

BiGCoW Meeting Minutes – Friday October 28th, 2011

Meeting times for the rest of the year:

- Friday, Nov 25th, 2pm
- Dec meeting TBA

Staff and Faculty Representative (Kat Stewart)

- Most of the Faculty meeting was dedicated to the Dean's discussion regarding funding decreases
- There are some issues raised regarding grad students not completing WHMIS refreshers and the disability quiz. Supervisors have a legal ability to require their students to do so.
- They are considering changing the grading system once again
- They are considering adding another teaching award so that there would be 2 awards. It may be for 'creative teaching'.

PhD Enrollement Issue:

- The Dean brought up that our department has low enrollment of graduate students. We have the worst masters:PhD ratio in all of the departments of Queen's, with a 2:1. This reflects poorly upon Queen's as an institution across Canada.
- They are trying to come up with incentives to increase PhD enrollment.
- A point was brought up that some students are being encouraged to shorten their master's to go instead into a PhD. This may be causing a disservice to the department and Queen's University, as it decreases inter-university collaboration as well as other costs.
- The less PhDs the university takes in, the less QGS we get, therefore the less funding for the Department overall. However professors cannot take on students without guaranteeing funding for the entirety of their degree, so it is a cyclical problem.

Graduate Teaching Award

- The idea of a graduate teaching award was brought up. The professors do not get credit for running graduate courses, so there is currently not much of an incentive to run these courses
- Would it be possible for BiGCoW to create a graduate teaching award? This can be run by the academic coordinators.
- There should be a survey, both anonymous and written, to find out which profs deserve the awards
- We need to vote on funding this award, but need 2/3 attendance in order to vote. The vote will be held at the next meeting.
- This may help to demonstrate that graduate students are benefitting from these courses, and acknowledging their achievements may instill change in the curriculum.
- The academic coordinators are considering creating a plaque for this award
- Internal funding (OGSST) for students who are overtime was cut, so you do not have grants to apply for additional funding

Social coordinators (Celia Symons and Laura Doubleday (absent))

Christmas Party:

- For advertising, divide the responsibilities amongst the committee and visit the different labs in BioSciences to promote the event
- In previous years, they have held the event in a side-room of Ban Righ. They would like to hold the event somewhere other than the atrium of BioSciences this year.
- Off-campus may be better than on-campus, as well night-events may be better than day-events.
- An email will be sent to all the biology professors to ask them what event possibilities would most likely increase their attendance at the Christmas event
- Last year the event was held mid-December. This year, we should aim for Friday, Dec 9th.
- Need to check whether children will be allowed to be at the events; some bars do not allow children past 11pm.
- Maybe ask restaurants if they have a back room that we can rent for the event. Potentially the Hotel's confederation room for rent.
- Usually the meals are buffet-style

Sports Coordinator (Adriana Lopez (absent))

- No new news

SGPS Representatives (Derek Gray & Open position)

- Last SGPS meeting, Derek brought up the problems that the Biology graduate students had with registering for courses at the beginning of the year
- Derek sent the opinions of the graduate students in biology to SGPS regarding this issue so that they are aware of the impact this has had on graduate students

Graduate Committee Representative (Niraj Kumar)

- There is no departmental ranking in OGS/NSERC anymore
- The department is finding it difficult to keep up with the names of students who graduate on the website.
- Niraj put through that, from the student perspective, it is important to keep the names of past students on the website so that there is recognition of their work at the university, as well it is beneficial for professor to show how many previous students they have supervised.
- For the disability online course, if you take it too quickly, you are disqualified and need to take it again, because you did not 'read it well enough'.

Issue of overtime graduate students

- Discussed graduate students who are overtime on their degree at the meeting.
- The idea was mentioned after the meeting that after a certain amount of time, graduate students should be bumped down to part-time automatically. This could be 3 years for masters and 5 years for PhD. This ramification would affect their funding and potential loans, so would be an incentive to finish on time.

- An argument is that overtime students should be addressed case-by-case, as sometimes it is not the fault of the student for taking a longer degree
- There was also the argument of international students, who may lose their Canadian-status privileges if they are put onto part-time
- An email will be sent soon to the biology graduate students that if you are going overtime, you will have to go in front of the graduate committee and present your case in order to explain why you are overtime
- Another argument brought up was that sometimes there is also an influence of the supervisor on why the student is overtime on their degree.
- Will there be any ramifications to the supervisors if the student is overtime? There are only negative consequences to the student; will this be addressed?
- This topic will be brought up at the next BiGCoW meeting and we will ask biology graduate students how they feel about this development

RTP Representative (Roslyn Dakin (absent))

- No new news

Treasurer (Chris Baird (absent))

- No new news

Academic Coordinators (Sarah Wallace and Amanda Xuereb)

- There are no new updates or events written on the Moodle account they created as of yet
- They added a ‘comic relief’ section so that people could post funny TA events that have happened to share with others (so long that names or identifiers are not used)
- A link was also added to SGPS
- It may get more traffic at the end and beginning of semesters, when TA’s would like to post their teaching notes.

QUBS Representative (Ann McKellar (absent))

- No new news

Final comments:

- The SCB Halloween party was last night; the graduate student attendance is lower than last year.
 - This may be due to either a busy week for graduate students, or because the party was on a Thursday
 - It may also be because Halloween was on a Monday, so it was an odd time to be having a party.
 - In the past, there has been more graduate students than undergraduate students. This may be more due to it being easier to spread the word amongst graduate students than undergraduate students, or advertising late.

- Are we going to be doing the Food Drive for the Salvation Army again this year?
 - In previous years, there has been a prize for the lab that brings the most cans, however the same lab has won for multiple years. Not much participation in the past
 - We will do the Drive again this year, need to find ways to increase participation

- PSAC should be sending out an email that highlights the responsibilities of the departmental steward position on the TA union, so that it may entice people to take on the position.