

# Graduate Student Committee report to the CASCA Board

## I. Current Membership of the Graduate Student Committee

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

Laura Parker, Chair (University of Waterloo)  
Louise Edwards (Université Laval)  
Alyssa Moldowan, Education Committee Rep. (University of Manitoba)  
Douglas McNeil (Queen's University)  
Pamela Klaassen (McMaster University)  
Pierre-Olivier Quirion (Université de Montréal)  
Brigitte Hesman (University of Saskatchewan)  
Chris Ryan (York University)  
Christy Bredeson (University of Calgary)  
Jason Rowe (University of British Columbia)  
Rachel Friesen (University of Victoria)  
Adam Muzzin (University of Toronto)  
Marjorie Gonzalez (McGill University)  
Catherine Lovekin (Saint Mary's University)  
Kevin Brown (University of Western Ontario)

The position of chair will be taken over by Louise Edwards at the upcoming graduate student workshop and the position of secretary will be filled by Catherine Lovekin. Douglas McNeil has recently completed his term as secretary of the GSC; we thank him for all of his work over the past few years. We would also like to welcome Kevin Brown to the committee.

## II. Meeting of the Graduate Student Committee

The graduate student committee members attend the annual CASCA Graduate Student Workshop. During the workshop we hold an annual general meeting which all graduate students are welcome to attend. The committee also actively exchanges email on all topics of interest to astronomy graduate students including upcoming CASCA meetings and funding.

## III. Annual Graduate Student Workshop

Following tradition, the CASCA Graduate Student Workshop will be held the Saturday prior to the Annual CASCA meeting. The theme for this year's workshop is *The interaction of the scientist with his surroundings*. During the day we will explore the role that a scientist plays in society as

well as the need for scientists to be able to communicate their ideas to politicians. The invited speakers for the workshop this year include Yves Gingras, Jean-René Roy and Julio Valdés.

#### **IV. Graduate Education Overview**

Alyssa Moldowan is the student representative on the CASCA Education and Outreach Committee. She is happy to report that the committee is preparing a fund-raising campaign, as the current funding from the PromoScience program of NSERC is running out within the year. The achievements of the program to date are impressive, and include a national website [www.cascaeducation.ca](http://www.cascaeducation.ca) for teachers and other educators, students and the general public, as well as a visitorship which sends experienced astronomer-educators to smaller centres across Canada. In the near future the Education and Outreach Committee plans to expand this program to improve the current website, create a travel allowance for members of the astronomy education community and the creation of a small grants proposal to provide seed money for education and outreach projects.

#### **V. Student Awards**

There is significant momentum among the graduate students to have a student-voted award for CASCA posters and talks. We plan to arrange this at our Annual General Meeting, and hopefully we will be able to judge student poster and oral presentations at this year's CASCA meeting.

#### **VI. Post-Doctoral Fellowships**

The most active discussion of late among the members of GSC has concerned the need for more post-doctoral funding for astronomy in Canada. The committee was pleased to see the need for funding outlined in the Long Range Plan reiterated in the mid-term review. As a committee we would like to encourage the CASCA board to continue to advocate increased funding and the establishment of fellowships.

#### **VII. Graduate Student Statistics**

This year the GSC compiled statistics on the total number of graduate students in each astronomy program in Canada. The number of male and female, MSc and PhD students over the last 5 years was recorded. We think this information is of great interest to the community and it will be the responsibility of the chair of the GSC to update these statistics each year.

#### **VIII. CASCA Oral Presentations**

There has been serious concern expressed among Canadian astronomy graduate students about the small number of oral presentations allocated to students each year. CASCA annual meetings

are a tremendous opportunity for graduate students to present their results to a large, broad and welcoming audience. Every year local organizing committees have the difficult task of choosing who gets oral presentations from the long list of qualified applicants. It is clear that with the growing astronomy community in Canada this problem will only get worse unless the format of the meeting is changed. The possible changes could include adding a day to the conference or maximizing the number of parallel sessions. As a minimum, the GSC would like to see guidelines provided to each LOC recommending that some proportion of contributed talks be allocated to graduate students (30%, for example), and that students in the final year of their program should be given the highest priority.

## **IX. Web Pages**

The CASCA committees' web page does not appear to have our most recent report to the board (November, 2004) available. The GSC has maintained a web page for a number of years at McMaster University. This page has become dated and is not the ideal location for a permanent web page. We are currently discussing options for a more permanent web page. This could perhaps be hosted by CASCA, or for a nominal annual fee we could use a private server.