

Graduate Division of Religion Student Association meeting December 4, 2008

Members in attendance: Gabriel Akinbode, Kris Black, Suzanne Duchesne, David Evans, Chris Haynes, Sharon Jacob, Isaac Kim, Sam Laurent, Geoff Pollick, Jackie Rhoades, Christina Riley, Shanell Smith, Robert Wafula.

Sharon Jacob called the meeting to order. Sam Laurent moved the approval of the last meeting's minutes; Geoff Pollick seconded. The minutes were approved.

ILL fees:

In recent conversations, Dr. Peyroux has raised the idea that the charging of fees to graduate students for the use of interlibrary loan services reflects badly on the school. Others have felt that this is not the most important issue for us to address right now. Sam Laurent: there is currently some resistance to change the policy from the library staff. After group conversation, a consensus was reached that this is not presently as crucial an issue as others we are pursuing with the library (notable fine-tuning the carrel policy), but is important enough to bring up through the library committee.

Conference reimbursement:

Sam Laurent: There has been a significant increase in reimbursement requests this fall. As of 3 weeks before AAR, \$5,000 was already committed to AAR/SBL, out of our \$8,000 annual budget for conference funding. A decision was made to put students on a waiting list, to try and reserve some money for the spring semester.

Kris Black: there are 40 requests in to date, \$6,450 for requests with an Intent to Travel form. The total including those currently on wait-lists is \$7,800. Last year, there was a total of 20 requests all year long, with a total of \$3,154 reimbursed. We do still have a little money from last year, so we're still putting people on the wait list.

Sam: we'll look at amending the bylaws in the spring to better reflect our current situation with funding.

Kris: we do currently give preference to people who haven't been reimbursed at all over those requesting multiple times.

Geoff Pollick: we should vote on the waiting list if we're going to use it as a long-term instrument. Sam: we'll draft language to that effect.

Jackie Rhoades: are there any chances of increasing our budget? Sam: half comes from the Theo School, and half from student activities. There's little chance of an increase for next academic year, but a possibility for the future.

International Student Caucus

Isaac Kim: the International Student Caucus had a successful first meeting, with around 20 students in attendance. They discussed problems and shared experiences about living here. They continue to hold informal gathering about every 2 weeks.

Robert Wafula: the group has held email conversations with Dean Samuel, who wants to know about students' experiences. Being a support group remains the Caucus's primary objective. There will be two official meetings planned for the spring.

Comprehensive exams

Sharon Jacob: students have approached her to discuss various issues and problems with comps, specifically the limited number of months where they can be scheduled. Several students have expressed an interest in opening a time frame during May, and want to send a petition to faculty. The Davies House space where comps are given isn't officially ours; we've been asked by the dean to hold off on buying the furniture that was approved at our last meeting.

Sam Laurent: current rationales for the limited schedule seem almost nonexistent. Most work is done by the faculty readers; there is little administrative overhead. The only real meaningful restriction is a 2-per-day exam cap, due to the limited number of school laptops available.

Chris Haynes moved that we ask the GDRSA co-chairs to speak with the GDR steering committee on our behalf to remove the timing restrictions on scheduling exams. Kris Black seconded. Motion carried.

Jackie Rhoades: there are also problems in her area getting exams scheduled and graded in a timely manner.

Sam: there is currently language going to the faculty to encourage timely grading: 2 weeks to grade closed-book exams; 4 weeks to grade essays.

Committee reports

Academic Standing Committee: Sharon reports that the committee is beginning a push to get students to finish their comps within 2 semesters. Students moving into the dissertation phase will have to get their prospectus approved before registering for dissertation work. There was a discussion over whether it's helpful for us to have a continued presence in AS committee meetings, with sensitive student information being discussed. Some expressed ambivalence, while others maintained that a student presence is important to present a student face and perspective to the committee.

New business

Christina Riley: Could we spend (part of) the money allocated for the purchase of furniture for conference reimbursement? Sam Laurent: the trouble is that this is a one-time source of money, so we won't be getting the \$5,000 again next year to purchase the furniture.

Adjourn

Sam Laurent moved to adjourn; Sharon Jacob seconded. Motion carried.