

AGSEM Union Council Meeting

February 16, 2006

Thomson House, Room 404

6:00 pm

Present: Lilian Radovac (Coordinator); Kyle Spyksma and Erin Vollick (Grievance Officers); Marc-Etienne Ouimette (Communications Officer); Jessica Wurster (Treasurer); Marie-Claire Albanese (Psychology); Andrew Carvajal (Sociology); Jessica Cox (Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences); Meredith Donaldson (English); Paula Goday-Paiz (Anthropology); Allison Gonsalves (Integrated Studies in Education); Rami Hourani (Chemistry); Émile Khordoc (Linguistics); Nathalie Kouri-Towe (Women's Studies); Stephana Lamasanu (Communication Studies); Maggie Livingstone (Physics); James McCrea (Political Science); Misty Malott (Nursing); Charles Meunier (Biochemistry); Tania Perlini (Art History); Lihong Shang (Mining, Metals & Materials Engineering); Heidi Zunn (Geography); Lydia Bourouiba (AOS observer, non-UC member); Christine Lapierre (Office Manager, non-UC member).

Regrets: Marianne Campeau-Devlin (French Language & Literature); Julien Poirier (Mechanical Engineering); Kristen Rempel (Earth & Planetary Sciences); Nabil Saliba (Civil Engineering & Applied Mechanics); Geneviève Smith (Biology)

Meeting came to order at 6:06 pm; pizza and beer arrived at 6:09pm.

1. Announcements (Lilian)

a. AGSEM Symposium on Work:

- i. Title: "Overtime, A symposium on graduate student work"
- ii. The CC encourages all grad students and profs to attend.
- iii. The CC will be inviting some McGill administrators and the media to the event as well.
- iv. There will be a roundtable, giving all present opportunities to discuss their issues relating to the work they do as grad students
- v. Screening "Declining by Degrees" and there is a chance to interact with a producer, Shae Isaacs. It does deal primarily with undergraduate-student issues, but still raises pertinent issues for graduate work.
- vi. As part of the roundtable there will be a panel of selected graduate students. Panelists get a three-minute talk opportunity to state who they are and what their particular issues are with respect to the work they need to do in addition to their own graduate research. Panelists also may participate in the general discussion. The goal is to direct some attention to grad student issues over and above the general focus on university life for undergraduates. Are there any delegates who may be interested in being on the panel if there is a need for more panelists?
 1. Meredith may be interested
 2. Meredith and Misty also think they know of a second person.
- vii. Are people interested in showing up at the symposium? Many are.

- viii. Postering volunteers. Are there delegates who are willing to help postering campus, mainly in the buildings that you already frequent: grad student lounges, TA rooms, etc...
 - 1. Misty, Paula, Heidi and Allison (who will take some now).
 - b. Bargaining Workgroup
 - i. Bargaining may begin in May 2007.
 - ii. What do we want to be bargaining for?
 - iii. The CC would like to for a BW to begin the identification of what AGSEM's goals may/should be. This work would be passed on to the general membership and to the Bargaining Committee at the appropriate times....
 - iv. We would like to gain a bit more legitimacy for our demands by allowing more than one General Assembly determine what our bargaining priorities are, as may have been the case in the last series of bargaining.
 - v. There are \$50 honoraria for subcommittee or workgroup members...
 - vi. Meetings will begin April or May, and continue to meet once a month or so.
 - vii. We hope to elect members of the workgroup at the General Assembly.
 - c. 180 Hours Campaign (Marc-Etienne)
 - i. Simple message from Communications Officer to general membership: "You don't have to work more hours than you signed up for in your contract!" The posters are a part of that campaign, dubbed the "180 Hours Campaign," which is generally based around images of street signs.
 - ii. The posters also allow us to show off the new logo!
 - iii. Allison: Are TAs allowed to work more than 180 hours?
 - 1. Kyle: Yes; the Collective Agreement says that TAships are not to be more than 180 hours, but if a student wishes to have more, they may because only if there are complaints would the union take any action.
 - 2. If TAs wish to take additional TAships, they should not think that the "union prevents" them from taking that TAship.
 - 3. The point of the poster is that more often than that, TAs work way more than their contracted hours (usually 180), but don't do anything about it.
2. Upcoming General Assembly, March 22, 2006 (Lilian)
- a. It's at 6:00pm on the Ballroom at Thomson House
 - b. Amendments to the Constitution (Marc-Etienne)
 - i. Constitution Review Subcommittee is making amendment proposals:
 - 1. Logical/grammatical changes
 - 2. Inclusion of By-laws to the constitution
 - 3. CC definitions and job descriptions
 - ii. All the proposals will be presented to the UC before the GA and we the GA will pass things smoothly because it's to have all been on the web beforehand.
 - iii. On a related issue, Marc-Etienne also noted that the Constitution allows for larger departments/hiring units may have more than one delegate (one delegate for every 35 TAs). It was quickly followed up by noting that quorum requirements also increase when more delegates are instituted as quorum is based on the number of people who, "in fact, have been named to sit on the council [i.e. are delegates or CC members]" (Art. 30 of AGSEM Constitution).

- c. CC Elections
 - i. All positions are open for election. Information will be posted on the website before the GA.
 - ii. At least two members of the current CC are stepping down.
 - iii. There is paid training from CSN available for all positions as well.
 - iv. Only membership-card signing members are eligible to run and vote.
- d. Document availability on-line
 - i. All documents will be made available on-line, at least a week before the GA.
 - ii. Please let your constituents know about all this.

3. Delegate Concerns

- a. Departmental issues
 - i. Allison (ISIE): Undergrads hired to TA in place of grad students were being paid to do 'menial' tasks. Allison got a TAship in the same course so she was able to see what these tasks were. They led courses and did real marking! Allison brought this to the department's attention and they are now being treated as TAs, since they were hired following the correct hiring procedures (no eligible grad applicants were qualified for the 'menial tasks' they were doing!).
 - ii. Rami (Chemistry): re: 180 Hours campaign. I don't think Chemistry TAs actually work 180 hours but they get paid for 180 hours. But in one course—only 2 TAs for it—the TAs were made to grad the finals using a new grading system that takes a lot of time, resulting in much more work than other Chemistry TAs had. They feel cheated because of the extra work (in comparison, not over their 180-hour contracts, though).
 - 1. Kyle: All Rami can do is commiserate, because there really is nothing that can be done about it.
 - 2. Erin: In Arts, sometimes TAing the same course as the last year results in needing to spend less time in prep, so a TA can gain the same sort of advantage that most of the TAs in Chem have over these two.
 - iii. Misty (Nursing): A certain TA always needs to pick up equipment for her course from ICS to an insecure location in a hospital. Is this a good thing?
 - 1. Erin: The TA is being sweet, but the TA is not responsible for such 'pick-ups' if she doesn't feel that she can do it 'safely.' In the end, it isn't the TA's responsibility, but the sessional instructor's.
 - iv. Misty: Preparation occurs over email; the TA doesn't necessary feel like she's as prepared to run the labs as she should be.
 - 1. Kyle: AGSEM can do little about this right now, but if she asks for more support from her sessional and keeps track of how that interaction goes, AGSEM may be able to lend suggestions.
 - v. Natalie (Women's Studies): (In a follow-up from Allison's comment) Non-grad students are getting hired while other grad students in other departments can't get any TAships!
 - 1. Erin goes over the Priority Pool setup.
 - 2. Kyle notes that, in addition to that, grad student applicants have priority (not Priority Pool priority!) over any and all non-grad student priority. All grad students who apply have to be shown that they are

not qualified before any non-grad students can be hired (as in the Allison case above).

vi. Misty: Job postings: How is the distribution supposed to be done? In Nursing, they are posted on the bulletin board and over the internet. Some “filtering” may have occurred in the email postings, though, as a choice TAship somehow went missing from the email list.

1. Erin: The official list is the bulletin board, so don’t simply check the emails, especially when you may not be able to trust the sender!

vii. Lilian: What are the triggers for hiring TAs in your department this semester?

1. James: Thinks it got raised in Political Science, but no firm numbers. There will be a lot of graders (80-100 students in a class will get an additional grader, for example).

2. Natalie: Are there limits on the number of students for which a TA is to be responsible?

a. Lilian: Not currently. This is something that needs to be addressed in the next CA.

viii. Meredith (English): There’s no training for how to mark papers. Many new TAs have no idea and therefore take much longer!

1. Erin: TA training, anyone?

2. Time that is given to do a TA task should not change with the budget numbers! There is very little pedagogical basis for that! This is an issue that should be worked on with undergrads.

3. Getting undergrads on our side is a massively-important component of the job that the next Communications Officer will have to deal with.

4. As an aside, James noted that Political Science now has to buy exam booklets, rather than having them supplied by McGill. They took the money it cost out of the TA budget!

ix. James (Political Science): Do we have any say in how TAs are being evaluated in Mole? All I got was now just comments, rather than numbers and comments. There is much less feedback this way

1. Andrew: We just got numbers; no comments

2. Allison, Misty, Nathalie, Meredith, Erin, Jessica, Charles, more: We don’t get any evaluation back, separate from generic course evaluations.

3. Marc-Etienne: They can use the evaluations against you for hiring purposes.

a. Kyle: You are allowed to write comments on these, so feel free to try to put perspective on any comments that come your way (for example, pointing out that the one negative comment you received was in a class with over 100 students, meaning that comment speaks for <1% of the class).

4. Rami: In Chemistry, you get your evaluation, plus an average over all the TAs doing the same job.

5. James: Why can’t Mole be standardized for TAs as well as profs?

a. Erin: Mole is still be tested and still isn’t standardized, or being used, over all of McGill.

b. Verification issues

i. Marie-Claire: My department says that they give the Tentative Appointment List directly to AGSEM. Do they?

1. Christine: In this case, yes!

4. Next UC Meeting: Thursday March 9, 6:00pm. Room 403 Thomson House, although it might be moved to the Thomson House Basement, for space considerations.

5. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned at 7:49pm