

SIGMAS Meeting Minutes
Friday, September 20, 2019, 15:30
GSC 108 (Halpern Centre Boardroom), moving to Side Project Coffee

President: Joanna Niezen
Vice President: Mitchell Haslehurst
Treasurer: Laura Teshima
Secretary: Joseph Horan

Director of Communication: Laura Teshima
GSS Representative: Joseph Horan
CUPE 4163 Steward: Laura Teshima
Math and Stats Department Rep: Joanna Niezen
MS Equity and Diversity Committee Rep: Felicia Halliday
Tea Chancellor/Poet Laureate: Brittany Halverson-Duncan
Exam Sales Coordinator: Flora Bowditch
Webmaster: Joseph Horan
Peacekeeper: Joanna Niezen
Safety Captain: Brittany Halverson-Duncan

Present (in no order): Arnott Kidner, Simon Guo, MacKenzie Carr, Joseph Horan, Flora Bowditch, Mitchell Haslehurst, Laura Teshima, Joanna Niezen, Brittany Halverson-Duncan, George Lee, Kevin Hsu.

Regrets: Felicia Halliday.

The meeting started at 15:32 in the boardroom, after Joseph put up a sign on the front of the door saying “SIGMAS Meeting! Please come in!” or something similar. (He then proceeded to fail at his follow-up task, which was “take the sign down when we leave the room in half an hour”. Oh well.) We almost skip introductions, but then decide that snappy introductions will work for now, and we’ll do “real” introductions later, once we aren’t under time pressure.

Treasurer’s Report: Laura gives a report on our finances. We’re in good shape; we spent the most money we’d spent in a while this past summer, which was neither here nor there. A large portion of this was the SIGMAS photocopy bill. Joseph asks for clarification on the total amount of money, which was a good thing, since Laura accidentally read a number over twice as large the first time.

Exam Sales Coordinator Report: Flora gives a brief report on Exam Sales from last term. It was a typical Summer term for us; no big deal. We did a smaller photocopy batch in-department instead of externally.

Ad Hoc Safe Committee Report: Joanna reports that the committee hasn’t met yet; soft target is to figure this out by the end of the year. We note that Mackenzie Wheeler no longer sits on the committee, of course, since he is no longer a graduate student. (This leaves Joanna as chair, Laura, Felicia, and Joseph.)

Policy Changes: The first order of policy business is the Emergency Travel Bursary; how often should one person be able to access it, and for what reason? The language in our policies doesn’t say much about this. Laura proposes wording to clarify the usage of the bursary: *The SIGMAS Emergency Travel Bursary (ETB) is a per-need travel bursary intended for financial hardship from emergency travel in the event of the unexpected death or serious life-threatening/debilitating illness/injury of an immediate family member (i.e. a parent, sibling, child, or spouse).* This suggestion meets with the general approval of the membership, but there was no recorded vote. Regarding

the frequency of access, we discuss potential options (once a year, once ever, no restrictions, twice every two years, etc), but settle on the status quo wording, in the end. Members of the Executive approves these requests no matter what, and if the Treasurer is required to be one of the three Executive members approving a request, then they should be able to determine what's appropriate at any given time. (We may have been using a two-of-three rule recently; whoops.) We approve the following change to the policy language: *The request will be accepted or denied by the SIGMAS Executive as soon as possible, with approval of three executive members in conference, **including the Treasurer**, before notification.* We also *unanimously approve an injection of funds to the ETB.*

Next up is the Food Bank donation. We currently donate 5% of our profits from Exam Sales each Fall and Spring to the UVic Food Bank (located in the Student Union Building); can we increase that to, say, 7.5%? It is remarked that not only is it a good thing to do, but grads proportionally use the Food Bank, and it's often better to donate money than actual products (because they can acquire the things that are actually in demand, etc). We *unanimously approve an increase of the Food Bank donation to 7.5%.*

Lastly before we move to Side Project, Laura proposes a mileage reimbursement for events where taking the bus or similar free transportation is infeasible. For example, taking the bus to and from Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site (where some SIGMAS members watched The Princess Bride this past summer) would have been very much infeasible, because the event ended after sundown and catching the bus would have meant walking in the dark along the shoulder of a rural road for at least half an hour before waiting for an already-rare bus to come. Going to the distillery in Central Saanich is also pretty far out of the way to bus. The specific amount is the distance from UVic to the event and back, scaled with the UVic mileage rate, which is 51 cents per kilometre. We also stipulate that it only applies for *carpooling*, which we define as having at least two people in the vehicle. The exact wording to be added to Policy 3.1 is the following: *SIGMAS may reimburse for carpool travel from UVic campus to the event location and back again, when the venue is not reasonably reachable by public transport, at a rate up to \$0.51/km, subject to prior approval. Carpool drivers must have at least two people in the vehicle.* The motion is *approved, unanimously.*

We finish this portion of the meeting at 15:57; right on time! We relocate to Side Project, once the serving staff lets us in.

After we rearrange tables into the strangest annulus ever created (next time, maybe we should try to do a tighter cluster), food arrives, and we order drinks, we redo introductions, allowing ourselves a little bit more creativity. The joke before the meeting (thanks to Joanna) was that maybe we should wait until the end of the meeting to do introductions; maybe we'll have the most to say at that point?

Elections: As usual for our September meetings, the "first" order of business is elections! We have a number of positions that should be filled.

- We begin with President. The President sits on the Executive, sends out the Tutor List e-mail, approves event ideas and ETB requests, calls and chairs these meetings, and that's about it. We search for nominations... and Joanna indicates that she is interested! No one else does. Joseph formally nominates Joanna, Laura seconds, Joanna accepts the nomination, and so *Joanna Niezen is acclaimed President!* Thank you for your service.
- In various shades of formality, we keep Mitch as the only Vice-President, Laura as Treasurer, and Joseph as Secretary. We also *acclaim Joseph as GSS Representative*; Joseph will be graduating in April, so talk to him if you are interested in being Grad Rep past then. An apprenticeship next term can be arranged.
- It is remarked that Tuesday Tea basically only ran this past Summer term when Joseph brought goodies; one main reason is that we didn't have a Tea Chancellor (or Poet Laureate). The Tea

Chancellor's role is to get people to sign up to bring goodies, set up and clean up after Tea, and occasionally purchase milk or cream or other supplies, as necessary. The Poet Laureate's one job is to send Tea-mail, which may or may not have poems or puzzles or jokes or other silly diversions; some of Dan Hudson's best Tea-mails were poems about his cat. Brittany indicates that she would be willing to do both roles! For this term, at least. Thus: *Brittany is acclaimed Tea Chancellor and Poet Laureate!* Joseph will get in touch to find a time to do a bit of training, mostly regarding the coffee maker. [For reference, Kevin Hsu is also interested; it's just that this term doesn't work with his schedule.]

- Flora indicates that she can continue to be Exam Sales Coordinator for this term, but that we will need to find someone to run it in the future. Mitch expresses interest, and will help out this term to learn the ropes.

Department Report: Joanna gives a report on the department goings-on. The main thing is, as has been recently, the Academic Program Review (APR) process. It seems like the process will be starting again in January, with a site visit by the panel in the spring. Meanwhile, all three of our new hires are here! And there are two postings coming up, one an ATP and one a Combinatorics position (designated as an equity hire, which is good to hear). Finally, now that we'll have a new Dean of Science in January, we will be starting on the Chair search again sometime soon.

It is mentioned (later, after Events, but it is reasonable to place it here in the minutes) that at the last department meeting, Moussa Magassa (the Human Rights Education Advisor in the UVic Equity and Human Rights office) gave a short presentation about topics in equity and human rights. Potentially we could ask EQHR to come in and give us a similar type of presentation at the beginning of our next SIGMAS meeting. Moreover, Brittany has heard that the department may be planning to do monthly workshops on various topics, potentially EQHR-related but also maybe things like privacy or active shooter response training; maybe we could get in on those.

GSS Report: Joseph rambles about the GSS (and should have prepared something). The GSS is working to keep the restaurant and coffee shop open (starting with the new hours), and the department grant budget has been slashed a fair bit. The first Grad Council meeting of the new term is on Tuesday, so he'll have more to say afterwards. Most of the information to be passed along about the GSS (for example, upcoming events!) comes through e-mails; please talk to Joseph if you have any questions! He's happy to receive e-mails or office visits.

Math and Stats Equity and Diversity: Felicia is unable to attend today's meeting, but Brittany mentions that there hasn't been a meeting since the first one, unfortunately (she is also on the committee).

CUPE: Laura reports that after a couple days of mediation, the University and Component 3 have reached a tentative collective agreement! Both sides have yet to ratify the agreement, but that should come soon. Then Components 1 and 2 will get their shot at bargaining... A brief history of the TA wage in the Math and Stats is given, for information purposes.

Mitch brings up the very amusing point that there exists a diagram showing the liaisons between the GSS, CUPE, and SIGMAS (ignoring the fact that technically Laura is steward for the department's CUPE members, not really for "SIGMAS", but close enough):

Tutor List Wording: Joseph wants clarification on the policy here; eventually, he figures out that he is somewhat confused about whether or not the wording "... from tutoring students in any course they are teaching or for which they are TAing" means that if someone's in your Math 100 tutor, then you cannot tutor them in Math 110 (for example). The issue was "students in any course"; Mitch points out that it wouldn't make any sense to read that as a whole unit given the rest of the sentence, and so it must refer to the SIGMAS member tutoring students "in any course they are...". Joseph probably deserves to feel silly about this one, since he wrote the damn sentence in the first place, but the sentence could be poorly read as saying the students who are not "tutor-able"

(in any course) are exactly those students who are enrolled in any course the SIGMAS member is TAing. After the meeting, his suggestion is that the line be rewritten to read: *Any member of the SIGMAS Tutor List is prohibited from tutoring for any course which they are teaching or for which they are TAing.* [The point is that the course is the barrier, not the students. So make the prohibition based on the course, and don't mention students at all, to avoid the potential confusion or misreading.]

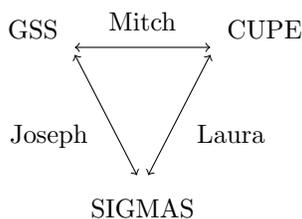
The discussion in the room centers around what the correct strictness of the policy is, why we have the policy at all (control or influence on marks, academic integrity, optics and perception), and how enforceable it would be. It would be too unenforceable (and not very helpful for our members) to have the most strict version of this, which is "if a student is in Math 100 and you're a Math 100 TA, no matter in what capacity, then you cannot tutor them in any course". It would be also be somewhat unenforceable and also unwieldy if it were "if a student is in any course and you either are their TA or you possibly have access to marks, then you cannot tutor them", among other things. In the end, the current policy is the easiest to work with (tutors simply cannot list the courses for which they are TAing) and strikes a decent balance in terms of strictness.

SIGMAS Letters of Disappointment: One thing that SIGMAS could do is write formal letters on behalf of the membership. This is relevant when, for example, something bad happens that affects our members in a negative way, though ostensibly there could be instances where a positive letter is warranted. Two potential letter ideas are brought up, which of course leads naturally to the next question: what is the procedure for creating and sending one of these letters? Joseph asks about how to make sure that these letters have the full weight of the membership behind them, which means involving grads from all four research groups and all degree programs. After some debate, the rough process seems to be as follows: *draft a letter, review and polish it, circulate it to the membership for signature or voting approval.* We will figure out how to circulate things soon.

Events: We (finally) make it to events! The best part of the meeting, aside from the free food and company. Before opening the floor to general ideas, Laura suggests that to prevent exorbitant expenses like at the Bin4 event last term, for some large dinner events we set caps on reimbursement per person/plus-one. This can be done per event; reimbursement can happen individually.

We move on to general event ideas.

- Brittany is really keen on trying out (stretching out?) the new mileage policy, by potentially doing a trip up-island to a cabin or something.
- A bonfire is also mentioned; there are some places where you can hold one when there is no fire ban, or we could run "SIGMAS Goes To: GSS Goes To: Oak Bay Fire Department's Halloween Bonfire!"
- We have tried Board Game Nights before, and they haven't always gone very well. However, now that Side Project is a thing that we could do, and there's that whole wall of board games over there [Joseph will maybe eventually finish doing inventory...], maybe this will work better?
- Mitch has been saying (for weeks!) that it would be cool to do a brunch event soon; he will



send a Doodle poll out soon, aiming for one of the next few Sunday mornings.

- Joanna reminds us about the Photo Scavenger Hunt that was held in the summer of 2014; she missed out! And all she heard about it was how fun it was (and how Joseph fell on his face trying to do a handstand). She wants to do one soon, to make up for it; no guarantees that any particular goals will or will not be on the goals list.
- Joseph mentions that he's still got the David Turpin Building grad block party idea on a burner; now that GRC should be back in action, he will see who the grad reps are for the other departments (Geography, Political Science, Environmental Studies) and figure it out. While we could hold it inside, like the department's Christmas party, it might be better to wait until March or April and try to hold it outside.
- MacKenzie relays some ideas from Felicia via text message; the first is that we should continue with our series of pottery events! We all express interest; Laura would appreciate "not Oak Bay", since it's hard to get to; with more lead time, we might be able to get into the 4Cats Uptown location (it is a bit smaller, though).
- An interruption occurs, and the possibility of doing escape rooms is raised. We would make sure to cap attendance to fit us all in a room or two, but that could be quite fun.
- Another Felicia idea is from the back-burner: axe-throwing! This also garnered some interest. There's a place right downtown.
- Another Felicia idea is visiting the Robert Bateman gallery for their Arctic exhibit (the gallery is downtown, across the lawn from the Legislature building). This would be like the time we visited the Royal BC Museum for one of their exhibits.
- One last Felicia idea was to have a SIGMAS book club! SIGMAS could kick in a bit of money for food/drinks, or maybe partial costs of the books.
- It's still a good time to do a corn maze in town; there's the usual Galey Farm one (it might be spooooky in October), but there are others.
- Arnott asks if there are any good places to do mini-golf; Joseph knows of at least a couple, so this should be a slam dunk if anyone wants to organize it.
- The idea of a brewery tour is brought up; there are a bunch of similar things in the area.
- Many people agree that SIGMAS skating should happen again.
- Some other ideas accumulated in the minutes are: billiards, bowling, math(s) and crafts...
- Brittany reminds us that the department's holiday party will be happening as a potluck again this year; there will be a planning committee, so let her know if you're interested in helping out! In particular, it might be nice to have a Santa more along the lines of a cheery North American-style Santa (like Dan!), and not a scary European-style Miracle-on-34th-Street Santa. Moreover, in the spirit of last year's musical performances, let Brittany know if you're interested in singing something or performing something for the group. We could have a SIGMAS Choir! And maybe sing Bohemian Rhapsody, with Mitch on keys. At the end of the discussion, shots are fired at █████, for being... "outspoken" at last year's party.

Don't forget that you don't have to be an Exec member to organize an event! Just let them know if you want it subsidized before sending out an e-mail. Moreover, it is mentioned that SIGMAS does have a Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/550512962096987/>. (We probably

also have a page lying around dormant somewhere... Whoops. This is the active one, currently.) It can be another way to reach people.

Right before the Christmas party discussion, we welcome a guest: former President Mackenzie Wheeler! He's here to eat the food we couldn't eat, and have his Defender drink and photo (since the Grad House was closed when he actually defended). Laura presents him with a small token of our appreciation; thanks for being President!

The meeting adjourns at 17:50, mostly so that Joseph can stop taking minutes. Thanks to everyone who came out!

Summary of Tasks:

- Joseph to type minutes and update the website and policy document and send out a reminder Task List e-mail;
- The Ad Hoc Safe Committee to meet and decide on a course of action, and take that action;
- Joseph/someone to rework the old L^AT_EX template to come up with an FGS compliant version [held over];
- Brittany to create Safety Posters [held over];
- Joseph to train Brittany on Tea duties;
- Brittany to draft a letter;
- Various people to look into events as described above;
- People to perform the duties of the roles they volunteered for/were elected to do;
- Everyone to be awesome!