SOGS was named as a defendant in a defamation lawsuit filed by a former councillor. SOGS Executives have been instructed not to discuss the case with Council, so we regret that we do not have the information available to report on this lawsuit in any detail.

With the end of the semester upon us, this meeting marks one of my last opportunities to remind you that nominations for the Graduate Student Teaching Awards close on April 21. These awards are worth several hundred dollars to the winner, and will be presented at an awards ceremony in May.

SOGS is always looking for members interested in joining committees. Please visit the Society's website ([www.sogs.ca](http://www.sogs.ca)) for further information.

We will be happy to take any questions about SOGS's activities, and we wish you a happy and productive summer term.

Sincerely,

Tim Hain ([tjhain@uwo.ca](mailto:tjhain@uwo.ca), principal SOGS rep)

Morag Dick ([mdick23@uwo.ca](mailto:mdick23@uwo.ca))

Emma Hobbs ([ehobbs3@uwo.ca](mailto:ehobbs3@uwo.ca))

Magda Konopka ([mkonopka@uwo.ca](mailto:mkonopka@uwo.ca))

Meghan Murphy ([mmurp5@uwo.ca](mailto:mmurp5@uwo.ca))

Paul George ([pgeorge5@uwo.ca](mailto:pgeorge5@uwo.ca), alternate)

John Loggie ([jloggie@uwo.ca](mailto:jloggie@uwo.ca), alternate)

Brian Sutton-Quaid (past councillor)

Joel Slade (past councillor)

Table 1. 2013-2014 Attendance figures with sign-in and sign-out times. If the Out time is recorded as “end”, the councillor attended the entire meeting. Please note that a calculation error by the university meant that the biology department was originally allocated fewer councillors than in previous years, but this error was corrected after the January meeting. An administrative error by SOGS meant that one councillor’s attendance was not recorded in one month, which accounts for our 94% attendance for the first four meetings.

SOGS attendance figures			
Date	Name	In	Out
Oct-13	Brian Sutton-Quaid (alternate)	6:03	end
Oct-13	Emma Hobbs	6:03	7:05
Oct-13	Magda Konopka	6:03	end
Oct-13	Joel Slade	6:03	7:04
Nov-13	Brian Sutton-Quaid (alternate)	6:05	end
Nov-13	Emma Hobbs	6:05	7:30
Nov-13	Aimee Houde (alternate)	6:05	end
Nov-13	Joel Slade	6:05	end
Jan-14	Emma Hobbs	6:03	7:50
Jan-14	Paul George (alternate)	6:03	7:50
Jan-14	Meghan Murphy	6:03	7:50
Jan-14	Joel Slade	6:03	7:10
Feb-14	Morag Dick	6:03	end
Feb-14	John Loggie (alternate)	6:03	end
Feb-14	Magda Konopka	6:03	end
Feb-14	Meghan Murphy	6:03	7:35
Feb-14	Aimee Houde (alternate)	6:03	7:37
Mar-14	Morag Dick	6:05	end
Mar-14	Emma Hobbs	6:05	end
Mar-14	Magda Konopka	6:05	end
Mar-14	Paul George (alternate)	6:05	end
Mar-14	Tim Hain	6:05	end

## **PSAC Local 610 Union Representative Report**

Over the course of the term I was able to contribute to various aspects of the PSAC610 Local, and fulfill goals I set out at the start of my term, including:

1. Increased Steward Representation
  - This year 26 positions were filled – up from 18 last year
  - Targeted emails to departments and face to face contact
2. Updated Steward's Handbook
  - Assisted with revisions and updates to this year's handbook
3. Orientation Sessions
  - Led multiple welcome sessions for new TAs to increase PSAC610 awareness and recruit stewards
  - Academic worker hoodies as prizes to increase visibility on campus
4. Steward Training Sessions
  - Hosted two science-specific training sessions for new stewards
5. Steward Solidarity Event Guide
  - Generated a detailed guide regarding steward solidarity event hosting for stewards
  - Distributed to stewards in biosciences and other chief stewards
6. Green Office Program (GOP)
  - Enrolled the PSAC 610 office in the GOP and completed a detailed baseline report with Conan (office manager)
  - 100% of executive on board to make PSAC610 more environmentally-friendly and sustainable
7. Communication with Stewards/Members
  - Emailed distilled key pieces of information to steward network for distribution to members
8. Steward Solidarity Events
  - Answered any questions regarding event planning
  - Distributed guide, budget, and members list
  - Attended events to field questions and meet members

I have received a lot of positive feedback regarding these initiative, and am pleased to see more stewards who are making a strong impact in their department. Suggestions/ improvements for next term include:

1. Increasing steward representation in smaller/less localized departments
2. Working with The Wave to have pre-approved payments for SSEs < 30ppl
3. Keeping all documents/handbooks up-to-date
4. Campaigning for increased TA wages

Thank you so much for allowing me to represent you, as your 2013/14 SOBGS Union Rep, and I would love to hear any feedback you could provide to strengthen this role next term.

Julia Matheson  
[jmathes6@uwo.ca](mailto:jmathes6@uwo.ca)

## **Graduate Education Committee Report**

The BGEC serves two primary functions within the department. The committee ranks applications for departmental awards, and contributes internal rankings of applications to university wide awards such as NSERC and OGS. In addition, the committee discusses and can bring changes to aspects of graduate education in the department – several discussions on this subject are reported below. The committee is led by the graduate chair and includes faculty from across the streams, as well as two student representatives.

### *Committee Activities, September 2013-Present:*

#### Matters of Biology Graduate Education Policy:

- The role of readers was discussed and a clarification issued – readers are only expected to read a thesis one time, feedback from the reader should be conveyed to both the student and the supervisor. Following the provision of feedback, it is the responsibility of the student and the supervisor to address changes suggested.
- It was reported to the BEGC that due to financial constraints, the number of international students will be capped – this only applies to the students funded internally by WRGS, and will mostly affect master's candidates.
- Part 1 of the graduate student handbook was revised last year, but the chair (Beth MacDougall-Shackleton) encourages students to contact her with any suggestions for further improvement.
- Student representatives for BGEC reviewed part 2 of the handbook, and determined that the information was out-dated, but some aspects could be useful to new students. It is planned to have a revised version available in time for new students starting in May.

#### Awards + Applications:

- Departmental ranking of NSERC and OGS applications. Subsequently submitted to SGPS for integration into a university wide ranking.
- Ranking of applications for Lumsden Fellowship & Award.
- Ranking of travel award applications.
- Ranking of best thesis awards.
- Approval of committee selection for PhD defences.
- Review / approval of applications by new students, many excellent applications have been received by the department.

Catherine Dieleman ([cdielem@uwo.ca](mailto:cdielem@uwo.ca))

Toby Thorne ([tthorne5@uwo.ca](mailto:tthorne5@uwo.ca))

## **Undergraduate Education Committee Report**

This year the BUEC has placed much focus on mapping the curriculum so that courses are complimentary to one another, and aligned with the modules. In order to help achieve this goal, a new module and some new courses are being introduced.

### **Curriculum Mapping.**

Tom Haffie has been working on curriculum mapping to ensure that OCAV degree-level expectations align with Biology Department goals and course outcomes. There are a few issues regarding how the faculty creates course outlines and descriptions that are uniform department wide. One issue specifically is that faculty members and courses are transitory, thus consistency among teaching material and approaches would be beneficial. Other issues involve using the Owl website for curriculum mapping, which makes it difficult to edit and evaluate course level outcomes. Curriculum mapping is an ongoing issue that will need to receive more attention.

### **New courses and modules**

A new undergraduate module has been proposed: Honours Specialization in Biodiversity and Conservation. Currently, work is being done to fit certain courses into the module based on content and scheduling. The module is scheduled to start in September 2015.

A new insect biology (entomology) course taught by Dr. Jeremy McNeil is also being introduced in September 2014. The course will help to highlight the importance of insects in many ecosystems. The course will be a key component of the Biodiversity and Conservation module.

Currently, there are no microbiology courses available for undergraduate students, so an online course has been proposed for next year that Dr. Charlie Trick will teach initially. There is also discussion of creating more courses that focus on aquatic ecology and terrestrial ecology.

### **First Year Biology requirements**

There has been discussion regarding the prerequisites for first year biology. People come from different backgrounds (with or without high-school biology/adult education equivalents). Currently, there is no formal check for prerequisites, and it is up to the academic counselor to decide whether a student without prerequisites will be granted permission to take the class. It is unclear how these situations will be handled going forward. One option is to make requirements more rigid, or conversely, allow the students to take first year biology without the prerequisites while waiving their right to appeal their grades.

### **Departmental Retreat**

The departmental retreat is currently being organized. The purpose of the retreat is to get faculty (and possibly a few graduate and undergraduate representatives) together to discuss and brainstorm solutions for any issues or problems that may be occurring. This year's retreat will likely focus on how to get more students interested in biology, particularly evolution and ecology.

Mike Onley ([monley@uwo.ca](mailto:monley@uwo.ca))

Jenna Siu ([jsiu29@uwo.ca](mailto:jsiu29@uwo.ca))

## **Seminar Committee Report**

On January 20<sup>th</sup> 2014, Seminar Committee distributed a survey to the Department of Biology (though the BioAll mailing list) to gather information about the departmental seminar as perceived by all members. A total of 64 responses were gathered, 75% of which were from graduate students, and 31% of respondents were based off campus (the majority at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; AAFC). Thirty six percent of respondents attend seminar series regularly, 25% do not attend at all, while the rest attend only seminars relevant to their research or the ones that they find interesting. Attendance to the seminars is affected by the ability to get to main campus for 26 % of respondents, all of them graduate students (Fig.1). The majority of off-campus students indicated that if transportation to main campus was provided, they would be more likely to attend the departmental seminar (Fig. 2). To address this, the seminar committee attempted to run a trial shuttle from AAFC to main campus on Fridays to help with transportation to the seminar. Due to lack of response and low interest, the shuttle is not currently running, but may be worth pursuing in the future.

This year, the format of graduate student lunches with the speaker was altered. Instead of a weekly sign-up with sandwich catering, we switched to an open lunch with pizza provided. Although this seemed to boost attendance, in some weeks there were very few students, despite the free food and stimulating conversation. It was also surprising to see how few students from seemingly relevant labs or research areas attended certain speaker talks, including speakers hosted by their supervisor, and therefore missed a networking opportunity.

To boost relevant attendance, we are considering reinstating a sign-up process. This may help ensure students set time aside to meet the speaker and could reduce costs because we would have a better sense of how much food to order. However, we are concerned that students will feel intimidated by the sign-up and obligated to carry the conversation, thus decreasing attendance and causing students to miss out on a chance to broaden their education.

We are hoping to maintain a minimum attendance week to week. Pursuant to this, we have also discussed directly contacting labs who we think would enjoy and benefit from the seminar speaker's experience and encouraging them to attend. We would welcome your feedback on whether the drop-in system works or if a casual, open sign-up would be more effective. And we also welcome opinions on whether targeting labs directly would be a welcome service, versus the current bioall reminder system.

Each year, the seminar committee solicits nominations for, and elections of, invited speakers for the departmental seminar series. Participation in this process last year was low: we had fewer than six nominations, of which one had speaking fees exceeding the seminar budget, and fewer than 35 students voted for speakers. Due to the low level of participation, the election process lasted until late summer, when all of the fall speaker spots had been filled. We believe this was partly due to a lack of understanding of the role that a nominator/host plays during the speaker visit (e.g. scheduling, what the host pays for, are they reimbursed, etc.), and the reasons we have student-invited speakers. In the future, we will make the hosting guidelines available to encourage more participation during the nomination and election process. It should also be made clear that student-invited speakers can serve as a way to connect and network with researchers with whom one would want to collaborate or work with. This means that the speaker nominations can be a unique career-enhancement opportunity.

Lastly, we have received several complaints regarding texting/computing during the seminars. This is embarrassing to the department as a whole and rude to our invited guests. It is important to note that while there is a general encouragement to attend these seminars, they are not mandatory for degree completion – therefore, those who plan to text/compute during the seminar should simply not attend. We are aware this behaviour is not limited to graduate students, but it is important to set a good example and create a good impression of UWO’s students.

Joseph Stinziano ([jstinzi@uwo.ca](mailto:jstinzi@uwo.ca))  
Joanna Konopka ([jkonopk@uwo.ca](mailto:jkonopk@uwo.ca))  
Matthew Turnbull ([mturnbu7@uwo.ca](mailto:mturnbu7@uwo.ca))

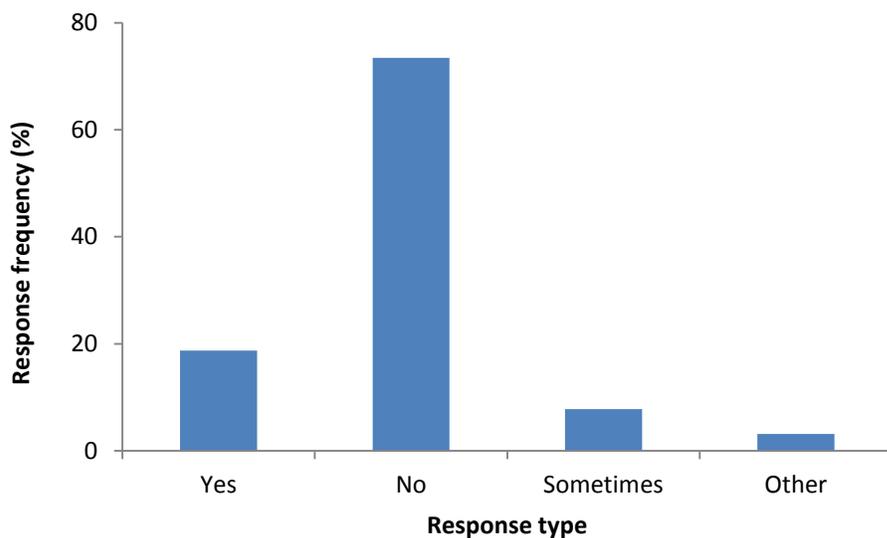


Fig.1. Frequency of response (%) of Biology Department members (n=64) at The University of Western Ontario answering a Departmental Seminar survey question: “Is your attendance to Departmental Seminars affected by your ability to get to main campus”.

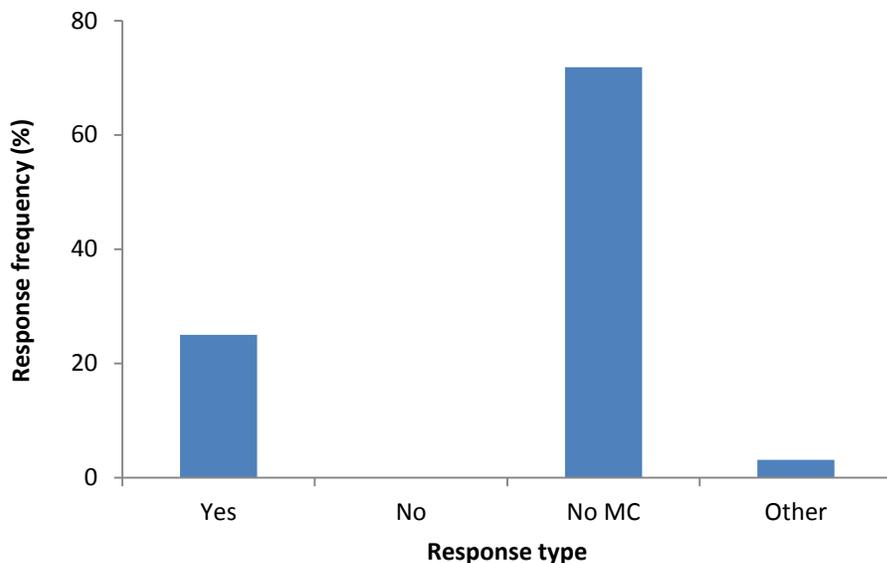


Fig.2. Frequency of response (%) of Biology Department members (n=64) at The University of Western Ontario answering a Departmental Seminar survey question: “Would you be more likely to attend the Departmental Seminar if transportation to campus from AAFC was provided”. Response types: Yes= Yes, it would help; No= No, I would not participate anyway; No MC= No, I am already on main campus.

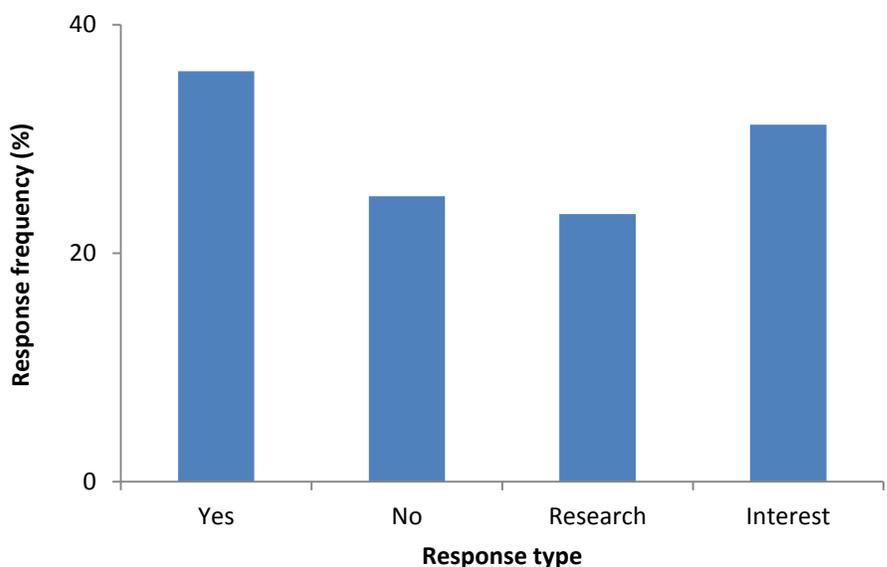


Fig.3. Frequency of response (%) of Biology Department members (n=64) at The University of Western Ontario answering a Departmental Seminar survey question: “Do you attend Departmental Seminars?”. Research= only the ones relevant to my research; Interest= only the ones I find interesting.

## **Outreach Committee Report**

### **1. Attended Outreach Committee meetings in October and February**

- actively participated in meeting discussions, including ideas for improving Fall Preview Day/March Break Open House, nature walks, and reaching the high school community
- developed an idea to reach the high school community
  - a three day enrichment program where high school students would be able to participate in their choice of day long seminars on hot topics in biology
  - an example seminar would be learning about next generation sequencing and the use of databases such as NCBI
- improvements for next year
  - jump start high school community outreach
  - encourage an increase in the number of meetings held by the Biology Outreach Committee in order to better facilitate outreach beyond Fall Preview Day and the March Break Open House

### **2. Represented SOBGS at the Fall Preview Day and March Break Open House**

- brought visual displays from our own labs to showcase research at Western
- made sure to be up to date on admission requirements and programs available in the Biology Department in order to be able to answer questions of prospective students and their parents
- assisted BUGS with the facilitation of crayfish demonstration
- improvements for next year
  - develop a demonstration for students that doesn't require lab space in order to reach more people (can be done at the biology information table)
  - actively recruit more grad student volunteers to assist BUGS with lab demonstrations

### **3. Updated SOBGS website on new Cascade server**

- SOBGS members, pictures, and events were updated at the beginning of the term thanks to Aimee Lee Houde
- future goals before the end of term
  - update changes in SOBGS representatives
  - update events panel to draw attention to the upcoming BBQ
  - put out a call for recent publications in order to update the publications webpage
- improvements for next year
  - make sure to gain access and training for Cascade within the first month of the new term in order to ensure ability to consistently update the webpage
  - ask Biology Graduates for input as to what they would like to see on the webpage and for photos to add to the slideshow

Trish Tully ([ttully@uwo.ca](mailto:ttully@uwo.ca))

Alison Camiletti ([acamilet@uwo.ca](mailto:acamilet@uwo.ca))

Richard Harris ([rharr166@uwo.ca](mailto:rharr166@uwo.ca))

## **Research Committee Report**

Dear SOBGS members,

It has been a pleasure working with all of you. I have immensely enjoyed my time as a Research committee representative. Thank you all for your valuable feedback and suggestions. Overall, the general mood of the committee was one of intense self-evaluation. A lot of pertinent and important ideas have been put forward and in the coming few months, the committee hopes to see them to fruition.

- The Department of Biology's research committee has been in the process of slowly restructuring the department in terms of clusters and strong research areas rather than individual research pursuits. This is being done in the hopes of fostering a stronger cross-collaborative research environment and increase the profile of our department across various research institutions.
- The committee has also been working on various pointers to establish and monitor measures of research success related to job readiness (research capacity, productivity and job readiness).
- The administration and this committee is working together with departmental-specific performance indicators such as funding (number and volume, grant success rate), people (number of researchers, number of post-docs, enrollment rates), research infrastructure (age and cost of equipment and facilities, operating expenses) and collaborations. Metrics (qualitative and quantitative) would provide us with a better picture of our department and be useful for future funding and collaborative opportunities.
- The idea of establishing a dedicated team for promoting out-reach and in-reach of our departmental research has been forwarded. Tumblr, Facebook and Twitter profiles that would be publishing recent events, grants, awards and publications in a timely manner would be valuable in increasing the web presence of our department.

Aniruddho Chokroborty-Hoque ([ahoque2@uwo.ca](mailto:ahoque2@uwo.ca))

## **Social Committee Report**

### **Hosted Events:**

We organized traditional events such as the Halloween and Festivus party, departmental t-shirt sales and the annual Bio Ball in April. We fundraised for Bio Ball by having bake sales and raffles. Due to the success that last years social committee had, we also fundraised with Carol grams in December. We built upon the success from last year and raised over \$200 (most of which was from administrative staff from other departments). In March, we organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Biology Coffee House, which also received a lot of positive feedback. Lastly, the slide show and awards at the Bio Ball seemed to be again, a great success.

### **New Initiatives:**

To help increase departmental participation and attendance to the Halloween party we added a new contest – the spookiest face contest. Members of the department were asked to send in pictures of themselves making their scariest faces and the entries were broadcasted in a slide show during the event. We also increased the number of volunteer bakes for the event, and the extra abundance of free food was definitely well received.

Another way we tried to increase departmental attendance was by bringing back alcohol at the events in B&GS. For the Festivus party we hired Great Hall catering to provide beer and wine, along with pizza. This meant allocating the entire Festivus budget to Great Hall and having very minimal decorations. Despite the effort it took to write an alcohol proposal and hire Great Hall, attendance did not increase.

To help fundraise for the Bio Ball, we added a new fundraiser this year. The week leading up to Valentine's Day we sold candy grams, which were little bags of candy and chocolate. The sender could personalize the candy gram with a message to the intended recipient. On Valentine's Day the candy grams were delivered by one of our members wearing a cupid costume. This was very effective, and we received a lot of positive feedback.

To increase bake sale profits we tried to have themed bake sales whenever we could. We bought themed tablecloths and decorations, and had one of our members dress up with the theme (for example, as cupid or as a leprechaun). Volunteer bakers were also encouraged to bake in line with the theme. This was very successful, and we generated more profit (~\$165 per bake sale) by increasing the visual appeal of our bake sales. We also held bake sales more frequently (~once a month, some times more often) and held them on the same day of the week. This helped to establish loyal customers.

Lastly, we held the Bio Ball at the Grand hall in Windermere Manor. This venue had never been used before, but many of the attendees were very impressed and we received a lot of positive feedback.

**Upcoming Events:**

An upcoming event will be the summer BBQ at the end of July/beginning of August at Gibbon's Park. We are also in the process of making a transition manual for next year's social committee.

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