

Graduate Student Committee report to the CASCA Board May 2009

I. Current Membership of the Graduate Student Committee

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

Jacqueline Otaguro, Chair (incoming) (University of Western Ontario)
Melanie Gendre, Secretary (University of British Columbia)
Ryan Marciniak, Education Committee Rep. (University of Western Ontario)
Aaron Maxwell (University of Victoria)
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)
Michael Zamfir (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)

After the upcoming Graduate Student Committee Annual Meeting Jacqueline Otaguro will take over the position of Chair. The position of Secretary has been filled by Melanie Gendre. Helen Kirk has completed her term as Secretary of the GSC; we thank her for all her hard work. The committee would like to welcome Aaron Maxwell, Ryan Marciniak, and Michael Zamfir. We would also like to thank our outgoing members, Talayeh Hezareh and Daniel O'Donnell, for their contributions to the GSC.

II. The 2009 Graduate Student Workshop and General Meeting

Following the tradition, the CASCA Graduate Student Workshop will be held prior to the start of the annual CASCA meeting on Tuesday, May 26. The workshop was organized by GSC member Laura Fissel and Mubdi Rahman at the University of Toronto, as well as the GSC. There are 118 students registered to partake in the workshop.

The workshop will be divided into sections, the morning will focus on career planning, with the afternoon focused on a Graduate Student Jamboree. The career section will have 2 panel discussions. The first panel discussion will be on *Careers Outside of Academia*, with panel members: Marko Kudjerski (Software Programmer, Starry Night, Imaginova Canada), Sara Poirier (Researcher/Programmer, Ontario Science Centre), Ivan Semeniuk (Science Journalist, Dunlap Institute), Dr. Charles Shepherd (Financial Software Programmer, Ion Trading), and Dr. Elissa M. Strome (Research and Special Projects Officer, University

of Toronto). The second panel discussion will be on *Obtaining a Post-doctoral Fellowship*, with panel members: Dr. Lev Kofman, Dr. Marten van Kerkwijk, Dr. Luc Simard, and Dr. Howard Yee.

The afternoon session is the Graduate Student Jamboree. In the session participants will have approximately one minute to talk about their research with an accompanying slide. This is a chance for the graduate students to advertise their talks or posters.

After the workshop the Graduate Student Committee will hold the Annual General Meeting, which all the graduate students are welcome to attend.

III. IYA Graduate Student Blog

GSC member Véronique Petit and Heather Matheson have worked to create a graduate student blog of the International Year of Astronomy (at astronomy2009.ca). The blog will be advertised at the graduate student meeting in order to increase the number of students participating with the blog.

IV. CASCA Student Membership

The GSC representatives have been advertising the free membership for students in their first year of their graduate program. It has been pointed out by the reps that, though there is free membership for the first year students, the definition of the student membership on the CASCA website is rather confusing. This definition reads as: “4. Persons enrolled for at least one academic year in a program of graduate studies in astronomy or astrophysics at a recognized university, and continuing therein, may be elected as student members, regardless of whether they meet the criteria for full membership” (from: http://www.casca.ca/Links/membership_categories.html). The main source of confusion stems from the requirement of the student to be enrolled for at least one year. This has led some students to think first year students can not apply for membership, even though membership is free for first year students. Perhaps some clarification on this point encourage more students to apply for membership.

There was also some confusion among students registering for the upcoming CASCA meeting who wished to give talks. Some did not realize in order to give a talk, CASCA membership was required, until after the fact. It might be useful for future meetings to mention that membership is required to give a talk, and if there is a link to the CASCA membership forms, this might also lead to an increase in the CASCA members.

V. Graduate Education Review

Ryan Marciniak has replaced Talayeh Hezareh as the representative of the graduate students on the CASCA Education and Outreach Committee.

VI. 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 8 years has now been recorded.

VII. Graduate Student Awards

The GSC will continue to give awards in recognition of the best student talk and poster at the upcoming meeting in Toronto.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelsey Hoffman
Graduate Student Committee Chair (outgoing)
23 May 2009