

GSA Executive Meeting Minutes – February 2, 2009, 4-6pm, Champlain SCR

Present:

Allison
Andrea
Colin
Jean
Jenn
Josh
Katy
Lynette
Nina
Tom

Absent with regrets:

John
Nick
Peter
Sarah
Vladimir

Guests:

Sherry
Murray

Meeting

1. Policy on Discrimination and Harassment – Presentation by Sherry Taylor and Murray Geneo
 - a. An overview of the document was presented followed by a response from the GSA. The committee on Discrimination and Harassment policy review will be meeting in 2 weeks.
 - b. Policy overview: Trent has had a policy on discrimination and harassment since 1995; it is well overdue for an update. An initial request was sent for renewal in the fall, the GSA was included in this request. The soft deadline on consultation was Dec. 15th, 2008. The process has since moved forward to developing recommendations.
 - c. Feedback from community consultations over the fall will be posted on human rights website. There were 13 submissions, some from individuals some from groups. 2 open forums were held. Feedback encompassed 3 main areas:
 - i. Freedom of speech – there is a wide range of feedback dealing with the controversial discussion of freedom of speech in some classes. Feedback was mostly received from a faculty perspective, but also from graduate students. Such controversial discussion is not forbidden in policy, rather the committee welcomes it.

- ii. Definition of key terms – particularly what constitutes harassment. As well ageism, youth, and gender identity should be its own separate ground.
 - iii. Malicious and fraudulent complaints – what is the best method?
 - d. A main issue generated from feedback was that of policy coverage: the most pressing concern being the policy’s relation to the charter of human rights. For example, it is not clear where bullying would fall.
 - e. Feedback indicated that there is a need for education and awareness. The committee has begun work on an education and awareness campaign.
 - f. Other comments encompassed remedies and sanctions, and the need to balance these in policy.
 - g. Timeframe – the committee received many great comments and questions, leaving much work ahead to deal with. The committee is working with unions, and graduate faculty. The policy is under collective agreement therefore subject to collective bargaining. There is no firm timeframe yet, the aim is for end of June. The policy must first move to senate and then will be advanced to the board of governors. For now it is in the recommendations review state.
 - h. GSA comments – the GSA was very satisfied with the document; it is a major improvement, with the process being well outlined and thorough definitions.
 - i. Questions – there is a major question about definition of the charter, since there can be confusion over where issues fall.
 - i. The committee removed overlap from the charter and cross-referenced out to the Policy. There will be difficulties in practice of course with issues that lack a clear delineation where they fall.
 - ii. There are 13 grounds under which the human rights policy would be applicable. If an issue is based on one of those 13 grounds, it would fall under the policy.
 - iii. In some instances, the policy would take issues beyond Ontario’s human rights legislation. Gender identity would be an example, as might political affiliation and class, as the extent to which these issues are covered under Ontario’s human rights legislation may not be sufficient for the policy’s purposes.
 - iv. Bullying will be covered under the policy if it is based on one of the 13 grounds. Alternatively it may be covered by the Campus Violence Policy or the student Charter.
2. Secretary
- a. Approve Minutes – January 19, 2009 meeting
 Motion by Katy to approve minutes
 Seconded: Andrea
 In favour: unanimous
 Motion passed
3. President
- a. Trend/Traill – meeting last week

- i. Wallis Hall – because construction was so delayed, could not guarantee would be available for January semester start. There are currently 12 apartments still available. The result is a large deficit that will be carried over for a while.
 - ii. Trend/Sunrise Cafe update – apparently doing very well.
 - 1. Chef Daniel may not be willing to pay for the extra insurance coverage required for holding the liquor license (\$1 million). The license should come through very soon, however we may still have to deal with Conference Services. Sunrise will be encouraged to take over the license in September at the latest.
 - 2. Dimmer switches are installed, but coloured light bulbs in track lighting have just been ordered.
 - b. University finances and ancillary fees – Trent University is facing an 8 million deficit for the coming year. Overall across Ontario, university applications this year have increased from last year by 1% but at Trent the applications dropped by 8%. This means more cuts, lay offs, and fee increases. The GSA needs to decide which ancillary fee services are most important for grad students to support.
 - c. One million acts of green – Dalhousie challenged Trent to participate. Trent was the first university to join the event last fall, turning out a huge success. The event launch is today. The Traill President would like the GSA to work with undergraduates on this event. The GSA will send out an e-mail to graduate students encourage them to sign up. We will plan an environmental social event in March or April.
4. VP
 - a. CASSC – update from the meeting this week.
 - i. The new Athletics building is still being designed, with construction scheduled to start in the summer. Completion date is September 2011 since Trent is hosting the women’s world rugby championship in October 2011. The new federal budget has allocated more funding to infrastructure at universities for the first time in 30 years.
 - ii. Russell Co., producer of all clothing for Trent athletics, was accused of using sweatshops. The decision to buy from Russell was approved by the Trent purchasing department, which performed due diligence to make sure they were sweat-shop free. The decision of whether they will buy from them next year is dependent on whether the sweat shop allegations are true.
 - iii. CASSC is looking into the possibility of installing new water fountains.
5. Treasurer
 - a. Conference bursary feedback – survey summary results. Total of 14 respondents (not all were from GSA executives). Answers to the 8 questions are outlined below.

- i. What type of graduate degree are you completing? The response was even between Doctoral and Masters, indicating good representation from both science and humanities programs.
- ii. How many conferences on average do you attend (or expect to attend) each year? 2 was the average.
- iii. Of the conferences you have typically attended or expect to attend, how many have you participated in as or do you expect to participate in as a: session director, workshop demonstrator, poster/platform presenter, student attendee/member? There was a wide variety of answers. Most respondents were presenters, but some have been workshop demonstrators and session directors.
- iii.iv. On average, how much were the costs of:
 - 1. registration fees: average costs were what was expected, with most responses falling in the area of \$100-200, although some were in the range of \$300-400, on par with what the GSA currently allocates.
 - 2. travel expenses: mostly greater than \$400
 - 3. accommodations: ranged from \$200 to greater than \$400
 - 4. workshop and relevant fees: in some cases, these fees may be significantly higher compared to registration fees, which would be \$0-100, indicating that workshop fees should be considered for reimbursement.
- iv.v. Which costs does your supervisor cover? Most respondents indicated that supervisors covered travel and accommodation costs.
- v.vi. If your supervisor agrees to cover only some of the costs of some of your conference, does that affect your decision to attend conferences? Most respondents said yes it would affect their decision to attend if supervisor did not give any funds.
- vi.vii. Have you ever applied for a conference bursary from the GSA? Most who did not apply for GSA conference bursary support said that they were unaware of it.
- vii.viii. Would you say that the funding you receive to cover the cost of conferences is typical for your program/discipline? There was a 50/50 split on whether the amount provided by the bursary is sufficient to cover conference registration costs.
- b. Nina will present a few different options for adjusting this reimbursement at our next exec meeting. For example, we could include workshop fees and/or travel costs up to a certain point.
- c. Student Ancillary Fees (SAF) Subcommittee – will start Wednesday morning. It is anticipated that given the University's deficit, the budget will be really tight for the 2nd year in a row. Most ancillary groups are facing deficits, except for athletics and housing. It is likely that some services will be minimized. Nina will have more information at our next meeting.
 - i. .

- ii. The list of ancillary groups and fees are available in the student calendar.
 - d. Where does the University's \$8 million deficit come from? It is impossible that this stems entirely from decreased enrolment. Nina will investigate and report back at next meeting. We should consider writing a statement regarding student fee increases in relation to University finances.
- 6. Communications
 - a. Website –Website is still in the works.
 - b. Newsletter – almost all blurbs have been received. In addition, Andrea has provided a summary of GSA accomplishments over the past year including: the new website, new constitution, working with trail and trend, great social events, Symons series going as usual, NAMP, motion on private residence, and supported CUPE on negotiations. Approximate date for publication would be the end of the month at the latest.
- 7. Senator – nothing new to report
- 8. Social Directors
 - a. January events
 - i. Pete's game and Trivia report back
 - 1. Hockey sold 43 tickets, double that of last year. There was good feedback on using the restaurant. Spectators could not see the game as well but the setup was better for socializing. 2 people came from indigenous studies.
 - 2. Trivia night went well, with a little more than 20 attendees. Most of the cost was paid for by Grad Studies. Doug Evans has said that he will donate a foosball table and possibly a dart board. GSA contributed some prizes to the event, including Trent mugs and gift certificates.
 - a. The mugs were very popular, indicating that the GSA would have great success producing their own merchandise. Allison is looking into customizable merchandise distributors in Ontario. A plan for merchandise production will be discussed at the next meeting.
 - b. February – band booking update: Sun Parlour Players notified the GSA that “it sounds like a hoot”. Need to work around their studio schedule since they are recording now. Andrea will ask for if they are available for last Saturday in February.
- 9. CUPE rep – the letter that Tom wrote was very well-received. Still waiting for feedback. CUPE is having a bargaining update meeting Feb 10th in the Crypt at noon. Will likely discuss York University's back to work legislation.
- 10. Sub-committee reports back
 - a. Constitution (Jenn, Katy, Lynette) – changes will be e-mailed soon. Equity/environment position. Should it be a two person position? The

main concern with dividing them into two positions is with workload. Both positions could each have a substantial workload, and therefore be a strong position. Otherwise, equity will likely be subjugated.

- b. Health Care (Allison, Jean, Josh) – Doug Evans will be meeting with small university head representatives, ask their opinions and will report back to the committee. An update on this issue will be forthcoming after the meeting.

- c. Student funding, fees, tuition (Tom - Chair, Vladimir, Jean, Colin, John)
 - i. Research topics have been assigned; should report back next meeting.

e.d. Symon's Series (Tom)

- i. Feb 4st, 2009 7-9pm - Natalie Thornhill and Andrea Coombs, food platters will likely be provided by the Charlotte Pantry but will look into getting food from the Sunrise Café.
- ii. Keynote speaker: Sherryl Vint, English Language and Literature Professor at Brock University, with an area of focus using science fiction and moral ethics to inform scientific decisions. Will speak at April 17th, 2009 gala event at Sadleir house. There will be 80 tickets.

- 11. Next meeting – Tuesday February 17th, 2009 4-6pm at the Kerr House. Everyone must bring plenty of food to feed the masses!

Motion by Katy to adjourn

Seconded: Jenn

Meeting adjourned