

PLB GSO Meeting 2.1.2016

Attending: Christopher Warneke, Anna Groves, Shawna Rowe, Joelyn de Lima, Christina Azodi, John Tran, Teresa Clark, Emily Dittmar, Colleen Friel, Klara Scharnagl, Caitlyn Byron, Chad Zirbel, Brian St. Aubin, Sam Perez, Damian Popovic

Ad hoc Steering Committee Meeting:

PLEASE COME – Wednesday, February 3rd at 4:00 pm in room 247! This meeting will set the tone for how we want to improve graduate student training. We would like as many graduate students to attend as possible. Plus there will be pizza and drinks.

Faculty Meeting: [1] The faculty will start a newsletter and website page dedicated to celebrating achievements and accomplishments within the department. Leonora leads this initiative. [2] Currently new faculty search is in progress. Please try to attend as many of the jobs talks as possible. [3] MPS graduate program: Christoph Benning and Katherine Osteryoung are writing up a grant for the program. It will be a dual degree program, much like EEBB. It will include 2 years of curriculum that includes both core and elective courses and is intended to fill in the course work gap for molecular biology and biochemistry students within the PLB Department. Pending funding and approval, they hope to start recruiting for the program in the fall of 2017. [4] There is a new effort to put together a database of MSU PLB alumni both as a historic record and as a means to solicit donations. We discussed also using this as a platform to put together an alumni network for internships, industry/government connections, etc for the benefit of graduate students and post-docs. [5] If you're graduating after 2017 you have to use Grad Plan. [6] Travel reimbursement paperwork needs to be submitted within 60 days after travel.

Seminar Series: [1] Please participate in making nominations and voting for speakers for the graduate student hosted seminar each semester. Student involvement has been described as lacking from faculty members so to maintain our ability to invite one speaker each semester the graduate students need to participate more fully. [2] The Seminar Committee is working on the logistics to give a current/recent grad student from PLB the opportunity to present at the weekly seminar series. The student selected would likely be the recipient of the Ernest A. Bessey Award for Research from the previous year.

Interview Weekend: [1] Bring your poster on Friday afternoon. [2] If you want to attend the hockey game let Teresa Clark know, we have ~3 extra tickets.

CDC: This semesters focus is on transgender rights and implicit bias. Details on the spring speaker will be released shortly...

COGS: Last meeting was dedicated to the Flint Water Crisis. Joelyn and Damien have sent out information on what you can do to help. Joelyn is looking into making Sexual Harassment Training through SERVE available to graduate students (as of now it is only available for undergraduates).

DAC: [1] The DAC is currently discussing where the Global Initiatives hires would go and what renovations need to happen to make them comfortable. [2] The greenhouses are scheduled for renovation. They will begin with the greenhouses by the road that have wood frames. After the remodel they will switch to a pay for space mode, but will be much nicer. A Green House Committee will make further decisions. David Lowry will chair that committee.

GEU: Ellie Siler is particularly busy this semester so wants to know if anyone else is interested in serving as the GEU rep. She can continue to participate if needed but doesn't have the time to continue being as active as she has in the past. The commitment requires bi-monthly meetings with dinner provided.

PLB GSO Meeting 2.29.2016

Attending: Christopher Warneke, Joelyn de Lima, Christina Azodi, Teresa Clark, Emily Dittmar, Caitlyn Byron, Chad Zirbel, Brian St. Aubin, Damian Popovic

GSO: What could we add to the Grad Student Lounge to make more people use it more frequently? Add a water jug (around \$3 a month) or water filter so we can get water in the lounge. Purchase utensils, mugs, plates, etc for common use (Goodwill).

Graduate Steering Committee Meeting: Joint meeting with Danny Snell, the Graduate Steering Committee and the graduate students was on Feb 3rd. I've attached a document combining the notes from the meeting with the comments written by graduate students before and after.

Social Chair: Anna would like to retire next year. Think about if you want to take on this role. There is a bar crawl scheduled on March 19, send Anna bar suggestions. Please remember to sign up for the Plant Science Graduate Student Symposiums (deadline March 18h), it is a great opportunity to get faculty feedback. On a similar note, sign up for the Graduate Student Lecture Series! Great opportunity – don't worry if you don't have polished results – just present your ideas!

Graduate Committee: Recruitment weekend went well. Some perspective students who weren't able to get CNS students have been able to get funding from Minority and Science Policy fellowships. Next year at the graduate student dinner make sure there is a better option for a main course for vegetarians/vegans.

CDC: This semesters focus is on transgender rights and implicit bias. Releasing public letter to support Muslim students. Workshops coming up on racial inequity – most of them are geared toward faculty, but will likely open up for graduate students and post-docs. Minor in LGBT studies has been approved at the university.

COGS: Hasn't met in 2 months. No updates.

DAC: GEU has added to graduate student contract that late term assignments will not be allowed. It is possibly this could mean that once you've signed a contract for a Fall TA in April, you cannot back out even if you receive a fellowship. We are going to follow up and make sure this rule will apply to our department even though the department guarantees funding. Andy secured 1-2 more TA

Other: Photo competition within the department and winners photos get blown up and framed.

PLB GSO Meeting 3.28.2016

Attending: Christina Azodi, Anna Grooves, Emily Dittmar, John Tran, Teresa Clark, Colleen Friel, Klara Scharnagl, Caitlyn Byron, Brian St. Aubin, Chad Zirbel, Isaac Osei-Bonsu, and Joelyn de Lima

GSO:

[1] Our next meeting will be Monday, April 25th at 11:00. Snacks and coffee will be provided.

[2] This year there was a deal of confusion about applying for travel funds through Paul Taylor. Specifically, it was unclear what information needed to be turned into PLB and what other programs PLB would submit your application to (for example, if a student is in PLB, EEBB, and BEACON, will submitting Paul Taylor to PLB get passed down to EEBB and BEACON even though these programs require different forms). We ask that this process be made more clear next year. Perhaps add a section on the cover letter to Paul Taylor that asks students to check off boxes for which other program they would like their application sent to.

DAC:

[1] Special Global Impact Initiative Quantitative & Computational Plant Science Job Search. The DAC hoped more people (faculty and students) would attend and submit evaluations on candidates.

[2] New policy negotiated by the Grad Student Union dictates that TA appointments should be set by deadlines a few months before the semester begins. The issue that this could create is that students who accept TA appointments but then receive other funding might not be able to back out of their TA assignment. This has become a problem in the department (last semester 7 TAs dropped out after signing their contract to accept other offers). One result of this is that BioSci has allocated fewer TA appointments to the PLB (from ~12 to ~8). However, we hope to make up for those lost TA positions because CNS is allocating more TA slots for bio for non-major courses to PLB.

[3] In past years PSF has invited ~60 students to plant science recruitment, this year only about 20 were invited. This could be because PSF did not coordinate with BMS for

recruitment weekend. This is an issue, because the dean has informed PLB, that compared to other departments our size we are training fewer graduate students. Because PLB guarantees funding for graduate students for 5 years, the department has always been conservative in how many students it accepts. Hopefully if we receive more TA slots we will be able to increase our graduate student numbers.

Graduate Steering Committee:

[1] Discussed plans to make a public presentation of research and/or ideas a requirement for all PLB students for every academic year. That would mean all PLB graduate students are required to present at a public venue (PLB Student Lecture Series, PRL seminar, EEBB seminar, KBS brown bag, etc.) during every academic year. To facilitate this, the PLB Student Lecture Series would become open to faculty members and attendance would be pushed for students, faculty, and post-docs. The plan for this Lecture Series would be for it to remain an informal environment with students/post-docs encouraged to present research results, project ideas (no results necessary), practice conference/job talks, sections of their dissertation proposals, etc.. With the addition of this public presentation requirement, the department would remove the “public” requirement from the proposal defense portion of the comprehensive exam process. The proposal would instead be presented just to the committee.

[2] The goals are to improve the interactions between speakers and students and to use the weekly seminar as an opportunity to build community and collaborations. The committee is discussing cutting the lunch with grad students and adding a happy hour social after the talk. This would allow students to interact with the speakers after they have given their presentation. Comments from graduate students on these suggestions include:

- Many speakers comment that they enjoy meeting with graduate students, and this can act as a recruitment tool, because speakers see the engagement of students and suggest their own undergrad students apply here for graduate school.
- Faculty would likely dominate the speaker’s time at the happy hour. It would need to become part of department culture that faculty cannot dominate speakers and that faculty should make an effort to introduce students who have questions or want to talk with the speakers. One way to make this a formal process would be for the speaker’s host to have a list of students who want to meet the speaker and the host can facilitate those meetings at the beginning of the happy hour.
- If the lunch is to be cut there should be slots allotted to graduate student/post docs to meet with the speaker. If it is a particularly popular speaker 2-3 students could meet the speaker in a small group. This could still involve lunch, it would just be a more personal vibe.

[3] The department wants to make an effort to give first year students more support in things like registering for courses, deciding on rotations, and selecting their committee. To do this the committee is proposing to set up a First Year Guidance Committee that would meet with each student on orientation day to discuss these topics. The committee would also be involved with putting together an information packet for first years to be sent to

them shortly after they accept MSU's offer. It should include details like what courses most students take (highlighting those that fill up early), how and by when to register for courses, how to plan rotations, current students to contact if you have questions about housing, moving, Lansing/East Lansing area, etc, and a timeline of what the students should be doing before orientation. The members of the committee have been suggested to include Alan + 1 PCM professor who also sits on the grad committee + the student's current advisor + 1 student (appoint 1 PCM and 1 ESE student, each will sit on committees for the students entering their subfield). It should also be department policy that faculty put new students into contact with current students in their labs, many faculty do this already, but not all. Other suggestions to improve first year training:

- Make the grad lounge part of the tour and be sure everyone gets a key to it during orientation. We hope this will give first years (especially those completing rotations) a home and end the feeling of being a first year nomad!
- Give more advice/explicit instructions for how students should approach faculty about committee membership. This will be especially important if we are asking students to set their committees earlier!

GSO Social: Anna developed a survey aimed at assessing how students feel about current PLB social activities, what reasons students have for not attending events, and events they would like to attend in the future. In response to why students don't attend events the number one reason was that they were busy working, second was that they are introverted and avoid social activities, and third was because they don't drink alcohol. PLB GSO will make an effort to include more activities that are introvert/no-drinking friendly. And we hope that as the department moves toward improving community and awareness of mental health issues, students will be encouraged to balance work with social events.

Seminar Committee: The committee has assigned a slot for the Bessie Award winner to give a PLB seminar on their work. They have also slotted in 3-4 tenure promotion talks into the seminar series.