

Graduate Student Committee report to the CASCA Board May 2018

1 Current Membership of the Graduate Student Committee

The current members of the graduate student committee and their university affiliations are:

Executive:

Adrian Vantyghe	Chair	University of Waterloo	a2vantyg@uwaterloo.ca
Doug Rennehan	Vice-Chair	University of Victoria	douglas.rennehan@gmail.com

General Members:

Nathan Brunetti	McMaster University	brunettn@mcmaster.ca
Colin Lewis	Queen's University/RMC	13cl21@queensu.ca
Mitch Young	Saint Mary's University	myoung@ap.smu.ca
Eric Koch	University of Alberta	ekoch@ualberta.ca
Jacob White	University of British Columbia	jawhite@phas.ubc.ca
Anna Ordog	University of Calgary	aordog@ucalgary.ca
Robert Gleisinger	University of Manitoba	gleisinr@myumanitoba.ca
Simon Coudé	Université de Montréal	coude@astro.umontreal.ca
Ryan McKinven	University of Toronto	mckinven@astro.utoronto.ca
Clare Higgs	University of Victoria	higgs@uvic.ca

Several representatives on the GSC will be graduating before the CASCA 2019 meeting. New GSC members will be recruited at the upcoming CASCA meeting, and elections will be held to determine the new executive.

In the upcoming year the GSC will set guidelines that will allow us to recruit members in the month preceding the conference. This will ensure that each Canadian university has a representative on the GSC, and will allow the GSC to better communicate its expectations to the incoming representatives. In recent years the GSC has experienced a rapid turnover, with many of its members serving for only one to two years. This has negatively affected the transition periods. The goal is to improve the long-term stability of the GSC by setting clear expectations for its representatives.

2 2018 Graduate Student Workshop and General Meeting

The Graduate Student Workshop for this year's CASCA meeting will take place on Tuesday, May 22. The workshop will include presentations and interactive activities that focus both on science and industry.

The morning sessions will include a tutorial on how graduate students can make the most of Gemini Observatory's Fast Turnaround observing proposal system, and an information and demonstration session on centralized data analysis that involves machine learning and working in the cloud.

In the afternoon, a special Astronomy-Industry session will enable graduate students and representatives from Canadian companies to discuss the ways in which industry and the astronomy community interact. Industry will be represented both by our industrial partners in building astronomy facilities and tech companies who hire our astronomy trainees.

The Graduate Student Committee will hold their Annual General Meeting during the lunch of the workshop.

3 Graduate Student Committee Roles and Responsibilities

The GSC is currently lacking a governance document clearly describing the roles and responsibilities of the committee and its members. This has made it difficult for incoming members of the executive. In the upcoming year the GSC will evaluate the roles and responsibilities for each position on the executive. A governance document will be created and posted onto the CASCA GSC website.

In addition to its existing executive roles, the GSC will add an international student representative.

4 Graduate Student Committee Website

The information currently posted on the CASCA GSC website has been outdated for several years. In the upcoming year, the GSC should prioritize updating the website. This is critical for years that have large changes in membership, as it will help to ensure a smooth transition.

5 Diversity

As it stands the GSC may not represent or sample the diverse needs of graduate students across the country, including: women, visible minorities, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, persons of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or expression (LGBTQ2S+), and others who may contribute to diversity. The GSC will encourage graduate student involvement in the committee by branching out with the representatives from each university.

6 Surveys

A few years ago Sébastien Lavoie conducted a funding survey for graduate students across the country. Through his efforts we were able to obtain extremely useful information about the living costs compared to university compensation that had a direct impact on the funding given to graduate students.

The statistics available from surveys is invaluable for representing graduate students to the CASCA board as well as to their respective universities. The GSC believes there are three main areas that need attention: funding, mental health, and equity. Annual surveys would reveal additional trends and determine if our responses to the data are effective.

7 Graduate Student Awards

The GSC will continue its traditional awards in recognition of the best student talk and poster at the upcoming CASCA meeting in Victoria in 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Adrian Vantighem
Chair, Graduate Student Committee (outgoing)
19 May 2017