

Meeting minutes: September 28, 2012

Cat Dale (Chair)

1. Currently Biograds stuff from the BBQ and for Coffee time is being stored in the Aarssen lab. Cat is going to get in contact with John Topping about a permanent closet for storage so that we have a clear idea of what we actually have
2. Met with Meghan Craine, the RA Union Rep. Her main argument is that students need protection. Cat made it clear that RA's are different among the faculties and that we are willing to participate in an information session. This is a time sensitive issue as a Union drive can only last for one year. There will be two info sessions held at the Grad Club and funded by PSAC. One will be Tuesday October 9, 2012 at 5:30 and the other Thursday October 11th, 2012 at 1:30. There was some debate about the time for the second session, but we decided to keep it as Meghan suggested. Important to send an email out before urging all Biograds to attend one session regardless of whether you agree or disagree.
3. Have contacted Anna with 1DegreeBio about helping sponsor an event (potentially grad student research day) but haven't heard back yet

Amanda Tracey (Secretary/Co-chair)

No news

On behalf of **Vanya Rohwer (QUBS Rep) *absent***

- 1) Queen's received an anonymous donation of 700,000 big ones to buy a share of the Elbow Lake property. This has been in the works for about 5 years (i think), so is a great accomplishment.
- 2) The QUBS executive board is planning a meeting for the near future; meeting date unknown.
- 3) This final news item is a plug in search of free labour..... This Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, is a work bee at Elbow Lake to clean the place up for winter. The work bee is planned and hosted by the good Dr. Steve Lougheed, who will kindly provide a BBQ lunch for volunteers. Ride to work site leaves at 9:00am from the front of Biosci.

Ally Hill (Treasurer)

1. Still looking for some of the receipts from the BBQ to reimburse the appropriate people. John Topping is reimbursing the BBQ 250\$
2. The chili lunch before EEB brought in 120\$ (and 2 euros, thanks Bob). This covers the 30\$ spent on chili supplies and 30\$ extra spent on the BBQ
3. Also made 7\$ on bottle returns

Kate Mathers (SGPS Rep) and Trevor Snider (SGPS Rep –*absent*)

1. Missed the first SGPS meeting because the website is very out of date
2. Meetings are second Tuesday of every month

Eric Fedosejevs (Graduate Committee Rep)

(From Eric's detailed notes – comments from committee underneath some points)

Grad studies committee meeting and dept. staff meeting (Sept. 11/12 and Sept. 13/12)

1. Bob proposed eliminating the requirement that chairs of MSc defenses be external to the department. This was suggested by the SGS to reduce overhead and other departments are moving in this direction. However, it was rejected at the departmental staff meeting as faculty felt that it would cheapen the quality of the MSc degree to not have an external voice.
2. The department will no longer be granting extensions to grad programs. Background: past a certain time, overtime students must formally request an extension to continue in their grad program. For M.Sc. students, this occurs after 5 years, and for Ph.D. students after 7 years. In the past, the department was relatively lenient in granting extensions. However, this resulted in some students going vastly overtime (there is currently a Ph.D. 12), which places a large cost burden on the department (as no government funding is received for these students), reduces the number of places available for new students, and increases the department's average time to completion.

What this change means is that MSc students will now have a maximum of 5 years to complete their degrees and PhD students will have 7. Warning letters will be sent out in the 1st and 8th month of a student's final year.

3. Course requirements will now have to be completed within 4 months of the end of the semester, otherwise an incomplete grade will be assigned. This is the current SGS policy, while the biology department was previously more lenient.

Biology 897 will remain an exception to this –I think— (see below)

4. Grad enrollment. The number of grad students is expected to decrease to approx. 60 by the next academic year. This is down from a peak of 130 two years ago, and is the result of both funding constraints and faculty who are winding down and no longer taking on students.

5. There was a proposal to modify the seminar course so that it would only last a single year and require attending fewer seminars. However, this proposal was rejected at the staff meeting.
6. Grad courses. Due to the decline in student enrollment and persistent complaints about the quality of graduate courses, the grad. course curriculum is going to be substantially revised. Many courses on the book will be eliminated, and two new required flagship courses will be introduced: one for MCIB, and one for EEB. The idea is to develop top-quality courses that will be co-taught by various faculty members. The timeline for this to happen is tentatively next fall.
7. TA hours. I brought up the issue of TAships that go over hours to the grad. studies committee. Apparently they have been hearing a lot of griping about this recently. After some discussion, they supported the implementation of a voluntary exit survey after the end of each semester, on which TAs will be able to estimate how many hours they have actually worked compared to what they were paid for. The idea is that this will help the department to identify and address problem TAships. I'll be putting this together at the end of the semester.

Everyone agreed this was a good idea, should send an email out if Bob doesn't

8. Lack of TAs. With the declining number of grad students, there are no longer enough of us to fill all of the TAships available. Joanne was only barely able to do so this semester, and likely will not be able to in the Winter. Although nothing has been decided yet, it seems inevitable that some TAships will have to go to undergraduates in the future.

For the most part the Committee was strongly opposed to this idea. Some ideas included having Undergrad TA's as markers, with a Grad Student super TA, or having them take on TA ships with marking only.

Additional items from the department staff meeting (Sept. 13/12)

9. Going to leave all of the RTP stuff for the RTP rep.
10. Early to mid-October: department celebration at Elbow lake. Haven't heard anything further about this since then.

11. Course cram. There was an issue last year where at least one student was selling tutoring services on a website called course cram for a course that they were actively TAing. They were apparently tutoring 300 students at >\$100/each. Dept. still deciding on consequences as of staff meeting. As a reminder, TAs are not permitted to tutor for courses that they are currently TAing.

We would like to see the actual regulations for tutoring while TAing written out clearly.

Grad student research day

12. During the GSC meeting, Wayne Snedeen brought up the idea of holding a Grad Student Research Day this fall. This could either involve grad students giving a 3-minute thesis-like summary of their research, or presenting a poster. Among other motivations, the idea is that this would promote greater sense of community in the department and help promote communication between people working in different research areas (i.e. EEB and MCIB), who have become increasingly segregated over time. All members of the committee were strongly in favour of the idea, and the final suggestion was to hold it at QUBS/Elbow lake, with the department providing transportation and refreshments (possibly including free beer).

Wayne asked me, as the GSC rep., to help organize the event, as he is currently swamped with teaching. I have since spoken to some of you about it, and the general feeling seems to be that it would be better to hold off until the early New Year, given all of the other events already occurring this fall. However, Wayne and some of the other GSC members would still really rather do it this fall. What are your thoughts on the matter?

Everyone agreed that if WE are to organize it, we want it in January.

Stephanie Greer and Courtney Holden (Social Coordinators)

1. Elbow Lake weekend is October 20-21. Cost will be 12\$ each and a potluck dinner and breakfast, will send out an email and start spreading the word
2. Coffee time. There was lots of debate about changing it to a lunch or changing the time and location. The final decision was to keep the same time, Tuesday at 10AM, up the price to \$1.00, keep the coffee time cream in a separate fridge, move to the third floor lounge, have different members of the committee run it every week to divide the time commitment up more evenly, and have people bake and bring in treats.
3. We will have a lunch instead of coffee hour once a month. The first lunch will be on the last Tuesday in October.
4. Usually the Biograds go to the SCB Halloween party, but no word on it yet.

Kim Lemmen (RTP Rep)

1. Some suggestions for future meetings with the faculty candidates: Should be more like an interview (more intensity) as opposed to just a meet and greet, should be asking things about mentoring and teaching, and situational questions, treat them as if they were a potential supervisor of your own
2. The next luncheon with a candidate is next week.
3. Will keep up to date on tenure committees

Donya Danesh and Ariel Gittens (Academic Coordinators) *absent*

No news

Other items:

1. All voted in favour to have Ally Hill also represent us as the Staff and Faculty Rep.
2. Still have Alumni Liaison and Sports Coordinator open, Amanda will email Biograds with the info.
3. Meeting time will be 3PM in the future