

SIGMAS Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, January 9, 2020, 16:30  
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: Joanna Niezen [and Felicia Halliday]  
Tea Chancellor/Poet Laureate: Brittany Halverson-Duncan  
Exam Sales Coordinator: Mitchell Haslehurst  
Webmaster: Joseph Horan  
Peacekeeper: Joanna Niezen  
Safety Captain: Brittany Halverson-Duncan

Present (in no order): Joanna Niezen, Laura Teshima, Arnott Kidner, Simon Guo, Joseph Horan, Ranjit Sohal, Mitchell Haslehurst, Yangming Li, Natella Jafarova.

Regrets: None received.

The meeting is called to order at 16:36. We do a quick round of introductions, since we have some newcomers to the department. We're quorate! We begin with various reports.

**GSS:** Joseph gives a quick GSS report: check out his recent e-mail, where there's a link to a survey sponsored by the GSS and CUPE 4163, information about upcoming events (please come!), and information about the near-constant search for graduate students to sit on university committees.

**Exam Sales:** Laura gives a quick Exam Sales report; profits were down significantly this past Fall term from last Fall term, with a variety of factors (known and unknown) at play.

**MS EDI:** Joanna gives a report from the Math and Stats Department Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee. At their last meeting, they met with someone from the Chemistry EDI group. One idea that was brought to the table is to have some sort of safe environment where members of the department (anyone, not just a particular group) can go to talk to an ombudsperson-like role during their office hours. The EDI committee is looking at targetted training for TA's, which could be piggybacked onto CUPE-mandated orientations. It is unclear how such training would happen, though: every time or just once, and for all TA's or just some?

It would be nice to have an EDI speaker come to talk to graduate students, at some point. It would also be nice to have two graduate students on the EDI committee: either a Master's student and a doctoral student or a newer student and a more experienced student (relative to time in the department). We'll come back to this in a bit during elections.

**Ad Hoc Safe Committee:** Switching gears, Joanna gives the final update from the ad hoc Safe Committee: we got one! Thanks to everyone who helped.

**Department:** Joanna keeps going with her department report. Take two of the Academic Program Review (APR) has been underway for a while, and the site visit is scheduled for January 15-17. The meeting with graduate students is 15:30-16:00, on January 16. Last time, those of us

who were interested in providing feedback met once before the panel meeting, so Joanna will send out a request for input and arrange for the pre-meeting.

The recent Chair search failed. We'll try again later; probably not until May.

One big item in the department has been office space (or lack thereof). There have been discussions between the department and the Faculty of Science to apportion the department more space (including the Dean's Office in the Elliot building), and the department has proposed a number of reallocations of its current space, including eliminating dedicated Master's student desk space and replacing it with shared desk space and lockers. SIGMAS has not been consulted. Laura mentions that there is no timeline, but the renovation budget is here and the Dean's Office is probably moving on this issue, so we should at least have an idea of what our Master's students want and have (counter-)proposals at the ready. Let's have a discussion!

Some ideas brought up:

- Maybe we should have folks who will use desks apply for one? A main issue is that some people just do not use their desks often or at all, so applying for a desk could filter those folks out.
- Is first-come-first-served better than sharing a desk with one or two people? Potentially; sharing a desk with specific people can lead to awkward messiness and conflict, whereas first-come-first-served prioritizes folks keeping that space much cleaner. On the other hand, if you are sharing with a specific person then you can coordinate who is using the desk when (so you can guarantee yourself a spot if you come in to mark, for example). You can also keep books and so on at your desk.
- Could we have a sign-up sheet for reserved desks? Maybe weekly; could be online, kind of like the AC bookings calendar. Something like this setup would allow folks who need to use a desk to make sure that it's available for them (for instance, if they have to mark midterms for a day or two).
- What happens with computers? One idea in the department's proposal is that there would be a computer lab (which we used to have back in Clearihue, actually). In particular, non-grad TA's could use that space (especially for marking via CourseSpaces). As it stands, the department still has some old laptops that potentially Master's students could borrow, but that technology is becoming outdated.

One thing that we would very much like to see is a formal proposal made available, with opportunity for feedback.

**CUPE 4163:** Laura reminds us that new TA orientations are on Friday. No bargaining updates thus far.

**Treasurer:** Laura outlines the current state of SIGMAS finances. We spent money primarily on food and get-togethers (thanks for organizing outings!), including Bin 4, brunch, games night, tickets for the Talithia Williams talk in December, and the Fall SIGMAS meeting. This past Fall semester was the first time in a long time that we spent roughly as much as we made in a term.

**Emergency Travel Bursary:** Laura gave a rundown of what the Emergency Travel Bursary (ETB) is and for what it is intended. It has had higher than expected usage this past year, and even with an injection of funds in the Fall, it is short of the maximum amount to be claimed. The question is: how can we keep the fund sustainable while still making sure it is at least somewhat helpful? We can rescale/lower the amounts, or make more frequent injections of funds to the ETB pool; or, we could leave it as-is. After fruitful discussion, we propose the following changes, based

on simplifying the regions in the GSS/FGS Travel Grant (upon which the original ETB regions were based):

*Motion: Be it resolved to change the ETB amounts to \$150 within BC/AB/Wash. and \$300 outside of those regions. Be it further resolved to inject \$600 to the ETB fund.* The motion passes unanimously.

**Tea Chancellor:** Brittany isn't here right now, but she seems as though she will remain on as Tea Chancellor.

**UVic Apparel:** Arnott talks about his experience taking orders for UVic-branded clothing (shirts and jackets, mostly). It took 23 days for the Bookstore to process the order (and let's not talk about how picking up the order went). Some items were actually cheaper than what the catalogue suggested, which meant that Arnott pocketed a few dollars (everyone ordering knew what they were getting into; there weren't that many people involved). Joseph and others expressed concern about this situation. It was agreed by all that the inflation of prices should be made clear to all involved, perhaps next time calling it a fundraiser and have the profits go to SIGMAS rather than an individual, or charging a rate true to the price of the clothing (if the Bookstore can make that happen).

**Elections:** We need to fill a couple positions!

- Flora completed her degree! Mitch is happy to take over as Exam Sales Coordinator. We're all in favour, and so *Mitchell Haslehurst is acclaimed as Exam Sales Coordinator*.
- Felicia also completed her degree, and so we need an official rep on the EDI committee; Joanna has been going to the meetings and is happy to stay. *Joanna Niezen is acclaimed as MS EDI grad rep*. However, the committee is now looking for two graduate students to sit it. There was no other interest among those present. We will try again to elect a second candidate at our next meeting.
- Joseph is finishing his degree in April and therefore needs someone to take his place as GSS rep. There are no takers at the meeting, so he will advertise in e-mails and see if anyone is willing to step up. He's happy to outline in what ways he does way too much work.

At this point, it's 17:45, and the meeting migrates to our reservation in the Grad House. Or at least, if the restaurant weren't being occupied by the memorial gathering for the victims of the Flight 752 plane crash in Iran; we head over to Side Project instead (thanks to the restaurant for still honouring our reservation!).

**Events:** We end the meeting with discussion about events, as always. Some ideas include the following:

- Arnott wants to do mini-golf! Say, in March. This should be easy to accomplish.
- Mitch is still trying to do his movie nights; it would be nice if they didn't overlap with Joey's games nights.
- Mitch will arrange for restaurant get-togethers (especially Bin 4).
- MacKenzie would like to still do SIGMAS Book Club, as would Joseph, but we'll see how that goes.
- Movies could be a thing; maybe we could see an IMAX film?

- There's an axe-throwing place downtown that could be quite fun, though it requires booking/etc. (There were questions about rage rooms in Victoria; thesis rage?)
- Can we try to get a Sea Cider trip figured out, with designated drivers? We maybe have enough folks and vehicles available.

The meeting "adjourns" at 18:30, or at least, Joseph stops 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 [hah...];
- Joseph/someone to rework the old L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X template to come up with an FGS compliant version [actually done!];
- Brittany to create Safety Posters [held over];
- Brittany to draft a letter [held over?];
- 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!