

Welcome back to the whirlwind that September brings. Over the last month, I have been incredibly busy working with the VP's and the social team preparing for Orientation. The Education Students Society Orientation went well and I had the opportunity to welcome approximately 750 new members to the SGPS. The Orientation Day on September 6th allowed us to present the first Graduate Support awards in front of new and returning Graduate students. It was a great event and I was delighted to meet many new members. I encourage you all to stop by the SGPs office and look at this fantastic award/sculpture.

As many of you already know, the Rector Nick Day resigned from his position effective August 31, 2011. This means that this position is vacant and I encourage you to consider running for this very important role at Queen's. Should you wish to discuss this further, please feel free to email me any time. With respect to the Rector election, I have been working diligently creating policy with respect to voting in the Rector and should the need ever arise, how to go about removing a Rector. Currently, the existing policy is ineffective referring to simply the election of the rector. Since this position represents Graduate, Professional and Undergraduate students, any policy that is created or amended must be approved by both societies. I have forwarded a draft policy to the AMS and anticipate bringing this to our next council meeting in October.

Finally, October 6th is Election Day. It is essential that as many students vote as possible. I encourage you to become familiar with each candidate and make an informed decision.

In conclusion, I look forward to the next few months and hope that each one of you will get involved with a committee or a club that the SGPS has to offer-or possibly even start your own club.

Respectfully submitted,

Jillian Burford-Grinnell
President – SGPS
president@sgps.ca



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the VP Graduate
September 2011

Greetings!

This past month has been a busy one. Here's what's been happening on my end:

Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)-Ontario

A delegation of three SGPS executives (Anne-Marie Grondin, Andrea Phillipson, and myself) attended the CFS-Ontario annual general meeting (AGM) from August 18 to 21. The meeting saw many of the CFS-Ontario locals gather together to report on their accomplishments and challenges over the past 6 months. Our local in particular brought forward a motion with regards to Principal Woolf's leaked letter. See the appendix for our full report on the CFS-Ontario AGM.

Student Advisor Program

The Student Advisors are currently working diligently to bring to SGPS members a workshop titled *Working Productively With Your Supervisor*. The workshop is taking place on Tuesday, October 4th, from 7-8:30 p.m. (location TBC). Please stay tuned for more information about the workshop to be made available through the next SGPS newsletter. Please also advertise this workshop widely within your departments, as our hope is that this workshop will reach a wide number of our members so as to proactively support the development of positive supervisory relationships. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Health, Counselling and Disability Services (HCDS)

This is a repeat announcement from my last council report. We are currently compiling a list of service gaps (re: HCDS) that our membership has experienced recently. We ask that you spread the word and compile any and all student feedback so as to be emailed to me. Our goal is to work together with HCDS to find ways to bridge the identified service gaps in order to better meet the needs of our membership.

Graduate Councils

Please spread the following message within your respective departments. Are you a MA student within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and interested in sitting on the Faculty of Science Graduate Council OR the Faculty of Arts Graduate Council? Each council is looking for 1 MA student representative. For more information on the structure and responsibilities of the councils, please visit <http://www.queensu.ca/sgs/forfacultyandstaff/SGSgovernance/council/artscgc.html>. Interested individuals are asked to email Irene Karagiorgakis (vpg@sgps.ca) their name, department, name of the council that they're interested in serving on (i.e., Arts, or Sciences), and a brief paragraph (100 words or less) indicating why they would like to serve as a student representative on the council. Expressions of interest are due by Monday, September 19, 2011, 4:00 p.m. Successful candidates will be contacted via email.

Peer Support Centre

We're working on developing a graduate student peer support group. This differs from last year where the peer support group catered to both undergraduate and graduate students. More information about the graduate student peer support group will be published in the coming SGPS newsletters, as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please feel free to direct them to me.

Academic Affairs Standing Committee (AASC)

The AASC convened last month after a summer hiatus. We are eager to get back into the swing of things, and one of the projects that we are currently undertaking is gather student feedback with regards to ways that the accessibility and clarity of Fall 2011/Winter 2012 registration information can be improved. We would like to compile a list of recommendations before presenting them to the Office of the University Registrar, and so we require your assistance. Any and all suggestions from SGPS members within respective departments would be greatly appreciated. Please send them to me via email as soon as they become available to you.

Further, over the last academic year, the Academic Affairs Standing Committee (AASC) worked diligently to develop a FAQ based on the T4 versus T4A issue faced by research assistants (RAs). To access this FAQ, please check out our latest newsletter (No. 89). Please also distribute widely to the students within your departments. If you or anyone else has any questions, comments, or concerns with regards to the FAQ, please feel free to send them to me at vpg@sgps.ca.

Lastly, the following is a repeat announcement from my previous report. Please distribute this message widely within your respective departments. I am interested in getting a wide representation on the AASC. We are currently lacking representation from the Faculty of Engineering & Applied Sciences, the Faculty of Law, the School of Business, the School of Policy Studies, and the School of Urban & Regional Planning. If you are interested in finding out more information about how to join the AASC on short-term projects to do with academic issues that face Queen's graduate students, please feel free to contact me as soon as possible.

This concludes my report to council. I would like to wish everyone a great start to the 2011/2012 academic year!

Respectfully submitted,

Irene Karagiorgakis
VP Graduate
vpg@sgps.ca

For starters I would like to wish a happy September everyone and a big welcome back to all those new and returning members of our organization. We are thrilled to have a new year upon us and have been working diligently throughout the summer to make sure that all is in order for the return of the fall months, orientation events are planned, etc etc.

Faculty of Law Orientation

We have made some significant inroads here that are worth bringing to the attention of our membership. During my first year at Queen's in the Law program very little about the SGPS was heard. After learning on my own how much the organization does for law students and how much a part of their time at Queen's the SGPS really is, I made it a personal goal of mine to increase awareness amongst this year's incoming class. I believe that we have succeeded to date in doing that. With the help especially of our amazingly dedicated President and staff, we were able to do two (2) important things that have not been done in some time to the best of my knowledge.

First: I was able to arrange through some discussions with faculty, to have our President give a short welcome address to the incoming class during the Dean's welcome remarks. This is a pretty important first week event for an incoming law class and mostly everybody is in attendance. I believe that doing this not only introduced students to the SGPS and a few of the key benefits of membership, but also enforced to the class of 2014 how important the SGPS is to them.

Second: Through working with the student organized law orientation committee we have been able to arrange for an SGPS table to be present during another important law school event: "clubs day". During this event typically different intra law school clubs (such as the criminal law association) make their collective pitches to incoming students to become involved. First year law students are VERY eager to do so, and as a result this event is extremely well attended. Having the SGPS participate will potentially allow us to tap into some of that enthusiasm and promote opportunities for participation. Further it will allow us to reinforce the message that was first introduced during the Dean's welcome address the week previous. Finally it will further legitimize the organization in the eyes of incoming students.

My apologies for devoting so much of this report to the topic of law orientation. However, given that these new students represent a sizable portion of our new membership and will be with us for three (3) full years, I believe the effort and time devoted by the executive and especially our president and staff is and was warranted.

The Grad Club

Our executive meeting this month was postponed and I believe that is a good sign because the reason for the delay was the fact that things were so busy! Gearing up for orientation has taken a lot of work and effort on the part of our wonderful staff and managers and they should be commended for it. As previously reported there are still several challenges that will need to be addressed to ensure the long term viability of the club. Efforts have and are underway to address these. Please do your best to promote the club to those you are in contact with as a great place to come for a bite to eat, to hang out, to study in a quiet corner, or to share a beverage. The support of the membership is vital to the Club's success. That said, if you are aware of any feedback that the club may benefit from, please feel free to communicate that to myself or a member of the executive. The Club is concerned about meeting the needs of the membership and if there are ways to improve towards that goal, everyone is "all ears".

Disability Services

As some of you are aware, I had an unfortunate accident around the time of the birth of my son this summer. As a result I have had to enlist the help of the good people over at Disability Services. In so doing I was benefitted by the fact that the faculty of law has a full time staff member who oversees students that have needs in this area. This staff member is able to serve as a liaison between faculty members and the student suffering with a disability related issue. The benefit of this is that any barriers to understanding how the particular disability will affect a law student are removed because the staff member is familiar with the demands of the program and can tailor a solution to meet specific needs each situation.

However, not all faculties on campus have this luxury. When I was discussing my particular situation with the staff at Disability Services, they mentioned that it can be a challenge understanding how a certain disability will affect an individual's abilities to perform in a given program because as a general rule they are not familiar with the particularities and the unique demands of that program. How a head injury may affect an individual preparing for a thesis defense will be different from how it will affect a person in the Education program. We discussed a potential solution to this problem could come from the SGPS perhaps in the form of volunteer (or paid) liaison persons. This could be an individual in each program who has an interest in disability related issues that could be contacted by Disability Services to answer questions about the program that will help them in making their recommendations for particular accommodations. I will be making an effort to explore this issue further and would welcome any feedback from the council or general membership on this idea.

HEQCO. Albeit awkward as a greeting, this acronym is worthy of being used as an introduction, for reasons I will expand on below. It stands for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, an arms-length agency of the Government of Ontario that provides the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, as well as university administrators, with various policy recommendations on post-secondary education (PSE). If the name sounds familiar, it is likely because Queen's administration will, every now and again, laud the HEQCO's recommendations as foundational tools upon which to model and restructure our university over the next few years. If, as Principal Woolf commented in the October 27, 2010 Queen's News release, the HEQCO's "themes resonate with our ongoing academic planning process," we may well imagine that these themes helped to guide the Academic Planning document, 'Where Next?' as much as it did 'Imagining the Future,' produced by the Academic Writing Team.

If HEQCO still doesn't ring a bell, you are likely to hear more about it as we enter into the official campaign period for the provincial elections. At the very least, you will see that some platforms on education were inspired by the HEQCO's recommendations. So if you haven't heard about it before, you soon will – so what? Well, after hearing more about HEQCO at the semi-annual general meeting of CFS-Ontario last month (see report attached in this Council package), and after following up by doing some research on my own, my message to you is as follows: be weary.

To begin, the HEQCO is mandated to evaluate the quality and accessibility of education in the post-secondary sector, yet it is led not by university professors known to prioritize quality education, but primarily by financial and legal experts, some of whom now occupy senior administrative positions in universities: Frank Iacobucci, former justice of the Supreme Court, Norie Campbell, VP and assistant general counsel in the legal department at TD Bank Financial Group, Navin Dave, a managing partner for global resource leveraging for KPMG, and Catherine Henderson, a management consultant, to name a few. Nevertheless, these quality of education 'experts' have a lot to say about access to, and quality of education.

For one, the HEQCO encourages 'greater differentiation,' or the specialization of universities in specific fields, areas, programs, or structure, and the concordant abolition of those fields, areas, etc. of lesser priority. Within this model, certain universities would provide, say, professional programs, others, graduate programs, teaching-intensive programs, education for Aboriginal students only, or courses in specialties such as law, ethics, and so on. In other words, through differentiation, universities would stop offering comprehensive programming. How any one university would choose its specialty (or have its specialty chosen) is one concern – given trends within various university administrations to prioritize revenue generation, would 'specialty' be equated with financial returns? If so, what would happen to our smaller departments, such as those found in the modern arts and languages? Furthermore, universities have a long history as hubs for multidisciplinary dialogue. Under a differentiated model, multidisciplinary would be greatly eroded. Furthermore, differentiation raises the question of access, as, for many, access to PSE is directly related to the proximity or geographical location of an institution. Differentiation would likely increase geographical, and therefore financial, barriers to education, as it did in Europe following the Bologna Accords.

According to our 'experts' on access, however, financial access to education is not really an issue for students. According to one HEQCO research report, lower-income students, which are disproportionately made up of racialized, and particularly Aboriginal students, are simply not sufficiently "financially literate" to make use of the abundance of funding available (see their 'Financial Literacy of Low-Income Students' report on HEQCO's website: <http://www.heqco.ca>). Better access to education, they contend, can be resolved by further promoting financial aid. Never mind that the cost of PSE is higher than it has ever been, and higher in Ontario than anywhere else across the province, that the national student debt is already at an all-time high, that the number of grants have stagnated, while the proportion of students attending university has increased exponentially, or that funding opportunities for underrepresented groups are embarrassingly scarce (for instance the Post-Secondary Student Support Program for Aboriginal students has been capped at a 2% increase since 1996, thereby denying over 3,000 Aboriginal students funding every year).

Our 'experts' have more to say about underrepresented groups, however. Using findings from a different research report ('Understanding the Gender Gap in University Participation') which concluded that more young men than young women apply to university, the HEQCO plans to invest more time into researching this disturbing trend. In fact, the HEQCO has been taken by the so-called reversal of the gender gap in PSE since its publication of 'What about the boys?', which investigates how males have become the "new, disadvantaged minority" and "second sex" in education. Now, this may be my Sociology talking, but I think my colleagues in the sciences and engineering will agree that women are still fairly underrepresented in many university programs. Perhaps our experts in education might have done better to look at actual admission and retention in university programs, and to compare these by type of degree (and the average level of income associated with it), rather than focusing on high school applications, before concluding that "The slow growth in university attendance by Canadian men poses a serious policy challenge."

Putting aside my wee rant for a minute, if you are still wondering what to expect from me as your VP Campaigns and Community Affairs over the next year, my role is to keep you informed about what goes on in the Queen's community, from the decisions which come from the top to the responses which emerge from below. My campaigns will be primarily directed towards raising awareness, as much about issues in PSE as on tools –policy, research, and campaigns- which you can use to voice how you and your colleagues are impacted by these issues. For one, I will be organizing monthly discussions on current issues in PSE at the Grad Club (dates TBA every month and advertised widely). I will also host 'Council prep' sessions a few days before each Council meeting (these dates also TBA once confirmed) to provide Councilors with a space to discuss what is presented in the Council package, and to ask question about reports, motions, or process.

Before I conclude, I should mention that I recently hired Andrew Stevens as a contractual organizer for the provincial elections – welcome! Andrew will be working to promote student voting amongst our members, and particularly to inform our members about the various platforms on PSE. If you are on Facebook, look for his page 'SGPS Votes!' and keep informed, particularly in the lead-up to the Queen's all-candidates' debate, which is tentatively scheduled for September 19th. You will soon also be able to access the campaign webpage, via a link from the SGPS website. Andrew is currently looking for a list of questions on PSE you and your colleagues would like to ask provincial candidates. You can contact him at sgpsvotes@sgps.ca.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Grondin
VP CCA

Budget

The beginning of the academic year marks a new fiscal year for the SGPS, and you can find the 2011-2012 budget in the August Council package. As I mentioned at the August meeting, it takes some time for recent expenditures to register, the bills to arrive, and the reconciliation to happen. Once we have those numbers finalized, the Finance and Services Committee will prepare a report for Council about the 2010-2011 budget.

In the meantime, we have found that, as expected, the amounts awarded for the SGPS Dental Bursary and Emergency Student Aid Bursary have exceeded the budgeted amounts. As tuition fees continue to rise, and especially the deregulated fees for international students, we can expect to see increasing numbers of members facing financial hardship. While bursaries provide an important safety net, this individual approach will continue to fall short if we do not also advocate for long term solutions. As the provincial elections approach, please consider how we will all benefit from lower tuition fees and ask your MPP candidates how they will support postsecondary education as a public service. To learn more about how we can easily maintain public funding of postsecondary education, see the recently released Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) report, *Under Pressure: The Impact of Rising Tuition Fees on Ontario Families*. See especially p. 24, where the authors calculate that it would cost the average family \$170/year to eliminate university tuition fees.

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/under-pressure>

Health & Dental Plan

The new academic year also marks a new year in the SGPS Health & Dental Plan, with coverage by Greenshield. The most important reminder to take back to your departments right now is that those who have **equivalent alternative coverage** (i.e., not provincial or UHIP coverage) and who wish to opt out of the SGPS plan must do so online between September 12 at 9am and September 23 at 3pm here:

<http://www.studentplans.ca>

Several people have asked me whether this step is necessary for those who have opted out of health and dental insurance with the AMS when they were undergraduate students at Queen's. The answer is YES! The SGPS plan is distinct from the AMS plan and all members must opt out every year.

SGPS Work Study Positions

Each term the SGPS posts at least one or two Work Study positions that are available exclusively to members. This program is designed to provide priority employment opportunities to students facing the greatest financial difficulty. More information is available on the Student Awards website:

<http://www.queensu.ca/studentawards/financialassistance/workstudy.html>

Students must be approved for a Work Study entitlement before applying for Work Study positions posted with Career Services.

Report Disturbing Incidents

An SGPS member recently brought an incident to the attention of the SGPS executive and commissioners involving a Kingston Transit driver who went to unusual lengths to verify the identity of a Queen's student. If you witness or experience issues with any of the services we access as members, please don't hesitate to inform the SGPS executive. We want to ensure that we are all paying into services that do not violate the society's mandate through unfair, discriminatory, or harmful practices.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrea Phillipson
VP Finance and Services

Overview of the meeting

As customary at General Meetings of the CFS, delegates were presented with a set of motions (sent in by the 36 locals which make up the Ontario membership) to review throughout the weekend. As mentioned at the last Council meeting, the motion package for this meeting was posted on the SGPS website on August 10, 2011, and remains available for your perusal at the following web address: <http://www.sgps.ca/events/news.html>

Over four days, our delegation broke off into groups to review the motions from various perspectives, and to recommend adoption/rejection/amendments. More specifically, such “groups” include:

Caucuses

Groupings of member local associations with common characteristics, including: 1) the francophone and bilingual caucus; 2) the Northern region caucus; and 3) the Ontario graduate caucus.

Constituency Groups

Participants in these groups share common characteristics and means of self-identification, including: 1) Aboriginal students; 2) students with disabilities; 3) international students; 4) part-time and mature students; 5) women; 6) queer and trans students; and 7) racialized students.

Plenary Sub-Committees

Each sub-committee’s task is to review the motions most pertinent to a particular stream of the broader structure of the CFS, including: 1) budget; 2) campaigns and governmental relations; 3) organizational and services development; and 4) policy review and development.

Our own delegation attended the Ontario graduate caucus, the women’s constituency group, and the part-time and mature students’ constituency group, and represented the interests of each of these groups within the budget sub-committee, the campaigns and governmental sub-committee, and the organizational and services development subcommittee. To ensure better, more equitable representation of our membership, we encourage members at large identifying with any of the above-mentioned groups to express their interest in attending CFS meetings to Anne-Marie (vpcca@sgps.ca). Most notably, the Aboriginal student caucus had only one voting member at this meeting, indicating a need for greater Aboriginal student representation at the QCFS, including from Queen’s.

Workshops

Discussions on motions were interspersed with various special-topic workshops. The purpose of these workshops is to disseminate information about current or upcoming issues of interest to students.

The first of these workshops was focused on the current state of post-secondary education. Presenters discussed the ever-increasing tuition fees in Ontario, our country’s record-high level of student debt, and the various barriers to reducing them. Chief amongst them are the recommendations put forward by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), which our VP CCA discusses in her Council report for this month.

The second workshop constituted a presentation on the cost of post-secondary education (PSE) for families. David Macdonald, a research associate from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Mark Rosenfeld, the Executive Director of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, provided us with a preliminary review of the impact of the rising cost of PSE on families since the 1990s.

Our third workshop featured Melina Laboucan-Massimo, an Indigenous rights and environmental activist from Alberta. Melina's moving—albeit disturbing—presentation detailed the massive and detrimental costs that have been incurred on health care, the environment, and communities as a result of the tar sands industry. We hope that our (soon to be hired) Sustainability Coordinator will investigate the possibility of inviting Melina to share her story at Queen's. Melina recommends reading the Green Jobs Report to understand how the move away from our society's oil dependence is economically sustainable. You can access the report here:

http://www.unep.org/labour_environment/PDFs/Greenjobs/UNEP-Green-Jobs-Report.pdf

Led by Liberal and NDP MPPs Naqvi and Marchese, the fourth workshop was a presentation of the "Right to Organize Legislation", or Bill-184, which unfortunately failed to pass the third reading before the Ontario Legislative Assembly prorogued last April. The aim of the Bill is to enshrine the autonomy and rights of student organizations and student unions, so as to guarantee continued services to such organizations' members should they ever be at odds with their affiliate institutional administration. Both MPPs hope to get re-elected in Ottawa in October to work on re-introducing the legislation anew.

The fifth workshop, titled "Challenging Sexual Violence: From Campus to Community" featured three speakers. Vanessa Hunt (President, York Federation of Students) discussed the history of sexual violence at York University, the university's lack of response, and the students' strategies for soliciting media attention and pressing for change. While the university agreed to an external safety audit conducted by The Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC), administrators have resisted METRAC's recommendations that concern structural issues of inequity at the university. Nicole Pietsch (Coordinator, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres) presented on the Province of Ontario's Sexual Violence Action Plan, including the frustrations of attempting to push for nuanced understandings of issues that influence differential incidence and reporting rates. Jessica Yee (Executive Director, Native Youth Sexual Health Network) spoke about the structural violence inherent in settler colonialism and the impossibility of ending violence against women in a society that legally sanctions violence against an entire group of people. She offered excellent suggestions for becoming an ally to Canada's Indigenous people.

The Constituency Commission also put on a sixth workshop, which consisted of a panel of four students attending Catholic schools, and related the stories of these young activists' struggle to have gay-straight alliances recognized within the Catholic education system.

Lobby session

We were very fortunate to have the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable John Milloy, drop in on the meeting to hear what students in Ontario hoped to see from the next provincial government in relation to post-secondary education. All member locals were given the opportunity to speak to the recommendations we put forward in a lobby document titled "Placing Students First," which was also given to the Minister.

Our own delegation was able to sneak in two such recommendations: the first, that post-residential fees (lower tuition fees for graduate students who have completed all program requirements save for their research and thesis) be reintroduced. We pointed out to Minister Milloy that students in most other provinces pay these continuing rates rather than full fees because they are not drawing as heavily upon university resources once they are doing independent research. Furthermore, many students study off campus during the final stages of their thesis work. Several SGPS members recently requested this reduction from Queen's administration, but the university was firm that without additional provincial funding, such cuts would not occur.

Second, we spoke against Minister Milloy's proposed plan to "differentiate" Ontario universities by specializing in certain degrees or programs, and eliminating degrees, programs and even faculties which would fail to earn the university top global rankings. We take issue with differentiation for several reasons. First, we know too little about which metrics would be used to rank universities. Based on current trends, it is not unreasonable to foresee the elimination of those programs which tend to attract less money – those departments which, for instance, may have smaller budgets to contend with, thus fewer faculty, fewer students, and fewer grants. Second, diverse campuses are key to a university's vitality. Multidisciplinarity—and its well-recognized value- is just as constructive at the local level as it is across

campuses. Third, differentiation would force prospective students to pick “the” university which offers their program of choice, thus posing an added financial barrier to access to public post-secondary education.

Motions

In fact, the first motion in the AGM package involved denouncing HEQCO for its role in recommending post-secondary differentiation as well as two very disturbing recent suggestions by the provincially-funded research group. First, HEQCO is organizing a conference to explore how post-secondary attendance is not rising for low-income Ontarians due to their lack of “financial illiteracy.” Since racialized people are disproportionately represented in low-income status, the delegates at this weekend’s meeting unanimously denounced this “finding” as racist, especially since it fails to account for the many social reasons why poverty and debt are inequitably distributed, instead choosing to attribute financial difficulties to individual fears of finance (<http://www.heqco.ca/en-CA/About%20Us/Events/Pages/Summary.aspx?link=15>). The other recent problematic HEQCO recommendation is for universities to make a concerted effort to recruit more men, which ignores how women have been historically underrepresented in PSE.

Another motion related to HEQCO involves their proposal for Income-Contingent Loan (ICR) Schemes put forward in a March 2011 policy paper. Under an ICR scheme, student loan payment amounts are calculated based upon income, meaning that those with a lower income will repay their loans at a slower rate, thereby incurring more interest and ultimately paying more for their education than people who can afford to pay up front or pay more quickly. Upon implementing ICRs in Australia, the government was subsequently forced to employ a massive loan forgiveness program. ICRs have been proposed and rejected in Canada in the past, and CFS delegates strongly opposed them at this meeting.

At the CFS-Ontario AGM, our local (Local 27) brought forward an emergency motion pertaining to the recently leaked letter written by Principal Woolf. We petitioned for the support of CFS-Ontario and CFS-Ontario locals to write letters in opposition to the goals and priorities of the Queen’s University senior administrative team as outlined in Principal Woolf’s letter.

Additionally, several motions campaigned to combat ableism (motion N39), to lobby for a system of universal child-care for all post-secondary students with young children and/or create awareness surrounding the lack of financial supports for student parents (motions N33, N34, N38). Various other motions included lobbying the government to increase funding for part-time student with permanent disabilities (motion N28), and part-time students with dependents (motion N27), and increasing grants for part-time students (motion N26). This is in line with the mandate of the CFS’s ‘Education is a Right’ campaign which supports affordable post-secondary education for all. As mentioned above, the complete list of all motions brought forward at the meeting is available on the SGPS website.

Services

The CFS will soon be offering several new services to its associate members. Amongst others, the CFS Executive unveiled a free “app” for smartphones. Designed by students from Queen’s, McGill, and the University of Toronto, this application allows CFS members to connect with other CFS members across the country with the click of a button. In addition to connecting with other members across the country, this app gives users the ability to see the various student saver discounts offered in their areas, and gives student unions an opportunity to post notices of their events, campaigns, and services. To preview the app, you can visit gotooohlala.com. Member locals currently have the opportunity to sign up with the Federation to have their accounts set up to enable them to communicate with their members on local issues.

CFS-Ontario Executive

The Executive team of the Ontario component of the CFS also presented us with a report of their activities over the last 6 months. To avoid detailing the report and unnecessarily making use of even more paper, we will soon be posting a copy of the report on the SGPS website – stay tuned.

For those of you who are not familiar with the work of the CFS, we thought it important nonetheless to share some key information about our provincial component.

Representation

CFS-Ontario ensures representation on various groups not otherwise accessed by students:

- The all-party Standing Committee on Economic Affairs and Finance
- Government Budget
- Provincial Steering Committee for the establishment of a new credit transfer system
- Online Institute Website Oversight Committee
- Federal Finance Committee
- Social Innovation Summit
- Ontario Women's Directorate
- Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario
- Academic Group
- Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)
- Council of Ontario Universities (COU)
- Higher Education Strategic Associates

Recent victories

CFS-Ontario continually lobbies for better financial assistance for students. More recently, they have asked the provincial government to extend the interest-free and repayment-free period for OSAP to one year. On August 13th, 2011, Premier McGuinty announced that he would grant this concession to recent graduates working in non-for-profits and NGOs. The CFS continues to ask that loan relief be extended to graduates not yet employed, and to those employed in other sectors.

Subsequent to a meeting held on August 6, 2011 with the CFS-O, Elections Ontario agreed to expand elections policy to include new ways, and more days, for voting. Our VP CCA elaborates further in her report to Council.

The CFS was awarded an incredible eight gold stars by the Canada Newswire Group (CNG) for the most accessed press releases.

This concludes the delegates' report on the Ontario General Meeting of the Canadian federation of Students held between August 18-21, 2011. Please note that the next CFS National General Meeting is happening in November 2011, and the CFS Ontario Semi-Annual General Meeting will be in January 2012. There will be an advertisement on the SGPS website when motions are being accepted. If there is an issue that you and your department members would like CFS members to lobby for or conduct research on, please draft a motion and look for that submission date this fall. If you have questions about our report or the meeting we attended, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully submitted,

Your delegates for the CFS-O Semi-Annual General Meeting
Anne-Marie Grondin, VP Campaigns & Community Affairs
Irene Karagiorgakis, VP Graduate
Andrea Phillipson, VP Finance & Services



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Equity Team
September 2011

Hello Councilors.

The month of August was spent getting to know the responsibilities and priorities of our positions and the people we will be working with in the next year.

We provided anti-oppression training and an introduction to Positive Space for the new positions within SGPS. Another training session will be provided in the near future for those who were unable to attend this one.

Aliya has been making connections with the various groups on campus to offer our support and build bridges with the communities that provide services for graduate students.

We are preparing to do our work on the committees and councils in the coming semester by representing the graduate students at Queen's.

Wishing you a good semester,

Elizabeth Amirault, Equity Commissioner
Aliya Kassam, Equity Coordinator

SGPS Computer Network

- I began testing protocols for an upgrade to our mail server.
- I have been working to improve calendar access on our server. Some of our accounts are experiencing difficulties with their calendar. I hope to have a resolution soon.
- I am in the final stages of a proposal for off-site backups with the Executive.
- I have written some new code that allows our mail server to react more quickly to search queries.
- More changes to the Queen's network have required further changes to our network, which have been completed.
- I continue to work on a couple of older computers so they can get back into our rotation.
- I am working to allow each computer in the office to keep differential backups on the main server. Some more infrastructure work is needed before this is in working condition.
- I am changing one of the workstations in our office to a newer computer as the current one needs to be re-worked.

SGPS Website

- I am working on the Council and Get Involved sections of our website to make them more informative and welcoming.
- We are working to add new information about UHIP so international students find it easier to understand the difference between our GreenShield coverage and UHIP.
- I have added an SGPS Votes! section to our website. Content for these pages have been prepared by Andrew Stevens, so a big thanks to him!
- I have updated the ESS section of the website to reflect the upcoming ESS Election. More updates to this page will happen as the election process continues.

Communications

- Agenda/dayplanners have arrived and we have been given them out at orientation events.
- The optional fee opt-out servers are ready to go. Full testing has been completed and all seems to be in order. The optional fee opt-out period is September 12 - September 23. More details are available on our website.
- I am in the final stages of preparing mailing lists for sub-components of our membership.
- The Orientation Week Survival Guide has arrived to all members. The address used was that from Solus.
- The Orientation section of our website was completed to reflect all the details of Orientation Week 2011 (events, opt-outs, other info).
- The tri-fold and our brochures were updated for orientation events.
- I have been working with the Executive and the Speaker to improve our Council Orientation package.
- I have been working to prepare the election space for the upcoming Education Students' Society (ESS) election as well as the upcoming Education Graduate Students' Society (EGSS) election.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Richards - info@sgps.ca



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Sustainability Coordinator
September 2011

BIKE KITCHEN

The bike shop work is still underway to establish a student run and operated bike shop. The mold from the MacGillverry Brown has been removed and currently we are organizing a meeting with the incoming AMS Sustainability Commissioner, and the yellow bike action. There is also a meeting being set up with the Jennifer Hosak and Harkness residents and see if some connections can be made to collaborate. The anticipated shop opening date is for October.



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the SGPS Provincial Elections Campaign Organizer
September 2011

Dear Council,

September will be an important month for the SGPS and its membership. On top of Orientation Week 2011, training and general orientation sessions for incoming students, SGPS members should spend some time focusing on the October 6 provincial election. Funding for research, tuition levels, student loan and debt policies, infrastructure funding, provincial government transfers, UHIP, and students' unions right to organize are some of the issues being debated by the major provincial political parties in Ontario. As the SGPS Provincial Elections Campaign Organizer - coordinator of the SGPS Votes! campaign - I will be working to inform the membership about party platforms on post-secondary education, introducing the membership to Kingston and the Islands candidates, and pulling students out to vote on election day. SGPS Votes! is part of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) Take it Over! campaign.

The names and contact information for Kingston and the Islands candidates can be found below. More information can be found on the SGPS Votes! Facebook page, by following the campaign on Twitter, and (hopefully soon) the SGPS website. There are a couple important dates coming up as well:

1. All-candidates debate, September 19, 7:00 PM, Wallace Hall
2. Advanced polling, JDUC (Lower Ceilidh), September 21, 22, 23, 10AM-8PM.
3. Election day October 6, 2011

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Stevens

Email: sgpsvotes@sgps.ca

Twitter: @sgps_votes

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/sgpsvotes/> (look for SGPS Votes!)

CFS Campaign:

Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario), Take it Over! <http://cfsontario.ca/en/section/179>

Candidates:

Mary Rita Holland (NDP): mrholland@ndpkingston.org

Robert Kiley (Green Party): robertkiley@gpo.ca

Rodger James (Progressive Conservative): www.rodgerjames.ca

Hon. John Gerretsen (Liberal): jgerretsen.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

General Information:

Elections Ontario: <http://www.elections.on.ca/en-CA/>



Society of Graduate and Professional Students
Report of the Cultural Studies Department
September 2011

Undisciplined 2011: Queen's Cultural Studies Graduate Symposium

Cultural Studies extended an invitation to all their 22 affiliated departments regarding the upcoming conference, Undisciplined. We would like to thank the SGPS for their funding support in making the event possible. The one day conference will take place on October 1st in the Robert Sutherland room in the JDUC. Keynote speaker Dr. Will Straw will be presenting and local vegetarian food will be provided. More information, including a full agenda, is available on the Undisciplined blog (<http://undisciplined2011.wordpress.com/>).

Thanks,
Jaspreet