

# Graduate Student Committee report to the CASCA Board December 2008

## I. Current Membership of the Graduate Student Committee

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

Kelsey Hoffman, Chair (University of British Columbia)  
Helen Kirk, Secretary (University of Victoria)  
Talayah Hezareh, Education Committee Rep. (University of Western Ontario)  
Jacqueline Otaguro (University of Western Ontario)  
Sukhpreet Guram (University of Calgary)  
Rob Cockcroft (McMaster University)  
Alireza Rafiee (York University)  
Véronique Petit (L'Université Laval)  
Pascal Elahi (Queen's University)  
Laura Fissel (University of Toronto)  
Daniel O'Donnell (McGill University)  
Robert Sorba (Saint Mary's University)  
Mike Hillier (University of Waterloo)  
Pier-Emmanuel Tremblay (Université de Montréal)  
Theresa Wiegert (University of Manitoba)  
James Silvester (RMC/Queen's)  
Locke Spencer (University of Lethbridge)

We would like to welcome Jacqueline Otaguro as the representative of the University of Western Ontario and thank Alyssa Moldowan for her work on the committee.

## II. The 2008 Graduate Student Workshop and General Meeting, Victoria

The CASCA Graduate Student Workshop was held prior to the start of the annual CASCA meeting on Tuesday, May 20. The Theme for this year's workshop was *Tools for the Modern Astronomer*. The workshop was organized by the Graduate Student Committee, with assistance from the Local Organizing Committee. The workshop included talks from Luc Simard on Proposal writing, Phil Gregory on Statistics, and Jayanne English and Jim Hesser lead a session on Public Outreach and IYA 2009. The workshop was well attended by the graduate students, with many of the students who attended CASCA also attending the workshop.

The Annual General Meeting was held after the workshop.

### III. Planning for the 2009 Graduate Student Workshop in Toronto, Ontario

Preparations for next year's Graduate Student workshop are underway. The workshop will take place on University of Toronto Campus in the Bahen Centre the day before CASCA begins. The theme has yet to be finalized. So far we are planning in the morning to have graduate students give review talks on an area of astrophysics, such as Cosmology. The afternoon will focus on skill building, such as presentation skills, job interviews and dealing with the two-body problem.

With regards to logistics of the workshop, Laura Fissel and Mubdi Rahman at the University of Toronto have put together a budget and have proposed a location. With respect to the budget, \$1300 has been allocated for the workshop in the CASCA budget, an additional \$500 is being applied for from the Graduate Student Union conference grant at UofT. This would give a total income of \$1800. The expenses are as follows:

- Refreshments: \$1400
- Printing Costs: \$100
- Gifts for Speakers: \$ 150
- Pens: \$150
- For a total of: \$1800.

The cost of the refreshments is based on an attendance of 140 people for 2 coffee breaks at \$5 each. The printing costs are for reports at the AGM. The pens will be distributed to attending graduate students.

The current plan is to have to workshop take place in the lecture halls or classrooms in the Bahen Centre, which is close to the Astronomy building. The rooms can be booked at no cost. The rooms can not be booked more than 5 months in advance, as a result the room to be used in the workshop will be booked in early January.

### IV. Student Awards

This past year the GSC formed a team of judges in order to select top student posters and talk contributions. We congratulate Gurtina Besla (Harvard-Smithsonian CfA) for winning the award for best talk for her contribution titled 'The Formation of the Magellanic Stream'. For the posters we had two winners this year, we congratulate Antoine de la Chevrotiere (Université de Montréal) for his contribution titled 'Magnetic Fields in Wolf-Rayet Stars', and Daniel O'Donnell (McGill University) for his contribution titled 'Tracing Active Galaxy Cluster Evolution and Mid-to-high Redshift with Red-Sequence Cluster Survey'.

It was noted that at the Victoria meeting that most of the graduate student talks were scheduled opposite each other during the very last session of the meeting – 7 of the 8 talks in the last parallel session were grad student talks. These 7 talks were out of the 16 graduate student talks over all. There is concern that this situation could present difficulty in the determination of the best talk award, since this is presented immediately following the final talks.

## **V. Graduate Student Talks**

We would like to recommend that the senior (finishing) graduate students be given preference for talks. It was noted that for CASCA 2008 there was no place to indicate status as a finishing student in the on-line abstract submission as in the past. We would like to recommend that this be re-incorporated for the upcoming meeting.

## **VI. Graduate Student Involvement with the LOC**

As is the case for the upcoming meeting in Toronto, there is graduate student involvement in the LOC planning committee. We would like to encourage this practice, as it is useful for the graduate LOC rep of the next CASCA to be present at the GSC meeting to be aware of graduate student issues during the planning stages. It would also be useful for either a graduate or other member of the current member of the current meeting's LOC be present at the AGM to describe how talks were selected.

## **VII. Suggestions for Summer School Topics**

At the AGM in Victoria we asked the graduate students for suggestions of topics which would be of interest for future summer schools. The suggestions included having a statistics school similar to that held by Penn State, star formation, galactic and extragalactic astronomy.

## **VIII. Web Pages**

We now have a permanent home for the GSC webpage on the CASCA servers. Dan O'Donnell has worked hard to re-vamp the site and it is in the final touches and should be up by the beginning of 2009.

## **IX. IYA Opening Ceremonies Contest**

This fall members of the GSC formed a selection committee comprised of Sukhpreet Guram, Helen Kirk, Jacqueline Otaguro, Véronique Petit and Kelsey Hoffman to assist ACURA and CASCA in selecting two students to represent Canada at the IYA Opening Ceremonies in Paris. The committee worked to determine selection criteria, determine the application process, collect applications and make recommendations of the winners.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelsey Hoffman  
Graduate Student Committee Chair  
4 December 2008