

BGSC Exec Meeting Agenda - September 28, 2020

1. Motion to approve agenda for Sept 28, 2020
 - a. Hana, Peiwen
2. Motion to approve minutes from August 24, 2020
 - a. Ryan, Adam
3. Updates
 - a. Update from co-chairs (Regan & Nell)
 - i. Welcome to council
 - ii. Our main issues this year will be supporting grad students through the ongoing pandemic (funding concerns, online TAs, mental health, socialization), re-gaining the vote on faculty hiring committees, initiating and supporting EDI initiatives in the dept and uni, workplace harassment and discrimination survey, and reviewing our BGSC constitution
 - iii. Virtual BGRS went really well, thanks Coco & team
 - iv. Mentorship program is up and running well, thanks Hayden and Heather
 - v. Orientation games night & trivia went really well, thanks Hayden, Heather & Riley
4. Updates from representatives:
 - a. QUBS (Adam) -
 - i. Adam meeting with Shelley and Steve soon
 - b. Faculty and RTP (Hana) -
 - i. Last meeting Sep 3
 1. processing applications to return to campus
 2. For winter term, pretty much everything online except lab course, hoping to have Biol 537 students on campus in winter term
 - ii. Results from survey about how pandemic affecting grad students, main issues are lack of progress in research, financial concerns, difficulties focussing at home, trying to get office space, mental health concerns, facilitating a safe return to campus
 - iii. Next meeting in a week
 - c. Alumni/Graduate Committee (Jessie)
 - i. Alumni seminar series will kick up again this fall
 - d. SGPS (Emilie & Chloe) –
 - i. SGPS meeting Sep 15
 - ii. VP graduate (Courtney) – covid tuition for intl students reduced to domestic tuition for remainder of degree if their degree was extended (for students who extended to December only). Send email to Courtney or Justine at vp.graduate@sgps.ca if you want to apply for this.
 - iii. New paid position – SPGS looking for microbiologist to assist in covid, paid position for anyone who knows how to run a PCR (<https://forms.gle/Mvg9ovLoGtBn9TJbA>), don't need to be queens student
 - iv. Dental and health coverage grants open, contact Tamara Mitterer

- v. Orientation week (Madison Danford) – they ran events, went over new ARC procedures (anyone using the ARC needs to do self assessment form, book timeslot online)
- vi. International Student Rep (Kiran Birdee) – setting up monthly international student check ins, to join network contact her at international@sgps.ca
- vii. Complaint – Sean Mars from history dept had complaint – even though students don't have research spaces yet they are paying full tuition, apparently happening across multiple departments. Also, students using on campus research spaces need to fill in form every two weeks saying what they've accomplished from being on campus – discourages students to use space you're paying for. Is this happening in biology?
 - 1. Regan: you can apply for access to office space (about a month ago, email from Brian, extenuating circumstances). You are supposed to fill out a form every few weeks saying what you've accomplished, not sure if this is being checked up on in biology. Everyone should absolutely fill out Microsoft Teams for contact tracing though.
- viii. International students not allowed to TA or RA if they're out of the country – this policy has not been communicated well by Queen's, Anthony talking with PSAC arguing this is a discriminatory policy in our current environment – contact Anthony Lomax to report
 - 1. Peiwen: Didn't get any complaints or questions from people in the biology dept
- ix. Grad student travel grants – lots of money raised for travel for grad students for conferences etc, question raised was can they change those funds to allocate it to something else, raised across multiple departments.
 - 1. Nell: spoke to Brian, said should use for virtual conferences which often still have a fee. Fund is only \$200 and could probably cover a handful of conferences.
- x. Cooking with Grandmas – Madison Danford athletics@sgps.ca running Cooking with Grandmas on Sept 30 on Zoom, cooking class and virtual sit down and eat together. Sign up contact Madison.
 - 1. https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9sNal-rKQZyrgiMta121cQ?fbclid=IwAR2DYdxR7TDfw46BW2Up1VvY5oXOZUns0lCnOXCGaje6XIsr7PneDvxMjHI
 - 2. That is the cooking with grandma's sign up link
- xi. Peiwen: Can students opt out of SPGS health and dental for only a semester? Emilie: No, must be a year.
- e. International (Harsha & Peiwen)
 - i. Updates from the International Student Commission have been forwarded to int'l grads in the department
 - 1. Updates received a week ago and sent out to intl grad students
 - ii. Planning on a virtual gathering to meet new int'l grades -- poll sent. Once we decide a date and time, all are welcome to join.
- f. Union (Heather) –

- i. No meetings yet this semester, email saying possible reimbursement from additional expenses from working from home (internet usage, office supplies) – more on that hopefully next meeting
- g. EDI (Sam & Kristen) –
 - i. Meeting on Friday
 - 1. New undergrad rep joining committee
 - 2. Grad scholarship
 - a. Biology Faculty’s Award of Excellence
 - b. Donation site set up, people have started to contribute
 - 3. Field biology scholarships
 - a. SCB contributes one time \$500 and likely 300 per year after
 - b. Advancement said they’ll fundraise post-covid so that award can be provided on continuing basis after
 - 4. EDI panel discussion, working on ensuring support structures for BIPOC students, reaching out to other departments to see if they want to collaborate
 - 5. Sent out letter for EDI suggestions for undergrad committee
 - a. Increase advertisement for recruitment
 - b. Teaching workshops to decolonize course material
 - c. Departmental equity training
 - 6. Sent out letter to grad committee of suggestions for EDI actions, no response so far
 - 7. Want to work on data collection, survey or open form with EDI committee inviting members of equity-seeking groups to discuss suggestions for future action items
 - a. Revisiting hiring practices, want to include EDI questions in those practices
 - 8. Outdoor skills development EDI subcommittee
 - a. First meeting today
 - b. Funding related
 - i. Funding to connect individuals with outdoors club, funds set aside to pay outdoors club fee
 - ii. Gift cards for apparel – for gear rental program, would work better for bigger items, don’t want sharing rain jackets – set funds aside
 - c. Seminar series that would introduce people to outdoor skills
 - i. Socially distanced meetup in park and work on specific skill to build outdoors skillset
 - d. Census of biology and environmental science labs to see what equipment is available for people to use – might not need to purchase this
 - e. Cultivating safe spaces in field work and field courses – setting policies for students and profs and stations you’re collaborating with, e.g. adding a section on racism and

microaggressions to the long form of risks students sign, which is currently focussed on physical risks

- i. Will work on finding funding for program, including individual funding for people to get involved
 - ii. Reach out to other schools in field course program, see if any ideas they're starting with that we could apply here
 - iii. Reach out to outdoor recreation equity groups, get input
 - iv. Will look into where to get field equipment e.g. MEC
 - v. Start drafting survey for grads and undergrads to get student input on what resources, outdoor skills, gear, what constraints and barriers they face in doing field work and field courses
 - h. Post-doc (Wendy) - none
 - i. Undergrads (Danica) –
 - i. Couple of events coming up –
 - 1. Get involved in Biology, introduce to clubs and research opportunities
 - 2. game night
 - 3. Grad 101 night – trying to get more info out there about grad programs
5. Update from Social coordinators (Ryan & Emma) -
- a. Re-start BEERS & CIDERS
 - i. Work on making it virtual
 - b. Socially-distanced weekend hikes and walks
 - i. E.g. Rock Dunder, Charleston Lake, Lemoine Point, make a schedule different weekends to meet up, arrange transportation
 - ii. Fort Fright – will run almost as normal but with social distancing guidelines, limit number of people – so we should book in advance. Emma can put out a poll on biograd fb page. Group rate for 20+ people – 20 instead of 25 to get in.
 - c. Netflix party movie/ tv screenings
 - i. New David Attenborough doc series
 - d. Virtual wine and paint night?
 - i. Paint same Bob Ross painting from home over Zoom
 - ii. Everyone would need their own supplies
 - e. Ryan: biweekly biograd trivia
 - i. Invite undergrad students
 - ii. If grad club trivia still on, work with them to get questions going
 - f. Holiday party??
 - i. Usually second or third week of Dec
 - ii. Probably won't run because of covid

- g. Thanksgiving get together over Zoom
6. Update from Academic (Hayden) –
 - a. Undergrad academic coordinator for Grad 101 is looking for 2 other grad students in cellular or genetic biology to be part of their panel, contact Hayden for info – Hayden will send it out to Biograd listserv
 7. BGRS update (Allen) - ?
 - a. Currently developing to do list and timeline, making committee soon
 - b. Will need to contact speakers, funding, resources
 - c. Finances - speaker honorariums probably only thing to pay for, Allen applying for funds
 - d. Aiming for running BGRS in April, after 537 presentations
 - e. Format
 - i. Pre-recorded talks – Allen will poll everyone to see if this appeals
 - ii. Poster sessions – zoom breakout rooms
 - iii. Find BIPOC plenary, ask one of new profs (Alex or Maria) to be plenary
 8. Some initial tasks:
 - a. TA resource database
 - i. An idea for a TA resource database was put forward in 2017 but it never became available. This would likely take the form of a shared google drive where TAs can share resources, slides, and educational tips for the large-sized TA heavy courses including 102, 103, 201, 202, 205, 206, and now 212. Smaller upper years courses could be included as well.
 1. Making google drive, sending out email to get people to send in teaching material
 2. Hayden can work on this
 - b. Guide to Graduate Studies update
 - i. This project has effectively been forgotten due to the general slow movement of the Graduate Council. We will have to put pressure on the council to make these changes happen. Jessie has the current version of the document but it may require additional work. The current Guide to Grad Studies page ends mid-word and provides no information for thesis submission or defense.
 1. Need to meet with Grad Council
 - ii. <https://biology.queensu.ca/academics/graduate/guide-to-grad-studies/>
 - c. Small group hikes over the next couple weekends?
 - d. Online Writing workshop/retreat
 - i. In the past, we've held a writing workshop immediately followed by a writing retreat; we could do this online by having the workshop followed by scheduled writing/debriefing sessions?
 1. Set up with SASS
 - e. One of the big things in our EDI letter was grad student recruitment, which has not really seen any movement and is going to be a big undertaking
 - i. Recruitment Coordinator position

- ii. There was a short-lived paid Recruitment Coordinator position during the 2017-2018 academic year. Nothing really happened with this position, but a reinstatement of this position, most likely off council, with an EDI focus may be possible in the current political climate.
 - 1. Leslie Holmes 2 years ago, Allen Tian last year.
 - 2. Allen has heard nothing about what's happening with position
 - 3. Nell, Regan, Allen will talk with Brian about this
- f. Non-academic alumni presentation
 - i. These were great, and we should try and line up a few more in the fall term, and maybe tweet the invites to get a larger audience of grad students from other Canadian universities?
 - ii. Jessie: if anyone has suggestions for speakers send them her way
 - iii. Nell: we should advertise widely as possible, get attendance up
- g. Potential divestment initiatives
 - i. A divestment subcommittee? To push for SGPS divestment, and university divestment, could work with QBACC
 - ii. Hana has worked with QBACC, can look into it
 - iii. Chloe or Emilie – check in with SGPS about status of divestment, they may not be currently invested in fossil fuels
- h. Ideas for mental health support initiatives? What do we need, what would be most beneficial?
- i. Community activism and volunteering in Kingston (sci comm)
 - i. Add Slack channel? Notices re Junior Naturalists, CAGIS (Canadian Association for Girls in Science) – virtual presentations from scientists for girls, loving hands, many more etc etc. Resource database to get involved
 - 1. Kristen and Sam compiling resources – create tab on Biology website, put TA resource database too, can also put job resources there
- j. As soon as next hire comes up, we should swoop in with renewed vigour to get our vote back!
 - i. Sam and Kristen – mention to EDI committee, Hana – mention to RTP
- k. Headshots for entire program
 - i. Could be a good event, meet in city park, Allen has a camera, ask Brian to pay him
 - ii. Allen (and Claire and Emma) will set this up
 - iii. Could take down by lake, or also get leaves changing colours – Summerhill, ivy on walls
 - iv. Could also get awkward distance photo of council