

SIGMAS Meeting Minutes  
Friday, September 16, 2016, 16:00  
Grad House

President: Charlie Watson  
Vice Presidents: Jane Wodlinger, Mark Piraino  
Treasurer: Laura Teshima  
Secretary: Joseph Horan

Directors of Communication: Jane Wodlinger, Laura Teshima  
GSS Representative: Joseph Horan  
CUPE 4163 Stewards: Jane Wodlinger, Mark Piraino  
Math and Stats Department Reps: Charlie Watson, Mark Piraino  
Tea Chancellor/Poet Laureate: Dan Hudson, Chloe Lampman  
Webmaster: Joseph Horan  
Peacekeeper: Joanna Niezen  
Safety Captain: Vacant

Present (by rough order of arrival): Jane Wodlinger, Joseph Horan, Laura Teshima, Dina Buric, Dan Hudson, Joanna Niezen, Mark Piraino, Charlie Watson.

Regrets: None received.

The meeting is called to order at 16:30, which is a few minutes before Mark and Charlie arrive. Oh well. We had ordered drinks and food previously; the Grad House (finally) now serves the Phillips Cream Soda! Hooray; Joseph is visibly enthused by this turn of events. There is one pitcher of Blue Buck, but really it is more hard alcohol this time around. Joanna orders ‘the Joey’, which is rum and pineapple juice; it is suggested that she visits the Grad House numerous times in a short span so she can just call it ‘the usual’.

After scrambling through e-mails trying to find an agenda, we start trying to go through agenda items. First up is elections. The only vacancies are for GSS Rep, Safety Captain, and Peacekeeper. Jane asks if Joseph is stepping down from the position of GSS Rep; the trick is that technically, Joseph’s term ended on August 31, so he’s no longer GSS Rep. However, after commenting that he’s just trying (and failing) to make ‘elections’ not be completely fake, Joseph says he would happy and willing to do it again, and after a very quick vote, **Joseph is unanimously elected GSS Rep**, again.

Joanna says she would like to be Peacekeeper. This is put to a vote; Jane objects and requests Joanna to explain to her why she would be a good person for the role. Joanna quickly defuses the situation, and after a quick unanimous vote, **Joanna is unanimously elected Peacekeeper**.

Next up is the Treasury report. Laura gives us some information on how our finances are doing; notably, we’ve been having more parties of late, so this has been the first year in a while that we’ve spent more than we’ve brought in; the difference wasn’t too much. She mentions that Exam Sales should not be expected to bring in as much money year-in and year-out, because of nefarious activity by the undergraduate students who buy our solutions. Thankfully, Charlie has been doing a great job of hosting parties much more cheaply than we had a couple of years ago; the per-party cost to host a party has been down. Other fundraising options are raised; Dan mentions a bottle drive. We agree to continue thinking about it.

Jane tells Laura to plug her ears, and proposes the creation of a termly honorarium for the Treasurer, for Laura’s, work with Exam Sales and other Treasury duties. We debate how much it should be, and after Mark makes a motion for it, eventually we settle on \$75, subject to approval

of the President following satisfactory completion of Exam Sales (and potentially other fundraising). The motion passes unanimously. In the discussion, we mention the honorarium for the Tea Chancellor/Poet Laureate, but we decide (perhaps by omission) to leave it alone for now. It should probably also be subject to approval, but anyway.

At some point, we have a discussion about the naming of certain positions. Charlie had wanted to rename President to “Lord High Numbler”. This was never formally entertained, due to potential fallout. Joseph mentions (but no one hears or cares) that perhaps “Communications Scrabble Acronym” should be changed to “Director of Communication”. He unilaterally changes it in the minutes, and waits for the readers of the draft minutes to request that it be changed back.

Speaking of Tea, Mark brings up the fact that the department should kick in some money for Tuesday Tea. There is discussion about how much we should ask for. Laura pulls up some numbers, and it seems like SIGMAS spent about \$300 on Tea this past year; not including scheduled weeks bringing goodies (two ice cream cakes, Indian food, and some fruit), this came to about \$170. The department used to provide Tea, and since it’s a *department* event and not a *graduate student* event (that is populated by faculty, grads, undergrads, staff, postdocs, visitors, all in varying proportions depending on what term it is), it is suggested that perhaps they should supply at least half of the money. A large portion of the money goes to milk and cream, amusingly. It is resolved that Charlie will ask the department (ie. Rod Edwards, the Chair) for \$100 a year for Tea.

Now that Amanda Malloch has graduated, she is no longer SIGMAS President; Laura suggests that we get her an outgoing-Pres gift. It’s probably going to be alcohol; the suggestion is to get her an alcohol gift card, and we authorize Jane and Laura to spend not more than ‘like, \$100’, or something.

Charlie brings forth the following motion: for all future SIGMAS parties (ie. not including the party after the meeting), with the exception of a grace period of one party, people who attend parties without RSVPing will be publically shamed by Charlie. Dina expresses both her amusement but also her discomfort with that idea; we are trying to get people to come, so... The counterpoint to that comment is that to avoid wasting money buying food and drinks, we need to have an accurate idea of how many people are going to come to events. This eventually goes nowhere, but it is liable to happen unofficially anyway. In a side discussion, Mark brings up an idea for an activity at the party: “photos that you wouldn’t want put up in the AC”. Sounds like fun.

We move on to more serious business, put forth by Mark. He asks about the ‘grad student handbook’ idea that we’ve been talking about recently. Charlie says that when he brought it up at the most recent department meeting, it was met with reasonably broad support from the faculty. They said that they would make a committee to investigate this. Jane suggests that we try to get good representation on the committee by grad students, and Ph.D. students in particular. The committee is likely not going to be very big, maybe four or five people (including the grad advisor, Peter Dukes), so the appropriate make-up is two other faculty members, and either one Master’s and one Ph.D. student, or two Ph.D. students. SIGMAS is going to insist on electing our own members; we will not accept them appointing students to this committee. Mark implies his willingness to be on the committee; we’ll decide later who the other member is.

Mark also asks about being an executive member. (We had done elections before Mark and Charlie arrived, whoops.) The ‘executive’ is the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. However, there is no reason (we think) why we can’t have two Vice Presidents, so **we unanimously elect Mark as another Vice President**. He indicates his willingness to be another steward in the department, so **we unanimously elect him as another steward**, as well. [Dina leaves.]

Next up is the topic of joint SIGMAS-SUMS events, and Dan mentions an idea he had recently: a theme party in October where admission is participation in a group-scheduled blood drive. (You know, because blood is scary and October is a scary month.) There are some comments about how

not everyone can give blood on demand (maybe can't, maybe donated blood recently), and we said we could probably come up with something like a 'charity' party, where admission is donation to a food bank or something similar. This can be planned, of course.

Laura mentions that when we are having joint grad/undergrad events, we need to make sure that there is an even balance in spending on the events. One time, there were eight grads (drinking) and many more undergrads, and SIGMAS purchased all of the alcohol for the event because SUMS could not purchase any alcohol using their event money grant from the UVSS. It was a lot of money, and we'd like to avoid that as necessary. SUMS does get a cut of the Exam Sales revenue when they work shifts, so perhaps they can spend that money to help. It is agreed that the two entities should talk finances whenever there are joint parties, and try to work something out. We poke fun at Dan for saying "we" when he refers to SUMS; he's one of us now!

Jane gives us a union update, but before that happens, Joseph reiterates (basically for the purpose of getting it in the minutes) that Jane's CUPE Orientation this term was the best orientation we've had in the last three years, and the table thanks Jane for her service. And the pens! And stuff.

At this point, Charlie has to leave and make sure his house is ready for the party. He comments that Mark has been cleared to attend the department meetings (since he has tutorials at those times this term), so the two of them will make sure information gets around. He also talked to Carol Anne Sargent about sharing the minutes of the department meetings with the grad students, and that's totally fine to do! He'll send it out on the grad mailing list, though we question why they can't just be posted to the Sharepoint site...

Not longer after Charlie leaves, he comes back and drops the following bomb on us: at one point he was talking to a student in Stats who was curious about being involved with SIGMAS, and the student said that other Stats students had told them that SIGMAS events were "not safe" (actual direct quote). The response around the table was, to quote Jane, "... What?" We don't know any other information than that, but if this is the reputation of SIGMAS, then perhaps we need to put some effort into rehabilitating the image of SIGMAS, and running non-party events like, for instance, going on hikes or playing board games or something. [Charlie actually leaves.]

The Christmas party is brought up as an example of an event that got widespread attendance last year, from most research groups. We briefly discuss whether or not we should subsidize ticket cost again. Last year, the faculty price was \$40, and the department covered half of the money for grads and office staff, so nominally it was \$20 for grads. SIGMAS then covered half of *that*, so that anyone who wanted to attend only had to pay \$10. Moreover, there were only one or two guests amongst the grads, so we had no problems covering the guests also. Mark asks if we really need to further subsidize the tickets, but it made a huge difference last year in grad student attendance (as did making sure we got the word out about it), so we agree to continue this practice. We'll see where it is this year.

At this point, Mark and Dan also leave, which basically spells the end of the meeting. Next time, we should have change of quorum on the agenda; we also agree that this time and place was not conducive to having an effective meeting. Next time, perhaps we will just have "a room", somewhere on campus that will fit 15 or so people, and hold it in the mid-afternoon so that all of the usual people can attend, probably on Thursday or something. It was way too loud here.

The meeting adjourns at 18:00.