BGSO Meeting Minutes

January 23, 2017

**Officers in Attendance**

Elvin Morale, Janice Love, Mark Hawk, Mauna Dasari, Bethany Blakely, Benjamin Gombash

**Members in Attendance**

Chissa Rivaldi, Justin Wilcox, Felicity Newton, Bobby Habig, Henry Vu

**Meeting Agenda**

Things to talk about

1. Recruitment

**Recruitment**

The recruitment volunteer sign up list is basically filled, and we have no shortage of volunteers.

The poster session is on Friday

* There are two new recruitment volunteer opportunities related to the poster session
  + We need to set up easels for the poster session at 2:00 p.m.
  + We need people to clean up after the poster session at 6:00 p.m.
* There will be easels to set up, we have 45 recruits and 45 posters
* The poster session will have windows of attendance for presenters to reduce crowding and make sure that poster presenters are there when the students that are interested in their labs/foci are there
* Details about when each poster presenter should be at the poster session will be distributed later by email

Thursday dinner is in the Oak Room in the South Dining Hall, there are multiple entrances

There is a BGSO Informational Flier included in this year’s recruitment folder.

Elvin had slides about BGSO ready

For people who are picking up and dropping off potential recruits

* The Flex (a department vehicle) will be available
  + it is always parked in back
* If you have more people than it can hold, use the van
  + the van will be in back starting on Thursday
* Keys to the vehicles are available in the lounge

One of the interviewees is bringing their husband and children, we do not have details on the ages of the children, but be prepared to see children at recruitment events

We are having the faculty band The Standard Deviants play, they are practicing some new songs and want students to provide vocal accompaniment. The songs are Closer by the Chain Smokers and Hello by Adele.

* Elvin volunteered to sing either of those songs.
* We should get folks involved and sing along.

There are 107 people signed up for the Saturday night event.

**The Parking Situation**

For Background: The 90 minute parking spots behind Galvin are now spots that students are prohibited from parking in.

Elvin has been contact with our representative on the Parking Committee

The Parking Committee met last week and finalized a report for the vice president of the university

There will be a multilevel parking structure (somewhere on campus) within the next three years

* In this structure, graduate students and faculty will get preferred parking spots
* We do not know where the garage will be
* There will be a year to survey, a year to plan, and a year to build the structure
* That is a long term solution, we are still working on more immediate issues by directly communicating with the vice president

There is an understanding that graduate students contribute a great deal, and should not be considered to be the same as undergraduate students.

There is currently no differentiation between graduate students and undergraduate students insofar as parking is concerned

Biology graduate students still want access to the 90 minute parking spots during the day

As of now, graduate students can access the 90 minute parking spots after 5:00 p.m. without a 90 minute time limit

The parking folks control the spots, the faculty and biology department have no control over the parking spots

Graduate students are concerned because their parking needs are very similar to faculty parking needs, this was brought up at the Parking Committee meeting, they were amenable to those concerns

Security will be notified that graduate students have access to the 90 minute parking spots after 5:00 p.m. and on weekends

The spots were always intended exclusively for faculty use, but were never adequately marked

The signage behind Galvin does not reflect that those spots are B spots (requiring a B pass), which means that technically people with no parking pass can park there, and people with faculty passes

In the future, parking regulations will have language that distinguish between graduate students and undergraduate students

Elvin has been in contact with other graduate student organizations to muster support

If there is enough support, the GSU will get involved

The GSU has previously sent a letter about parking concerns, which was never addressed other than having the spring meeting of the Parking Committee brought to their attention

Work is being done on the parking issue, and there have been results

As of now, after a negotiation, we can park in the 90 minute spots after 5:00 p.m. without being ticketed, which is maintaining the status quo

However, at a point in the past, not being ticketed during the work day was also status quo, and it changed

**BenchSide**

BenchSide is a company out of Toronto, Canada. BenchSide has contacted Elvin about an event opportunity.

* The founders of BenchSide are all PhDs
* BenchSide is testing a service that compiles antibody information for easy access and use
* BenchSide has approached us with a professional development opportunity
* They would like to do a Skype Question and Answer session about entrepreneurship
* Students could ask about the path between graduate school and non-academic careers
* Elvin was contacted today (Jan. 23, 2017) and will stay in contact
* We may be able to schedule a future event
* An email will be sent out to gauge relative interest in the event
* If there is interest, we will plan an event

**BGSO Elections**

There has been a great deal of interest from first year graduate students regarding participating in the BGSO executive board

Elections are typically in early February, we need to work out logistics as soon as recruitment weekend begins

We would like to have ‘actual’ elections, where multiple people run for each position

* ADDENDUM: The constitution only allows the general membership to elect executive officers and a specific president, all other positions are determined as needed by the executive board. There is no reason why we could not have elections the way that we would like to, and use the votes of the members to decide who gets what position.

We would like to set a date for elections, which are traditionally in early February

There may be things in the constitution

* ADDENDUM: The constitution was consulted, and elections have a deadline, they must be completed by February 15.
* The constitution may not be on the website
* Are there provisions for a two year maximum service in the BGSO
* Does this mean two years of total service, or two years per position?
* ADDENDUM: The constitution was consulted, and a person may not serve on the BGSO executive board for more than two years, regardless of changes in position

We need to set an election date

Does the “election date” mean “this is the deadline for showing interest in running” or the last day to vote, or the day that we start voting

Do we want to enact an nomination system via email?

Does the president need to come from the current executive board?

ADDENDUM: There is no language in the constitution that requires the president to come from the current executive board, however, the executive board is elected, and a specific president is voted for by the general membership, and then elections within the executive board assign the other positions to the executive board members

A nomination period may be beneficial

We could possibly set the elections back to accommodate a nomination period

The old constitution used electronic ballots

ADDENDUM: The constitution allows the use of electronic ballots

Our next BGSO meeting is on February 6, 2017

We could have nominations from the 7th to the 10th and elections would be held during the 2nd week of February

Can we open up nominations sooner to give people more days?

Let’s open nominations on January 30, 2017

We can have nominations sent to Ben

Elvin can write an email requesting nominations

We could have two weeks for nominations and then voting

We could use Survey Monkey or Google to make it so that we can select between nominations and only vote once

We want to make sure that people accept nominations

The February 6th 2017 BGSO meeting could be an information session for potential nominees to come and ask about their position

There are currently two new positions (Professional Development Chair and Life Sciences Symposium Chair)

There are already people interested in these new positions

Are there position descriptions? Yes

ADDENDUM: The constitution only describes the duties of three of the positions (president, secretary, and treasurer), there are no other positions described. The GSU representative should be an executive board member, but that is not required.

Position descriptions could be included in the nomination acceptance request

Elvin and Ben will write up the most up to date constitution, they will make it available soon and work on it tomorrow (Jan. 24, 2017)

There could be a two week nomination period (January 31, 2017 to February 13, 2017)

We will have an informational meeting on February 6, 2017

There are ideas about the content of the email requesting nominations

**Events**

The BGSO website mentions a “Winter Olympics” event

* The Winter Olympics could involve bowling, go karts, and putt-putt golf.
* There could be awards
* Bethany is inclined to do the Winter Olympics in March
* Should we look for more team oriented sports? The previously mentioned events are more for individuals (other than bowling).
* What about lab trophies or foci trophies?

Bethany moves to schedule and plan a Winter Olympics sporting event

* The motion was seconded by
* The voting took place
  + In favor = 7
  + Opposed = 0
  + Abstain = 0
* The motion passes

The BGSO would like to do a trip to SkyZone

* Bethany is inclined to do a trip to SkyZone in February
* There are black light nights on Friday
* There are typically many high school students

Bethany moves to schedule and plan a trip to SkyZone event

* The motion was seconded by
* The voting took place
  + In favor = 7
  + Opposed = 0
  + Abstain = 0
* The motion passes

AWIS is hosting Pi Day 5K

* They need volunteers to give lab tours where you would show a gaggle of adorable children all of your science, and they will be very impressed
* We should speak with colleagues, PIs, and other labs about this
* Last year participation was thin, so we would like more this year
* A tour is sufficient, but demonstrations or activities would be better
* There were demonstrations in Jordan Hall last year
* The date is March 18
* Bethany will send a sign up sheet to either the executive board or the entire BGSO
* The entire department could be contacted via Matt in the front office

**Other Business**

Should we purchase a gift for Laurie?

* Should it be a gift or a gift basket?
* Mauna was thinking a gift basket
* Elvin suggested flowers and gift basket

**Open Forum**

Justin would like to speak and has questions

Has BGSO been involved in the seminar requirement?

* The stated first aim of BGSO is to provide graduate students with a forum to express themselves
* Students have been told that seminar requirements will be enforced via research credit grades
* If we started a petition, for example, and many people signed it, then the BGSO would respond to the petition by speaking with the Director of Graduate Studies (Dr. Wingert)
* If it is a large enough sentiment, we would speak to the DGS, but we would need proof (in the form of the petition) that the sentiment was sufficiently large
* There has been a great deal of discussion among graduate students, but no firm consensus has been reached
* The requirement has been communicated inconsistently
* Student sign contracts and have curricula, and it does not seem that the proper channels were gone through to make the seminar a requirement
* First year students are required to go to seminar, but this is not known to apply to other students
  + First years need to sign up for a course twice
* If Elvin is given a petition with signatures, he will take action

When is the next all graduate student meeting?

* The BGSO executive board was under the impression that a meeting would happen in January, but it has been pushed off, and will likely be sometime after recruitment weekend

Justin personally feels, and has heard from other graduate students, that there are various issues, and he believes that poor communication between the graduate students and the department itself may be a cause

Does the BGSO have a person who is designated to communicate with the department on behalf of the graduate students?

* Technically, this is the BGSO president
* The president is supposed to attend faculty meetings
  + Elvin, as the BGSO president, attends faculty meetings
  + To his knowledge, he is not allowed to speak at faculty meetings.
  + Elvin has never had a spot on their agenda to raise graduate student concerns.
  + Elvin was told that his role at faculty meetings was to listen
  + Elvin was told that he could not bring things up at faculty meetings to avoid faculty being upset by him
  + According to a former BGSO president, this has not always been the case.
  + The current department chair emphasizes the chain of command, so Elvin would have to go to the DGS so that the DGS could go to the department chair
* Headway has been made on some issues (i.e. parking)
* We do not have a person who is specifically there to document malcontent
* BGSO has a monthly meeting with an open forum for graduate students to voice and raise their concerns
* In regards to the seminar requirement, multiple individuals have met with the DGS, and the ecology focus has met as a group, but having a group designated to handle these sorts of issues may be beneficial
* Both the DGS and Elvin have open door policies about coming in to voice concerns
* Elvin needs proof to back up his claim that there is wide spread discontent, possibly in the form of a petition
* Justin would like to know what is required to create a position that has this as a major focus (gathering feedback, communicating that feedback to the department)
  + Bethany thinks that having a separate position for this purpose would take the load off of the president
  + We may want to move that duty to a different (possibly new) position to lighten the work load
  + There are already many positions, shifting duties may be justified
  + ADDENDUM: Only three of the positions are actually outlined in the BGSO constitution
  + This could become a vice presidential duty
  + ADDENDUM: The vice president position is not described or mentioned in the BGSO constitution, and there are no duties specifically for the vice president
  + This would require a proposal of a change to the constitution
  + We lack quorum for such changes at the moment
  + We could recommend a constitutional amendment to the incoming executive board
  + If the vice president takes on this duty, then the president’s job may be easy
  + These concerns can all be brought up during the March meeting for the next executive board to handle
  + The elected executive board takes office immediately after their election

The meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.