

September 2014 SOBGS Meeting Minutes

September 3rd, 2014

In attendance:

Toby Thorne
Joseph Stinziano
Emma Hobbs
Aimee Lee Houde
Ricki Lovett
Matthew Turnbull
Trish Tully

Aniruddho Chokroborty Hoque
Meghan Murphy
Morag Dick
Tim Hain
Richard Harris
Catherine Dieleman

Minutes

2:03 – Meeting called to order

- A.L. Houde: BRGR report
- Abstracts close soon, photo contest is still open, received poster boards last year from department of Dentistry for use at BGRF, the speaker has been scheduled so as to not overlap with the department seminar, there will be a post-BGRF grad club social starting this year

2:05 – A.L. Houde reports on department retreat

- Concern expressed over low graduate publication rate and high proportion of grads entering year X, but this is a nation-wide trend
- Low proportion of grads (10-15%) go on in academia, more professional development opportunities are needed for alternatives
- On second day, mentioned less money available for TAs, especially for year X students; generated ideas for more recruitment, publications, and writing workshops

2:07 – A.L. Houde announces call for SOBGS nominations will be sent September 8th

- all positions open except for one seminar committee spot (J. Konopka)
- may self-nominate, 2 week election period
- transitional reports would be helpful, current exec members should give thought to preparation

2:08 – T. Hain delivers SOGS report

- summer meetings relatively quick
- some controversy over Gazette article on “how to date your TA”
- reports being read directly into SOGS minutes (i.e. not opened for discussion or questions) included a presidential report on the status of the lawsuit
- lawsuit against individuals in the SOGS executive dropped, but lawsuit against SOGS as an organization continues
- wrote a transitional manual for next principal SOGS representative
- J. Stinziano: now that SOGS is the target of the lawsuit, can we demand information about its basis, our defense, etc.?

- T. Hain: the SOGS president has been absent, but will pursue those questions when he returns
- M. Turnbull: SOGS was already named in the lawsuit, still no information forthcoming

2:11 – M. Dick: was department retreat productive?

- J. Stinziano: found it interesting that publication count is only calculated based on publications *during* completion of degree when many submissions occur after defense
- A.L. Houde: higher number of year X students than thought, but comparable to national average; highlights workload and funding issues more than student attitudes

2:14 – T. Thorne delivers graduate education committee report

- No meeting, Vanier + donor awards ongoing
- A.L. Houde: this committee also updated graduate handbook part 2 to include an online expense system guide

2:15 – J. Stinziano delivers seminar committee report

- Speakers booked and scheduled, exciting year ahead

2:16 – A. Hoque delivers research committee report

- Promoting department visibility is a high priority, working with Dr. Smith closely
- Meeting with UWO Science Communications and PR team to talk about outreach and publishing, will be contacting faculty to ask for interesting research stories, then publishing these stories publicly through UWO Communications or posting on a department blog
- More details forthcoming following a committee meeting with the dean
- A.L. Houde: does this committee require another graduate student member?
 - A. Hoque: would be useful to have someone soliciting stories, should be okay with Dr. Creed, especially need someone in other research streams, could use help with the blog

2:19 – T. Tully delivers outreach committee report

- A.L. Houde: do you have website access?
 - T. Tully: yes, have been making changes, not approved by Vicky yet
 - R. Harris: has been updating BGRF website if assistance is needed

2:22 – R. Lovett delivers social committee report

- Good reviews of biology formal, emailed kind comments from award nominations to faculty
- Barbecue went well and was under budget
- 10 page transition manual written including budget, contacts, venues, and feedback

2:24 – A.L. Houde delivers chair report

- Department is hiring four new positions including biological adaptation, sustainability, complex system modeling, and one for the professional development degree
- Dr. Kelly now the acting chair
- Mustang Market running to buy materials but always requires PI approval, all chemicals should be going through ChemBioStores
- Higher proportion of incoming domestic students in line with department goals
- Between May and June, a student sent an email concerning problematic supervisor behaviour towards their students and asked about supervisor training; A.L. Houde met with Dr. Macdougall-Shackleton to discuss the issue; supervisors undergo standard anti-bullying training, Beth issued a reminder at the June faculty meeting; there is a list of options for graduate

students on the SOBGS FAQ if you have experienced or witness inappropriate supervisor behaviour; the learning curve and power differential does contribute to under-reporting of conflicts; could draft a student-supervisor code of conduct if the issue is ongoing

- M. Turnbull: why not make a code of conduct anyways?
 - o A.L. Houde: not aware of other departments having one, relatively strong option
- M. Dick: why not make it a faculty of science issue? Problems are not specific to the department of biology, should be dealt with top-down
- T. Thorne: code of conduct could go both ways, may also serve as a guideline for student expectations
- C. Dieleman: what would the enforceability of the code of conduct be? Would it be followed?
- A.L. Houde: agreement in faculty meeting that this is a major problem, a code setting out what is and is not acceptable could empower both sides
- T. Hain: sounds like something that should be university-wide, may have been started in 2012, but can't find the final product, may raise the issue through the Senate
- A.L. Houde: training and enforcement are mismatched, policy must be paired with repercussions, can bring up at the department meeting
- R. Harris: this involved 1-2 supervisors?
- A.L. Houde: it was a small group but still a big problem, students should go to Beth if help is needed
- T. Tully: remember that reporting is likely to be far lower than occurrence

2:38 – Thanks to last year's executive, reminder to consider transition manuals, meeting adjourned