

Graduate Student Committee report to the CASCA Board

December 2012

I. Current Membership of the Graduate Student Committee

The current members of the graduate student committee and their university affiliations are (in alphabetical order):

Hannah Broekhoven-Fiene, Secretary (University of Victoria)
Alexandre David-Uraz, Chair (Queen's University)
Ryan Goldsbury (University of British Columbia)
Sukhpreet Guram (University of Calgary)
Sarah Malek (Western University)
Aaron Maxwell (McMaster University)
Wayne Ngan (University of Toronto)
Matt Shultz (Royal Military College)
Samuel Tisi (University of Waterloo)

Due to the upcoming completion of his Ph.D., Nathan Deg stood down from the position of Chair. Alexandre David-Uraz, who acted as interim Secretary at the previous CASCA meeting, was elected Chair by unanimous decision. Hannah Broekhoven-Fiene was then elected Secretary in his stead.

The committee has seen a number of departures this year. We would like to thank our outgoing members, Todd McKenzie, Stephanie Keating, Jesse Rogerson, Jason Grunhut, Rob Cockcroft, David Williamson, Theresa Wiegert van Vliet, Ismael Moumen, Nathan Deg, Jonathan Tyler, and Gibion Makiwa, for their contributions to the GSC. We would also like to welcome Wayne Ngan, Matt Shultz and Samuel Tisi to the committee.

The position of representative for a number of universities is currently unoccupied. We will contact graduates at each of these institutions to try to fill these positions.

II. The 2012 Graduate Student Workshop and General Meeting

The 2012 Graduate Student Workshop was held on Monday, June 4th. The morning talks were about writing grant proposals and getting jobs. In the afternoon, discussion sessions were held with individuals with Physics degrees working outside academia. The feedback was rather positive, and it has been suggested to keep this as a recurring theme since it is relevant for M.Sc. students, amongst others. Another suggestion however was to keep such discussions focused on astronomy, rather than physics at large.

Ideas for upcoming Graduate Student workshops were given, including: how to give talks and presentations, how to make good posters, basic laws of visual presentation and graphic design, how to communicate science to the public and the media, how to write proposals for computing time and related web tools, radio astronomy (related to some upcoming observatories), and multi-wavelength astronomy. Also, a strong desire for archiving of the Graduate Student workshops (presentations and additional documentation) was

expressed. We will look to add such information on the GSC website.

After the workshop the Graduate Student Committee held its Annual General Meeting, which all the graduate students were welcome to attend. Sub-committees were formed to judge graduate posters and talks, and determine the winners of the “Best poster” and “Best talk” certificates awarded by the GSC each year. To avoid conflict of interest, students presenting a poster could not be asked to judge poster and students presenting a talk could not judge talks. Special thanks to Karen Lee-Waddell (Queen’s University), who served on the poster judging panel in lieu of Alexandre David-Uraz, since he presented both a talk and a poster.

III. Graduate Student Statistics

The GSC has continued to collect statistics on the total number of graduate students in most astronomy programs in Canada. The number of male and female MSc and PhD students over the last 11 years has now been recorded. Further efforts will be invested in this task to always have an up-to-date account of Graduate membership throughout the country.

IV. Graduate Student Awards

As is the case each year, “Best poster” and “Best talk” awards were presented by the GSC to the most deserving student in either category. This year’s winners were Lindsay Holmes (Royal Military College) in the poster category, and Andy Pon (University of Victoria) in the talk category.

Additionally, CASCA also awards students in these two categories. The winners were: Megan Engel (University of Alberta) for Best Poster, and Annie Hou (McMaster University) for Best Talk.

Finally, a “Best Student Publication” award was offered this year, as well as Travel Grants. The winner of the publication awards was Yasuhiro Hasegawa (McMaster University). The application process for this award was deemed clear by GSC members and everyone was generally happy with the way it turned out. As for the travel grants, the lack of a deadline was confusing to some people, and a clearer procedure would be appreciated. Moreover, the application process involved submitting a finalized abstract, which was a surprise. It may have been better if a tentative abstract was required instead. The last issue had to do with the way the money was awarded. Indeed, email money transfers can disadvantage students dealing with smaller banking institutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexandre David-Uraz
Graduate Student Committee Chair
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