

## **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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 24-25<sup>th</sup>)
  - 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