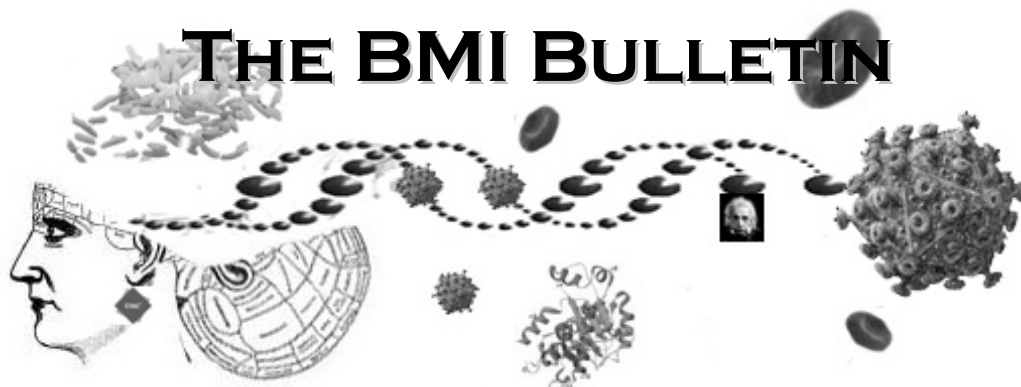


THE BMI BULLETIN



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12-02-09 ISSUE N°78

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FOCUS

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EVENTS

BMIGSA Elections
Wed. Feb. 18 2009
(at Seminar Day)

BMI Seminar Day
Wed. Feb. 18 2009



Editor
Leslie Mitchell, VP Finance

The buses are back!! Having written to the Member of Parliament in my electoral district to inform him of the many negative effects of the bus strike on the best and brightest graduate students in Ottawa, I now feel inclined to work just that little bit harder to live up to my own high opinion.

With that being said, at least I've been working hard on this issue of the Bulletin!! This issue is jam-packed with articles of interest to all members of the BMI department.

First off, the 'Focus On' section is back with a bang and highlights one of the newer and more impactful members of the BMI community – **Dr. Mona Nemer, VP Research**. Dr. Nemer has been settled in this position for approximately two years I believe, but has only recently moved some of her lab to the University of Ottawa. I've had the pleasure of getting to know her students as their lab is just around the corner from mine, but it is rare to see Dr. Nemer herself walking the 4th floor halls of RGN. Therefore it was insightful to learn a bit more about her life and career!

Our usual features are also included (**Culture Corner, Being Green, A Taste of Science**), and this issue also recaps a recent BMIGSA event – **Career Day**. In fact, this event was run in conjunction with the CMMGSA and was financially supported by the Faculty. What a huge success!! Read all about it on page 5.

On the upcoming BMI calendar, three annual events are fast approaching. Tomorrow (**Friday February 13**) will see our hallways inundated with the fresh young faces of undergraduates from both Ottawa and across the country as part of **Undergraduate Recruitment Day**. There is a **social planned at 4:30 in the third floor lounge of RGN** to which we are all invited. Also, all graduate students are invited to come out for dinner afterwards at the **Aulde Dubliner** in the market (~6:30). The two other events will occur simultaneously next week: **BMI Seminar Day on Wednesday February 18** and the **BMIGSA Elections**. As seminar day is mandatory, it's the perfect day to have the elections! When you sign in for Seminar Day, look for the ballot box and vote for the next group of students who will make the coming BMI year AMAZING.

Cheers,
Leslie

FOCUS ON: DR. MONA NEMER

By Andrea Lau

In the fall of 2006, Dr. Mona Nemer was appointed as Vice President of Research at the University of Ottawa. Needless to say, her accomplishments are something to behold. Born and raised in Lebanon, Dr. Nemer traveled by herself across continents to North America to pursue her undergraduate and post-undergraduate education, and eventually her career as a scientist. Last December, I had the privilege of meeting with Dr. Nemer and getting to know the story behind this superwoman.



Did you ever write for anything like the BMI Bulletin?

We didn't have a bulletin that was released every month when I was in school, but I did write for the annual newsletter. Before coming to the University of Ottawa, I was the director of development and planning at Université de Montréal. The communication director reported to me and they didn't have much happening at the time, so I started a newsletter and an alumni association that also had a newsletter. I think things like this are really important.

How did you end up moving from Lebanon to the United States?

I did my high school in Lebanon at a French school. After that, the civil war started. I moved by myself to Kansas for undergraduate studies. My parents would not let me go by myself to a place that didn't have any relatives, and we did have some relatives in Kansas. It was definitely a cultural shock.

How many languages can you speak?

I can speak Arabic, French, Italian, Spanish, and some German. I was forced to learn German in the United States.

When did you discover your love for science?

During high school I liked the sciences a lot, especially chemistry. I also liked math. I was also good at literature and actually wanted to be a journalist but my parents discouraged me from pursuing this pathway. I figured that I could always study literature, philosophy, and history as a side hobby but I couldn't do the same with science.

Do you have any siblings?

I have a younger brother and sister who stayed a few more years in Lebanon after I left before leaving themselves. Both of them are engineers. I am the only scientist in the family.

What did you study during undergrad?

I majored in bioorganic chemistry because I wanted to pursue medicinal chemistry as a career. I didn't really take any biology or biochemistry courses during this time. The system is different in the United States in that you have more electives and less concentration in your area. There are a lot of compulsory courses such as languages, psychology, and political sciences.

When did you know you wanted to pursue a career in research?

I wanted this since my first year of undergrad. I was eager to finish my undergraduate degree so that I could become a researcher.

How did you decide where to pursue graduate studies?

I was planning to go to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I went there and almost rented an apartment. When I was there during the Fourth of July weekend, I met some friends from Toronto and Montreal. They invited me on a road trip to those cities and when I arrived in Montreal, I fell in love with it and decided that was where I wanted to stay. I went to McGill University the next day to see whether I could register and find a supervisor in the bioorganic chemistry department. That is how I ended up going to McGill!



How was your graduate school experience?

When I started graduate school at McGill, I knew less chemistry than the other students that came from the Canadian system, so I was disadvantaged at the beginning. However, I think I had the opportunity to take other courses that they didn't have a chance to do during undergrad and never had the chance to do during graduate school. I took courses in the social sciences, communication, and even management. We're trained to do research, but we receive

less training in teaching and managing a lab. A large number of scientists pursue careers in government and industry where additional skills in terms of understanding policy, business, and project management are very helpful. I feel that we need to offer these types of courses to our graduate students.

Oh, but these courses tend to hurt people's grade point average!

I know. My daughter is studying economics at McGill and she tells me how she hates taking courses in political sciences because it's harder to get good grades.

How long did it take you to complete your PhD?

I took four years, but I did have a life. I believe in the motto: work hard, play hard!

What did you do during your post-doctoral years?

After my PhD, I realized that I needed to know biology and biochemistry to be able to develop interesting drugs and so on, so I went on and did a post-doc in molecular biology and ended up staying in that field for the rest of my career! I did one post-doc in the United States with Gibco, Industry. This made me realize that I preferred academia. I did another post-doc back in Canada at the IRCM [Institut de recherches cliniques de Montréal], which was affiliated with l'Université de Montréal (UdeM). After that, I left to go to Chicago for a year but I was hired at UdeM before leaving. It wasn't difficult at the time to obtain the position.

How long did you work at UdeM? What kind of research did you do? Did you teach much?

I was there for 20 years. My research stayed in the field of molecular biology. I studied the mechanisms that control heart development. I love teaching, but I only taught around 20 hours a semester.

Was it difficult to start your own lab?

I remember being so excited when I finished my first grant proposal. I even showed it to my old graduate school supervisor, who told me that this would probably be the last grant proposal I would enjoy writing because of the stresses that would come later on wondering whether or not you will get funded. At first it was hard to adjust when I became a PI because you always had to be there and your students are not! My lab had around 15-20 people, and only half of them moved here with me during the 2-year transition. I love working with students.

What does a typical day look like for you? I'm sure you are quite busy, since I had to book this meeting with you 2 months in advance!

I can show you my schedule. Typically, I meet with several different groups and scientists and consult with them. I get to see people from industry, from the government, and from universities. I would like to see more communication between different groups. There are so many resources out there in government laboratories just a few minutes away and we don't always make use of it. I would also like to see more women in sciences. I have gone to high schools to give talks to encourage girls to pursue a career in science.

What do you see in the future for research at the University of Ottawa?

University of Ottawa, though not one of the top schools now, will continue to do better. They just hired several new scientists over the last few years and many of them are doing very well. Other universities that are more established have not been doing this, and so they will not improve as much.

What are your hobbies?

I love all kinds of dancing!

When do you find time for your hobbies and relaxing?

Sunday nights!! This is the chance I have to read books for fun.

What advice do you have for current graduate students?

Word hard, play harder! You have to like what you do. Don't get discouraged even when results are not what you expected. Sometimes, this is how you make your greatest discoveries.



CULTURE CORNER

By Anastassia Voronova

The major cinematographic event, Oscar Night, is fast approaching! If you haven't had a chance to dive into watching the Oscar nominees yet – now is your opportunity to catch up! "Doubt", "Curious Case of Benjamin Button", "Revolutionary Road", "Frost Nixon", and "Slumdog Millionaire" are currently running at the Empire Theater. At the Bytowne Cinema you can watch a handful of other Oscar nominated films: "Happy-Go-Lucky", "The Wrestler", and "Waltz with Bashir".

"Waltz with Bashir" was nominated as the best foreign language film. It's an Israeli animation movie about the Lebanon War that happened in 1982. The main character recalls lost memories with his war comrades. The movie has already won numerous awards including the Golden Globe for the best film. An hour of history in 3D animation is not to be missed!



Winterlude is in full swing and will end next weekend. Make sure to take a walk in the midst of ice sculptures and attend a fantastic "fire and ice" performance by Saltimbanque on Valentine's Day! For

more information check the culture corner in the previous BMI bulletin and the official web-site of Winterlude <http://www.winterlude.gc.ca>.

Finally, adventurous souls can take the weekend off in Toronto for 100\$! The International House SFUO is organizing a trip to T.O. on Feb 28 – March 1. The cost includes transportation and accommodation in the best North-American hostel with breakfast. It will be a great way to finish the long-lasting winter on its last calendar day! Contact International House via e-mail ihouse.activities@ihouse.ca or check their Facebook page.

BEING GREEN - TIP #4

By Thienny Mah

As all scientific researchers know, it is important to keep on top of the huge number of papers that get published in your field. Well, I do try and the amount of paper that I use to print out these papers astounds me. I have tried to cut down on this paper use by doing two things: I read more papers on my computer but for the papers that I know that I will need to keep referring to, I make sure to print on both sides of the paper. I feel a little better knowing that I have cut down on the amount of paper that I could potentially use by half.

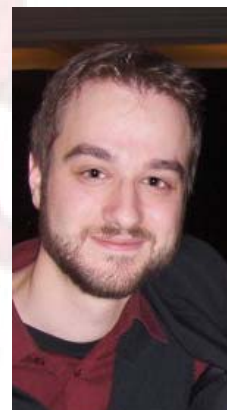
Green tip #4: Check to see if there is a "print on both sides" option on your printer and use it.

A TASTE OF SCIENCE: FOODS TO PUT US UNDER PRESSURE

By Sylvain Lanouette

In the recent years, nitric oxide (NO) has taken the center stage in cell signalling, immunology and cardiovascular health. Far from being only a product of the NO synthases, it can come up through our food in unexpected ways.

When nitrate-rich vegetables are consumed, the nitrates eventually make their way into our saliva, where bacteria will transform them into nitrite and nitric oxide through a NO₃⁻ reductase complex. When NO enters our stomach, it triggers the production of a thicker layer of mucus. The beneficial effects of nitric oxide along the digestive tract do not even stop at the stomach. In the intestines, it can work as a mild oxidant in concert with acidity to control the levels of potentially pathogenic bacteria. This underlines a problem for overly hygienic North Americans: mouthwash products kill the nitrate-reducing bacteria of the mouth. Halitosis or stomach ulcers... we are left with a difficult choice.



The food/NO connection can also present itself in funnier ways. Watermelon contains high levels of citrulline, the precursor for the biosynthesis of arginine. This amino acid supplies the NO synthesis pathway, allowing its levels to climb up in the blood. And higher levels of NO in the blood means... vasodilatation... While sildenafil affects the degradation of NO, watermelon by inhibiting PDE5 (cGMP specific phosphodiesterase type 5), watermelon could thus, in theory, mimic its effects on NO vascular concentration. On the downside, to observe the same influence on localized blood flow, you would need 4 litres of watermelon. A single slice before going to bed would do little more than quench your thirst.

For further reading:

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BMIGSA/CMMGSA CAREER DAY

By Evelin Loit

Whether you think about your research in the shower may determine your career

Contributors: Dorota Sikora, Natalie Bunimova, Jennifer Beveridge, Erica Schissel



We are in graduate school for two, three, five, sometimes for up to seven years, and surely not all of us will become PIs one day. But what else is there? The Faculty of Medicine holds a Career Days once over two years, but usually they can only fit in one talk geared toward BMI graduates, which is too little as the surveys conducted among BMI graduate students indicate. Therefore, the BMIGSA, in collaboration with the CMMGSA, decided to take the initiative and host our own Career Day. To start off the series (hopefully), we chose five speakers who have acquired a PhD or Masters Degree in Biochemistry, Microbiology or Immunology, and all of them have continued on to career paths that go far beyond the scope of academia alone.

The turnout at the event was remarkable. Approximately 100 students from BMI and CMM came out to listen and get info about the alternative careers, which clearly indicates that this kind of Career Day definitely deserves to be carried on in future years. (I'm sure we would all agree that events that break the century mark for attendance in our department are few and far between.)

The lineup of speakers for the day was as follows:

Dr. Rod McInnes - Scientific Director, Institute of Genetics, CIHR, PI at U of T

Dr. Marc Desjardins - Clinical Microbiologist

Dr. Dara Friedman - Epidemiologist, Ottawa Public Health

Mr. Stephen Lau - Web marketing consultant

Mr. Daniel Brunet - Senior Field Applications Specialist, Promega

Comments from graduate students following Career day:

* It was very good. I liked the last two talks (Stephen Lau and Daniel Brunet), since it showed how they took the lead of their careers and developed their science skills along with additional skills into a great career.

* Overall I really liked the Career day. Very useful! I liked the first speaker in terms of encouragement, and I actually believed I could be a PI, while he was talking. The second and the third speakers I liked in term of career choices, because these types of jobs are not very obvious to everyone.

* I liked Daniel Brunet's talk, since it put the selling job into completely different perspective.

* I found the Career Day useful for a few reasons. I didn't know some of those careers even existed so it certainly helps in weighing options. Especially because I'm not sure research (I.e., being a PI) is what I want to do anyway. Also, knowing **how** each of them actually got to where they are is SUPER-helpful. The Career speakers made me realize that there are actually other reasons to do a PhD, rather than just to be a PI.

* I was mostly intrigued by Dr. Mark Desjardins career, because I like the idea of using your knowledge/expertise "at the bedside" in a real setting. Not less importantly, I was also relieved to hear that a decent salary **can** be earned by someone with a PhD. I also found myself interested in the

public health job; it sounded great because it opens more doors and makes for a job with little redundancy.

* I really liked Stephen Lau's talk and career story, since I have an engineering background and I am interested in technology and combining Biochemistry with my engineering background.

* I really enjoyed Dr. McInnes's talk, as he talked clearly about the skills (intelligence, problem solving/imagination skills, experimentalist skills etc) and personality characteristics (confidence, people skills, positivity, tenacity etc) needed to become a PI, which made me to realize that I may be suitable for being a PI myself. I liked how he mentioned that there are many ways to be successful and the fact that if you did not get A+ in all of your graduate courses does not mean that you should throw your pipet into the corner and find a new career. Also, he brought up some common thoughts graduate students have ("ah, it's just a fluke. It's too good to be true. I must find the flaw.") and discussed solutions how to overcome them.

All and all – we had a very successful Career Day. We do look forward to your feedback though. Whom did you like the best? Whom/which kind of career representative would you like to see in the future events? E-mail us: bmigsa@gmail.com

The next event offered in BMIGSA Career-series in collaboration with the University of Ottawa Technology Transfer Office will be on **February 25th at noon** (with lunch!!! Place TBA). **Dr. Louis Lamontagne**, the president and CEO of PainCeptor (www.painceptor.com/page.asp?intNodeID=15168), will give a talk on his career. He received his PhD in Immunology from McMaster University and completed his post-doctoral studies at Harvard University's School of Public Health. He started his career from the university spin-off company and transformed it into very successful biopharmaceutical organization. If you are innovative and interested in developing your project into something more (such as your own business), you will definitely benefit from this talk.

This event is organized to encourage all of you to enter the Technology Venture Challenge, where your innovative idea can win you \$10 000 (www.techvc.org/).

BMIGSA ELECTIONS

BMIGSA elections are fast approaching. Get ready to vote in a new executive.

WHEN: Feb 18 2009 at Seminar Day

WHERE: Look for the ballot box when you sign in

TIME: all day

To date, here are the students who have announced their candidacy:

President: Lemuel Racacho

Currently I am a Biochemistry MSc. with a specialization in Human Molecular Genetics. I will transfer to the PhD program this semester. My current supervisor is Dr. Dennis Bulman and we are located at the OHRI General Campus. I would like to continue the exceptional efforts of the current BMIGSA council and maintain and broaden the social and academic events organized by the BMIGSA.



VP Academic: Nicole Forbes

I'm originally from Washington State, and I just started the second year of my M.Sc. in Microbiology and Immunology. I work in the Brown lab, and am currently researching adaptive mutations in the NS1 gene in terms of increased viral protein synthesis. I really like to get the most out of my grad school experience and want to help all of you guys do the same!



Webmaster: Andrea Lau

I am a second year Masters student in the lab of Dr. Kristin Baetz, using baker's yeast (mm bread) as a model to study the essential NuA4 complex via high throughput genomic screens and a variety of molecular biology techniques. I love anything to do with FOOD. Baking, cooking, eating, Food Network, recipe books, gourmet kitchen supplies. When I am not stuffing myself with food, I like to



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talk and I love snowboarding :) As webmaster, I will maintain the BMIGSA website and attempt to keep it as updated as possible.

VP Social: Vanja Avdic

I am currently in the first year of my Master's working with Dr. Jean-Francois Couture. We utilize X-ray crystallography to characterize histone modifying enzymes. My non-science interests include traveling, sea creatures, crosswords and pretty much any game involving words! I have been volunteering with the BMIGSA since September. Having just organized the BMIGSA ski trip to Mont Ste Anne, as VP social I would love to continue to plan events that get grad students out of their labs to have fun and to meet and forge friendships with all the other awesome students at BMI.



VP Finance: Anastassia Voronova

I am a Ph.D. student in Dr. Skerjanc's lab, where I work on muscle and neuronal developmental programs in stem cells. Outside of science, I am involved in professional ballroom dancing, I love to play music, admire the movement of impressionism and thinking outside the box. As a control-freak I need to have a good handle of my life and my money. My overall goal as part of the BMIGSA is to improve the quality and experiences of all BMI grad students. I'm originally from Estonia.



VP Internal: Carey Greco

I am a Ph.D. candidate in the Ramirez lab at Canadian Blood Services. My research is focused on bacterial contamination of blood products. I also volunteer at blood donor clinics on a regular basis—call 1-888-2-donate! Like most people, I love to travel when I get the chance and have been as far south as Cuba and as far north as Iceland, although Ottawa has always been my home. I enjoy volleyball, reading, writing, and spending time with friends. I'm looking forward to another fun-filled year of



event-planning and activities with the BMIGSA. Since you may not run into me very often at RGN, free to contact me any time with questions, suggestions, or just to say hi ☺ .

VP Communications: Mike Wall

I am currently doing a PhD in the Altosaar lab. I am developing a process that will localize biopharmaceuticals to the surface of starch granules, easing the purification of IGF-1 and CD14. I like science fiction literature, hot food and fermented drink I'm originally from Cape Breton.



VP External: ????

IF you are interested in getting involved with the BMIGSA this coming year, it is never too late! Email us at BMIGSA. Member-at-large positions are also available!

BMIGSA@gmail.com

FOCUS ON BMI RESEARCH

Zhou H, Hou W, Denis NJ, Zhou H, Vasilescu J, Zou H, Figeys D. [Glycoproteomic Reactor for Human Plasma](#). J Proteome Res. 2009 Feb 6;8(2):556-566.

Cheng X, Liu G, Ye G, Wang H, Shen X, Wu K, Xie J, Altosaar I. [Screening and cloning of antimicrobial DNA sequences using a vital staining method](#). Gene. 2009 Feb 1;430(1-2):132-9. Epub 2008 Nov 5.

Zhou Y, Ma C, Karmouch J, Arabi Katbi H, Liu XJ. [An Anti-Apoptotic Role for Ornithine Decarboxylase during Oocyte Maturation](#). Mol Cell Biol. 2009 Jan 21.

McBane JE, Matheson LA, Santerre JP, Labow RS. [The effects of phorbol ester activation and reactive oxygen species scavengers on the macrophage-mediated foreign body reaction to polyurethanes](#). J Biomed Mater Res A. 2009 Jan 15.

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Parato KA, Lichty BD, Bell JC. Diplomatic immunity: turning a foe into an ally. *Curr Opin Mol Ther*. 2009 Feb;11(1):13-21.

Yarmo MN, Landry A, Molgat AS, Gagnon A, Sorisky A. Macrophage-conditioned medium inhibits differentiation-induced Rb phosphorylation in 3T3-L1 preadipocytes. *Exp Cell Res*. 2009 Feb 1;315(3):411-8. Epub 2008 Nov 6.

Bunimov N, Laneuville O. Cyclooxygenase inhibitors: instrumental drugs to understand cardiovascular homeostasis and arterial thrombosis. *Cardiovasc Hematol Disord Drug Targets*. 2008 Dec;8(4):268-77.

Was your paper missed? Let us know so we can include it in the next issue! Contact us
BMIGSA@gmail.com

SEMINARS & CLUBS

Good news everyone! All your seminars are easily accessible from the BMI departmental website via Google Calendar. You can find it here:

<http://www.medicine.uottawa.ca/bmi/fra/zEngSeminars.htm>

The RNA Club

The RNA Club is a gathering of researchers with common interest in various aspects of RNA biology, (i.e. splicing, translation, RNA binding proteins, RNA viruses etc). The Club meets every second week to present and discuss latest data from participating laboratories in a "work-in-progress" format. The goal of the RNA Club is to bring together researchers with common interest, to allow graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to interact and talk about their projects with their peers, and to identify and foster collaborations among different research groups within the University of Ottawa.

For more information, or to get involved in the fall, please contact Dr. Martin Holcik e-mail: martin@mgcheo.med.uottawa.ca

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Biochemistry, Microbiology and Immunology Ph.D. Thesis Defence

Mitch Baldwin
Supervisors: Dr. Ian Lorimer
OHRI-Cancer

"The Role of Atypical Protein Kinase c iota in Glioblastoma Multiforme"

Date: Tuesday, February 17th, 2009
Time: 1:00pm
Place: RGN 2113

Examiners:

Dr. Paul Albert, NSC
Dr. Luc Sabourin, CMM
Dr. Robert Sreaton, BMI

External:

Dr. David Litchfield.
University of Western Ontario

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND

12th GSAÉD Interdisciplinary Conference

Monday, February 2 - Thursday, February 5, 2009,

76 presentations, 24 sessions, 4 keynote speakers, 4 rooms.

Participate in one session, participate in them all!

Undergrads, grads, professors, administrators and friends are welcome to attend.

Complete schedule: www.gsaed.ca/conference2009.

In order to volunteer and have access to the "bar night" on Thursday, February 5th at Café Nostalgica, please write to us at conference@gsaed.ca

For free tickets to the **Maude Barlow, Joël Plouffe and Tofy Mussivand keynote presentations**, please pass by the GSAÉD office at 601 Cumberland.

Looking forward to seeing you during the events.

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GSAÉD elections March 17th, 18th, and 19th, 2009

Nomination period now open for several positions:

GSAÉD executive officers:

- Internal Commissioner*
- Finance Commissioner*
- External Commissioner*
- Student Life Commissioner*
- University Affairs Commissioner*

*Paid positions with upcoming pay review.

Other posts:

- Senate Representative
- Governor's Board Representative

All nominees for executive posts must be bilingual and will have to complete an aptitude test in the official language that is not the one of instruction.

For more information, please consult the GSAÉD website at www.gsaed.ca or communicate with the CRO, Désirée Lamoureux at elections@gsaed.ca

Election Scrutineers Needed: This job pays \$10 an hour. You will be asked to hand out the ballots and verify student cards. If you are interested or if you know someone who would be, please contact Désirée Lamoureux dbern047@uottawa.ca

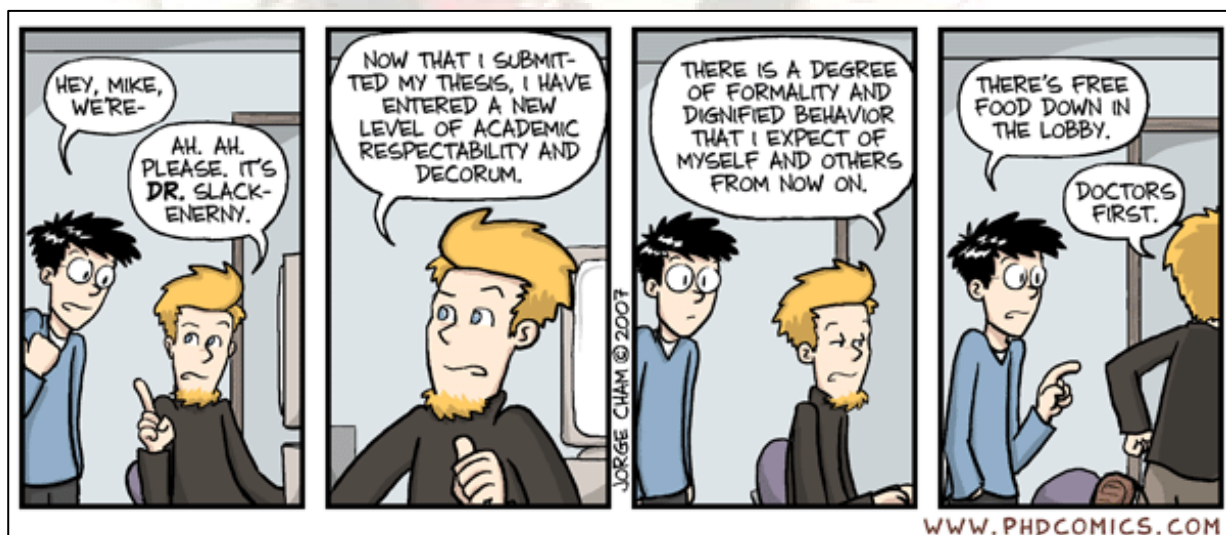
GET INVOLVED

The BMI Bulletin Committee is always seeking creative and energetic Grad Students or Post Docs from the department to participate on in the creation of The BMI Bulletin through contribution of articles, ideas and/or feedback. If you're interested or would like more information please contact the BMI Bulletin Editorial Committee:

E-mail: BMIGSA@gmail.com

The BMI Graduate Student Association (BMIGSA) is ALWAYS looking for new and energetic individuals to represent the graduate student population, to help plan social events and to provide new insight and ideas to the group.

E-mail: BMIGSA@gmail.com



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DO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW WISH YOU WERE ON THE BMI BULLETIN DISTRIBUTION LIST? WELL NOW YOU CAN BE! DROP US A LINE WITH YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO BMIGSA@GMAIL.COM AND WE'LL ADD YOU TO OUR GROWING LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS!

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