

EGSS Council Meeting

May 1, 2013

Room 133, Education Bldg (14:30-17:00)

Called to order 2:36pm

1. Approval of the agenda for May 1st, 2013 [2']

Approved, moved by Moksha seconded Zahra

2. Approval of minutes April 5th, 2013 [2']

Approved as amended, moved by Tom seconded by Cora

3. Business standing from the minutes [15']

a. co-CROs report [10']

- Moksha and Cora are working on a written report that will be submitted with the package for next council meeting so it can be presented for approval at the next council meeting;
- Especially working with the new constitution, it was important to have two CROs in decision making;
- Report will make recommendations including re. constitutional amendments, timeline, working with the PGSS CRO, outreach to FNIE, and procedures for nominations and voting.

b. follow-up motion to reach out to EdUS [2']

- EGSS President has reminded EdUS of their seat on our Council and has invited them to participate in this council meeting, but no one could attend.

4. EGSS Travel Awards [10']

- We have an additional \$400 because no one applied for the travel awards from the conference and so the Conference Committee donated the additional money to EGSS travel awards. VP Academic requesting an additional \$100 so that we can have \$2500 in travel awards for the spring semester [this will be a ONE TIME increase in available funding]
- VP Finance and President will look at the budget to determine which portfolios the \$100 will come out of.

- BIRT \$100 from the EGSS 2012-2013 budget be allocated to the 2012-2013 spring travel awards. Moved by President seconded by VP D&E; passes unanimously.
5. Additional awards for 2012-2013 [research excellence, 2x doctoral awards; professional leadership]
    - It has been decided that asking for reference letters for awards of less than \$1000 is not the best use of faculty and graduate student time. Instead, a new section has been created on the application: a “part B” that is to be a brief statement (approx. 200 words) by the applicant’s supervisor or if they don't have one, the GPD
    - VP Academic and Councillors agree that the consultation period re. awards will be extended by one week until Monday May 13<sup>th</sup> by 10am. Councillors will use track changes
    - Applications will be due in June and awarded in July.
  1. EGSS Fellowships [10’]
  2. VP Academic Spring event [5’]
    - Monday May 13<sup>th</sup> ground yourself yoga for academics event with Sara Mostafa Kamel, 4-5:15pm in the Coach House
  3. Library campaign [30’]
    - Councillors were present at the Study in Solidarity Event organized by EdUS handing out stickers and the Open Mic event last Friday was also a save the library event.
    - Many people around campus have been told that the Education Library is being closed: the decision has been made. Re the consultations, it seems as if any consultation at this point is about what will happen to the space in the future. The administration seems to have a clear plan for the dispersal of the library’s resources. \*Something to remember: There are costs associated with any re-appropriating of the library space.
    - Idea raised: reaching out to other graduate student groups at other universities for support of the save the library campaign
    - Each of us need to be ready with talking points to raise awareness about the threat to the library: Lerona will create a google doc of talking points.

- Cora Lee, Lerona and Fernanda are working in collaboration with Teresa Strong Wilson and Lise Winer to have a town hall to discuss the situation—we can invite the press.
  - May 10<sup>th</sup> there is a Family Day at McGill –we should create a visibility event at the library –may schedule the town hall for that day and information pamphlets etc some more fun, direct actions
  - Save the Education Library Mobilization Committee needs to be formed: a callout for participants will be issued through the newsletter; will reach out to Music Education; PGSS & SSMU contributed heavily to library improvement funds and the PGSS is currently mobilizing a referendum campaign
4. Past and upcoming EdUS/EGSS/Dean’s Office meeting [15’]
    - The next meeting will be on May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 9am\_ President will confirm our presence
  5. Motion to endorse letter by AHCS GSA (Appendix 1) [10’]
    - Moved by President, Seconded by VP D&E; Approved unanimously as amended
  6. VP Diversity and Equity Position Paper / Annual Report (Attached to email) [10’]
    - BIRT the EGSS Council endorses the VP Diversity & Equity position paper/ annual report

Council agrees to review motions (#12 and 13 below) and send VP D&E any proposed amendments by email. VP D&E will then submit final motions to President and Council will vote online.

7. Motion of solidarity against by-law p-6 and police repression in Montreal (Appendix 2) [10’]
8. Motion of solidarity with students and staff from University of Toronto’s Transitional Year Program (Motion will be brought from the floor. Please see: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/campus-notes/2013/04/varsity-blues-u-t-provost-gets-big-raise-while-dismantling-progr>) [15’]

## Appendix 1

### **Motion to endorse letter by members of the department of Art History and Communication Studies Graduate Students Association (AHCS-GSA)**

(Fernanda Soler Urzúa, President)

WHEREAS EGSS is committed to work within an anti-oppressive framework;

WHEREAS EGSS falls under the umbrella of PGSS;

WHEREAS activities at the PGSS level affect EGSS;

WHEREAS silencing, abuse of power, exclusionary processes and unaccountability are in serious opposition to anti-oppressive practices;

BIRT EGSS Council endorses the open letter by members of AHCS-GSA.

#### **OPEN LETTER - TO ALL PGSS MEMBERS**

As members of the department of Art History and Communication Studies Graduate Students Association (AHCS-GSA), we are writing to denounce the anti-democratic culture that has taken root in the PGSS over the past year. A number of events during recent PGSS meetings have resulted in a loss of faith on the part of our members that PGSS truly represents graduate student interests. Moreover, two of our members, the PGSS Equity Commissioner and the External Affairs Officer, have been repeatedly harassed and intimidated while trying to carry out their duties. We are disturbed and upset that this kind of behaviour has been allowed to continue for so long and that attempts at remedying the situation have been met with retaliatory actions rather than conciliation and accountability. This is a concern for all members of PGSS.

#### **SILENCING**

The silencing of dissent at Council meetings, the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM), and at the February 20th "husting" (or electoral debate), disenfranchises members attempting to uphold the PGSS as a viable democratic body. For instance, a protest that took place during the Feb. husting, which is one example of PGSS members non-violently expressing their dissatisfaction with the way that Chief Returning Officer was disregarding election rules and had verbally assaulted PGSS members, was used as an excuse to censure the Equity Commissioner and External Affairs Officer. The fact that a peaceful protest would be construed as grounds for censure of anyone strikes us as a willful abuse of the mechanism of censure.

## ABUSE OF POWER

A mass email concerning the husting circulated by the Board of Directors on April 1 refuses to acknowledge the historical role of protest in democratic processes and instead construes the events around Feb. 20th as harassment against the CRO. This email could also be read to imply that the protest was “loud, vulgar, aggressive, abusive, violent, illegal or could be construed as harassment...or that is inappropriate on any other grounds.” This vague and value-laden procedural document is redundant insofar as abusive, violent and illegal actions are already dealt with under the criminal code, while other actions like being loud or vulgar are not offenses for which people should be punished. These new procedures are therefore nothing more than a method for intimidating and controlling members whose dissent is deemed ‘inappropriate’. In a very similar fashion to McGill’s protest protocol documents, this policy leaves the determination of ‘appropriate’ protest methods completely open to interpretation and subjective assessment. The threat of the removal of PGSS membership and resources will likely intimidate members from engaging in legitimate protest actions in the future, and we believe this is the intention of the “new rules”, not the protection of PGSS members.

## EXCLUSIONARY PROCESSES

The quality of democratic debate and oversight over PGSS affairs has been hampered by actions on the part of the Executive to shut out members from the process. One prime example of this was the April 10 council debate of the motion calling for censuring the Equity Commissioner. Immediately a motion for closed session was moved by an executive and this type of motion does not allow for debate. After a majority of councillors approved going into closed session, the Chair and the Executive enforced the closed session by kicking out all non-voting members, despite PGSS bylaws which grant “any regular member may attend the non-confidential portion of the meeting of any governing body” (see 7.1). The purpose of a closed session is to restrict coverage by the media, not to prevent the broader PGSS membership from overseeing the discussion at council meetings.

## DISEMPOWERMENT

On a number of occasions the Chair has given preferential treatment and speaking time to members of the Executive. During the AGM, executives motioned to strike member motions they disagreed with from the agenda. This has contributed to the atmosphere of disempowerment on the part of members who don’t feel that they have meaningful space to engage in debate that will be fairly considered. The fairness in debate was also hampered in the April 10 council meeting by a one-sided confidentiality ordered by the Board of Directors, which also sent representatives to the council meeting to impose their ruling, leading to the confusion and silencing of members attempting to defend the Equity

Commissioner against a censure motion.

#### NO ACCOUNTABILITY

At the March 20th Senate meeting, the Secretary General voted in favor of adopting McGill's Statement of Values, and against the position adopted in PGSS motions at prior council meetings that rejected the intent of this document. Rather than reprimand the Secretary General for not representing PGSS, the Equity Commissioner was targeted by the Executive Committee for censure because of a conversation she had before Senate with the Secretary General about his intention to vote for the Statement of Values. If we can't even expect our elected representatives to be accountable for the decisions passed by the PGSS, what do we gain from engaging in the organization?

In conclusion, a state of disempowerment has been produced by an executive who are not interested in enhancing the democratic participation of PGSS members. In light of the consistent refusal to acknowledge the above problems on the part of Jonathan Mooney (Secretary General), Michael Krause (Internal Affairs Officer), Adam Bouchard (Academic Affairs Officer), Elizabeth Cawley (Member Services Officer), and Erik Larson (Financial Affairs Officer and Acting Chair of the PGSS Board of Directors), we demand: 1) the immediate resignations of these Executives; 2) council revoke the censure motions against the External Affairs Officer and the Equity Commissioner; and 3) a public apology from the Executive Committee and the PGSS Board to all members who have experienced confusion, frustration, and intimidation at the way PGSS has been conducting its affairs over the past year.

## Appendix 2

### **Motion of Solidarity against by-law P-6 and police repression in Montreal**

(rosalind Hampton, Vice-President Diversity & Equity)

Whereas freedom of expression and assembly are protected by both the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, part of the Canadian constitution, and the Quebec *Charter of human rights and freedoms*, and “this protection extends to the right to one’s image and to the right to anonymity;”<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the Canadian Civil Liberties Association<sup>2</sup>, the Association des juristes progressistes<sup>3</sup> and the municipal party Projet Montreal<sup>4</sup> have all publicly condemned Municipal By-law P-6<sup>5</sup> and the way it is being enforced as an infringement upon these rights;

Whereas the EGSS passed a motion on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2013 denouncing McGill University senior administrations’ protocol and all operational procedures intended to restrict McGill community members’ rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association on campus;

Whereas this spring upwards of one thousand demonstrators, the majority of them students and academics, have been kettled at demonstrations, arrested and/or detained and given \$637 tickets under By-law P-6;

Whereas the UN Human Rights Commission has repeatedly criticized the SPVM tactic of mass arrests through “kettling” as a violation of the right to freedom of expression;<sup>6</sup>

Whereas on April 23<sup>rd</sup> Montreal City Council voted to maintain the anti-protest By-law P-6 with Mayor Applebaum arguing that the police are responsible for “judging when [P-6] should be implemented, and how;”<sup>7</sup>

Whereas the SPVM is known for racial and political profiling and brutality;

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<sup>1</sup> Olivier Roy, criminal lawyer; Sibel Ataogul, labour lawyer and president of the Association of Progressive Jurists; Finn Makela, lawyer, law professor and Director of the common law and transnational law programs at the University of Sherbrooke (2013, April 7). “I Wasn’t Born a Panda, but I Have the Right to Become One! P-6 and the Right to Anonymity.” Available at: [http://aipquebec.org/?p=538#\\_ftn11](http://aipquebec.org/?p=538#_ftn11)

<sup>2</sup> <http://ccla.org/2013/04/04/mass-arrests-under-montreal-bylaw-must-stop/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://aipquebec.org/?p=500>

<sup>4</sup> <http://projetmontreal.org/communiqués/projet-montreal-demandera-au-conseil-de-ville-de-montreal-dabroger-le-reglement-p-6/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/sel/sypre-consultation/afficherpdf?idDoc=23796&typeDoc=1>

<sup>6</sup> Ethan Cox (2013, March 23) “‘There is no right to protest’: Montreal Police Deny Charter Rights.” *Rabble*, <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/ethan-cox/2013/03/there-no-right-protest-montreal-police-deny-charter-rights>

<sup>7</sup> Carla Green (2013, April 23). “Motion against bylaw P-6 fails: Protesters rally against P-6 at City Hall.” *McGill Daily*, <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2013/04/protesters-rally-against-p-6-at-city-hall/>

BIFRT EGSS Council join fellow student associations<sup>8</sup> in issuing a public statement denouncing By-law P-6 and that this statement be made available on our website;

BIFRT EGSS Council join the Coalition Contre P-6<sup>9</sup> and/ or sign on to the public declaration issued by La Convergence les luttes anticapitalistes ("Solidarity against police repression in Montreal: We will not submit to the municipal by-law P-6

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<sup>8</sup> Including Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ), the provincial student federation of which the PGSS is a member; Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ); the Graduate Student Association (GSA) at Concordia; RadLaw McGill; Association étudiante de service social de l'Université de Montréal (AÉSSUM); and a number of faculty level associations at UQAM

<sup>9</sup> <http://aipquebec.org/?p=551>