BioGrads Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 8th, 2009

Chair (Martin):
-welcome back to everyone

Sports Rep (Ann)
-softball was cancelled owing to rain
-will be organizing a squash ladder for biograds (which can be done with an on-line program through Athletic Services)
-intramurals are up and running and there are a number of biograd teams

QUBS rep (Cory):
-no updates yet

GC Rep (Scott):
-the first Graduate Committee meeting was held this past week because NSERC applications were due
   -NSERC rankings will be done early next week and forwarded to the School of Graduate studies
   -OGS rankings will be done following the Oct 22nd deadline
-last year, two major concerns were brought up:
   -one dealt with measures to limit overtime students while the other dealt with standardizing format and scheduling of committee meetings
   -for now, dealing with the problem of overtime students has been set aside
   -the focus at the moment is thinking about ways to make committee meetings more standard and consistent across the department, but there are many opinions about this at the moment
   -Scott informed the Graduate Committee of the BioGrads’ effort over the last year to produce evaluations for graduate courses
      -members of the committee were interested and looking forward to getting feedback
      -at this time, it is not clear if this will be formalized, but it will at least be a useful tool for professors to get clear and anonymous feedback from students

Social Reps (Tara and Cat)
-the Welcome Back Bbq was a success
   -total cost was 200$
   -about 45 students (new and returning) attended
   -thanks again to Kat and Scott for providing the venue
-Halloween Party
   -no house currently available for a house party
   -one option is to choose a bar where everyone can meet up
   -another option would be to attend the SCB (Society of Conservation Biology) Halloween party
      -may have an endangered vs invasive species theme
-would include an entrance fee that would be a donation to the SCB
-venue is still a problem for the SCB: looking for an idea of where to have it
  -one idea is Monte’s (above the Tir Nan Og)
-might be able to get some funding from the SGPS
  -but we will have to confirm that this would not affect our ability to
    receive funding for the Holiday Party in December
-one concern about merging with the SCB party is that if the party gets a bit too
  rowdy, it could affect the SCB image
  -one way to limit this would be to set reasonable hours for the “official”
    party and allow people to carry on later if they choose to

-QUBS Weekend: Saturday/Sunday (Oct 24-25th)
  -total cost will be 40$ per person
    -35$/person to cover accommodation for one night with brunch the next day
    -5$/person to cover the cost of dinner (bbq) on the first evening
  -right now priority is to announce the event and price and get an idea of the number of
    people who will be attending
  -will get help organizing event as we go
  -will generate a list of potential activities

-Coffee Tuesday:
  -started off really well
  -attendance is slowly decreasing
  -so far, it is a self-sustaining activity
  -will re-evaluate the viability of the activity at the next meeting

RTP Rep (Julie):
  -nothing to report

Faculty Rep (Rhiannon):
-October Faculty meeting took place earlier today

**Budget Cuts**
- major focus is talking about plan for budget cuts over the next couple years
  -at the last QFA meeting, it was mentioned that owing to budget constraints,
    maternity leave and sick leave funding might be cut
  -those on leave would still receive their salary
  -change would be that no funding would be available to provide a replacement for
    the person on leave
  -if Faculty across the board (whole university) take a 1% salary cut, the money recovered
    would be enough to cover the major budget issues
    -this salary cut would not come as a salary reduction, but a reduction in salary
      increase
    -in the Biology Department, an initial survey of the Faculty showed unanimous
      support of the salary cut – if it doesn’t go through at the university level, it was
      mentioned that the Biology Faculty could potentially take a cut as a donation to
      the department
  -other universities that are being faced with budget constraints are agreeing to a reduction
    in salary increases
-entrance salary for professors at Queen’s is 96 thousand dollars (a lot higher than what it was in the mid-90s)

**Flu update**
-the university will be tracking the virus throughout the Faculty
-professors need to sign a special form if they are sick

**Curriculum changes**
-currently some discussion occurring around the Biology 334 course
-at the moment, this course is able to count as one of the Chemistry requirements for undergraduate students majoring in Biochemistry
-acCORDING to some professors, this is having an effect on the quality of the course in terms of limiting the depth of the material that can be covered
-one proposed amendment was to have this course no longer count as a chemistry requirement but instead have it count as one of the physiology requirements

-Martin raised the issue that not all departments have the same number of people and support staff
-for example, some departments have much fewer students but much greater support staff
-if this is indeed the case, should this not be considered when dealing with budget cuts so that the impact is more fairly distributed across departments
-Martin has volunteered to look into this issue and follow up with a draft letter to the Vice-Principal Academic

**SGPS Reps (Chad and Chris)**
-Chad is considering running for the SGPS presidency (paid position, 600$/month)
-currently, there are few science or biology reps on any of the committees so it would be beneficial to have some representation

-SGPS Finance Committee updates:
-the committee processes a lot of grant applications and provides a lot of money to graduate students (many of these applications are for emergency funds)
-there is talk of increasing graduate student fees to the SGPS in order to make salaries for committee members more attractive/appropriate
-overall, there is a surplus in the budget and they are thinking of how to spend it
-planning on getting a financial consultant
-the housing committee is still thinking of buying a house with some of this surplus
-alternative ideas include merging with the Grad Club or creating another Common Ground space in the JDUC after the new Student Center opens
-the Grad Club finances are suffering and this is a concern since they receive funding from the SGPS
-may be some management issues
-the SGPS will be looking into this

-SGPS is looking into negotiating a new service agreement with the AMS (walk-home, bus, etc...)

**Academic Reps (Mark)**
-not present (no report)
Secretary (Anneli):
-nothing to report

Chair (Martin):
-QUBS weekend e-mail to be sent out announcing date and cost
-plan on merging with the SCB Halloween party and look into venues
-will work on draft letter to Vice-Principal Academic about budget cuts