Plant Biology Graduate Student Organization Meetings Spring 2018
*Most recent meeting at top*

Plant Biology GSO meeting 17/01/2018

- **Department Advisory Committee (DAC)**
  - Leonora has taken a job off-campus; she will not be replicated, and the department is in the process of redistributing her duties.
  - The CNS dean search is ongoing.
  - Fringe benefits charged on general funds accounts will be transferred to the department as of 1 July 2018. Currently, the department only sees salaries in their budget; when they see fringe benefits, the budget cut will also affect those benefits. This will likely affect hiring.
  - In the next few weeks, you will no longer be able to forward your MSU email to a Gmail account.
  - Tom Sharkey proposed building a phytotron (high controlled greenhouse space). This is a need, but the department wants to ensure that this does not come at the expense of renovating the rest of the greenhouse.
    - The greenhouse renovations have been taking a while.
    - The greenhouse is not currently pay-per-use, and this will be changing when they remodel the greenhouse. The dpt. should be aware of this affecting people in fields that don’t have the resources to support these changes.
  - **Update on time to finish (Lars)**
    - If we can articulate outcomes that we expect of grad students when they finish, and the goal of comps is to evaluate the trajectory of grad students towards finishing, then the basis of comps should be the same as the expectations for graduation but at the halfway point. Discussion point for grad committee.

- **Council on Diversity & Community (CDC)**
  - Interest in special offering of the O13 “Understanding Implicit Bias” certificate program
    - [https://www.hr.msu.edu/professional-development/certificate-programs/understanding-implicit-bias-certificate-program.html](https://www.hr.msu.edu/professional-development/certificate-programs/understanding-implicit-bias-certificate-program.html)
    - Special offering would be geared towards CNS members. If we can get at least 25 people to attend, O13 is willing to schedule the training for us. The intent is to find a time that works for most interested CDC members and then invite others in CNS to participate.
  - Increasing inclusiveness in STEM classes
    - Refer to diverse labs/people who have made/are making a significant scientific contribution—name researcher(s) and university(s), or include names on slides (e.g., the anti-malaria drug artemisinin was discovered by Tu Youyou, a Chinese scientist).
    - The CDC will be compiling a Google Doc of examples of scientific diversity for professors to add to their lectures.
  - In classrooms using nametags, it would be good practice to include a line for students to indicate their preferred pronouns (and potentially require students to do so). Some instructors are hesitant, but the students would have the choice of what to put and this eliminates the student’s need to bring up the topic.
  - The BioSci department wants to start having common exams at common times to help standardize the curriculum. They are currently planning on evening (not Friday) exams.
outside of normal class hours. CDC recommended avoiding Friday evenings (retail job concerns), to try to have the location near a bus stop so students can feel safe while leaving, and to follow the Chemistry department’s lead and allow students to take a makeup exam the next day without needing to explain why (safety, family, other concerns or conflicts). This morning alternative exam may be at 6:30am, but it would be offered.

o The CDC is continuing to work towards justifying a request for a CNS Diversity Coordinator by comparing our college with others at MSU. We are gathering information about what other diversity coordinators are responsible for and what kind of feedback students have given in different units.

- Graduate Committee (Christina)
  o Recruitment Weekend is Feb 2-3 for PSF. Email Christina (azodichr@msu.edu) if you would like to volunteer as a buddy (pair up with an individual recruit and take them to their interviews) or to attend/lead a Saturday activity (van drivers, housing tour volunteers, Sat night social activities, etc.)
  o Proposal to revamp the comprehensive exam system
    ▪ Suggestion made at the retreat with a great deal of support
    ▪ Would address both decreasing time-to-graduation and concerns about student mental health
    ▪ Input from students would be helpful
    ▪ Current suggestions:
      ▪ One exam including a written proposal, public seminar, and questioning session by the committee. This is very similar to the current 2nd exam, but the questioning would include a mix of broad and proposal-specific topics.
      ▪ Two exams, with the first being a common written exam taken at the end of your 1st year that covers content from PLB801 and 804.

- Seminar Committee (Ravi)
  o The Grad Student Invited Speaker winner was Christopher’s nominee, who could not attend due to federal budget reasons.
  o The second close nominee (Christina’s)—Todd Mockler was invited and accepted. His talk will be 20 April 2018.
  o Spring semester speakers include many internal PLB speakers, both to save money (PLB seminars have split from PRL) and to give postdocs a chance to practice talks.
  o Sign up for grad student lunches (pizza)—Leonora ran this, so scheduling will return to normal soon.