



International Development and Global Studies Graduate Student Association

Tuesday, December 10th, 2019

Opening:

Shannon Fournier called the meeting to order at the University of Ottawa at 5:37 on Tuesday, December 10th.

Present:

Shannon Fournier

Rebecca Dick

Kayla Richardson

Jennifer Bonti

Gabrielle Marseille (par téléphone; joined at 5:52)

Adrian Murray

India Roberts

Furqan Asif

Eric Dupuis

Absent:

Janet McParland

Lukas Van Aragorn

Bryn Copp

Étienne Côté Vaillant

Approval of Agenda

Yes.

Approval of Minutes

Yes.

1. Updates

1.1. Furqan says it is nice to see everyone.

1.2. Jen might not be at next month's meeting because she might be headed to Cape Town.

- 1.3. India is at the meeting to help while Jen and Rebecca are away on fieldwork next semester. Welcome India!
- 1.4. Kayla says that we missed the department's General Assembly because no one told us about it. The November and December meetings were cancelled. We do get the minutes for the GA meetings. Adrian says CUPE wants them to make sure there is nothing contradicting the collective bargaining agreement between them and the department. **Kayla** is allowed to share them with us and she will after each meeting.

2. Business from the Previous Meeting

2.1. Follow-up meeting with Paul (Shannon)

- This meeting was in relation to what we had discussed at a previous meeting in regard to the imposter syndrome first years have been feeling. They do not feel adequately prepared for the program when they first start, and the mandatory first year classes do not properly prepare us for the rest of the program. Shannon said Paul was helpful and interested in this topic and said he had been thinking about this issue a lot. Last year, issues with the first year courses had been brought up a lot.
 - With regard to the imposter syndrome, we had recommended the department send out a reading list before the start of the program; students have the option to read the suggestions and catch up to have background in development. Paul was very much in favour of this. Paul explained that lots of concerns had been raised in the past 3 years about the English introduction to development course, but not the professor. Paul recommended putting a different professor who has a better background in general development issues.
 - Paul will change the instructor for DVM 5100 for next year. Information letters will be sent to students when they accept their offer with a list of recommended readings. Paul will file a complaint for Nadia's course.
- Elissar and Nadia are not teaching in the department anymore (Nadia will not be teaching for 3 years).
- Shannon explained that other students had suggested doing a focus group with the department to see what is wrong with the program. We will see after tonight if that is something we want to be involved in.
 - Paul recommended he and Susan would run the focus group.
 - Abby asked why the department wouldn't run the focus group itself. Eric said it would be a chance for us to collaborate and get feedback on what we are doing as an association. Furqan argued that we would act as a broker and a mediator.
 - Furqan said he thought there was a review of the MA program that happened very recently, so he was surprised they were interested in doing this again. He wondered if people knew about the reforms and deep structural changes they made a few years ago.
- The department wants to make sure the French and English streams are learning the same things. Paul had no idea what was being taught in some classes. He agrees professors should have some say in what they are teaching, but they should have a basis of what should be taught in each course.

- Professors assume students know a lot of things about development (which we probably should) but we don't, and we feel like we are behind when they are teaching.
- There is a recurring theme in discussions amongst first years of constantly feeling like we don't know enough about development. Shannon expressed that this shows outside of our school too: every paper from uOttawa was rejected from a paper competition with CASID.
- Rebecca said that how we promote the focus group could hinder how we participate in it. We should not promote it by saying that we have to reform the program, and we should not encourage people to come and trash the program. Instead, we should promote it as a chance to share the good and the bad experiences.
- Abby said that she is not against a focus group, but she does not think that the Association should plan it. It could come off as us supporting a reform when in reality that is out of our scope and we should not appear to be taking a position. Planning a focus group could give the wrong impression.
 - Shannon thinks that by doing this, we are showing that we are neutral about a program reform.
- Eric says that we should promote it as a chance to share the positive and the negatives. A good focus group presents both sides and allows people to share their concerns.
- Jen asked if second year students would be able to attend. Shannon answered that if Paul and Susan run it it would be open to all MA students.
- India asked if Susan and Paul would be a part of the conversation. Shannon answered yes.
 - Rebecca explained that she sees it as them running the discussion and us facilitating it. She says that we would go as individuals and not as representatives of the association.
 - Adrian said that us going as individuals would encourage others to participate in the focus group.
- Kayla asked if after we vote on our participation, would we talk about logistics? Shannon answered that we will vote and then see what to do.
- Gabrielle said that the narrative we use is going to make the difference in how its going to be viewed. How we frame and present our involvement in the focus group will influence how it is viewed.
 - Shannon suggested that we present the focus group as us as students creating a space for students to share their thoughts on the program.
 - Adrian suggested that we present it as the department is hosting a focus group and not us. Abby agrees with this strategy.
- Kayla suggested that if we go to the focus group, we should mention that we are there in the capacity as an individual and are not representing the Association.

- The report from the MA coordinator said that they did a geographical advertisement campaign in Francophone communities across the country to try to increase Francophone enrolment. The MA reforms include a program name change, the creation of a French immersion option, and to officially abolish the French language exit test rule.
 - The language test hasn't been enforced in years.
- Vote: Does the Association support the department in providing a space for a focus group?
 - 8 yes
 - 1 abstention
- In terms of logistics, we will book the room for the focus group. Shannon will lead and Kayla will help. In terms of communications, we will go through the usual process to make sure the language is right.

2.2. Past events (Rebecca)

- Rebecca was not here for the potluck we held on November 28th. Jen said that it was good, but that most people in attendance were Association members, and not many first year students.
 - Furqan reminded us that we did have one person who wasn't even in the program attend the event.
 - Abby explained that a lot of first years were in the study rooms that night and couldn't go. It was a bad week for them in terms of assignments and papers.
- Gabrielle suggested that we should have an action plan to get more first years to events. What's keeping them away? Is it timing, or is it because they don't know anyone?
- Eric mentioned that other events have done well in terms of first year attendance. He said that a potluck just isn't a good event for grad students; its hard to plan for it and to bring food to campus.
 - Gabrielle and Rebecca agree.
 - Gabrielle said that asking students to bring things instead of offering them things is not how we should do it.
- The sweater party held on December 5th wasn't bad and we had a decent turnout, but only 3 first year students came.
 - What is it stopping people from attending our events? In this case, it was exam time on top of the factors we had discussed previously.
- As an association, we have to figure out a way to determine which days work best for the different years and what kinds of activities everyone wants. We can't go up to people and say "You said you could do Thursdays and you didn't come!" but there are ways to get a better idea of who is available when.
 - Gabrielle suggested making a suggestion box and leaving it at the secretariat. We can leave post-its and pens with the box. Abby suggested leaving the boxes in the

study rooms where they are easily accessible for everyone. We can make the suggestion boxes in January and promote them online.

- Rebecca doesn't want to host the first event of the new year too early to let people get back into the groove of school. We also don't want to host the first event too late into the semester so that people don't get too busy.
- Gabrielle suggested dodgeball again this year. We should do it earlier in the term this time. Last year it was a good way to get people to mingle. Jen agrees because she loves dodgeball.
- Kayla reminded everyone that we have to hold elections in January. Rebecca suggested maybe doing them at dodgeball because more people might be there to vote.
 - Shannon said that the elections have to be end of January. We have to announce them at the beginning of January, and then remind everyone two weeks before the elections.
 - We will also be helping with the focus group in January. Kayla said that since it is not so much our thing, it won't necessarily interfere with our other activities. The department will probably want to do it in the day or early evening.
- We could also have the pub night and elections at the same time, or hold the elections at the dodgeball night, but dodgeball and elections don't go as well together. Abby suggested we have the elections at the event where we would have less people so that anyone running would bring their friends to vote for them.
- Valentine's Day could be meshed with the dodgeball event. We wouldn't host it on Valentine's Day but sometime before (either the Wednesday or Thursday). Last year the dodgeball was on a Friday.
- Rebecca suggested the pub night/elections be held at the end of January. We should have dodgeball sometime in February.
- International Development Week is the first week of February. Reading week is February 16th to 22nd. We should have dodgeball February 28th.
- The pub night/elections should be January 30th or 31st. We will determine the best date following consultations with first years and will make the final decision at the meeting in January.

3. New Business

3.1. International Development Week collaborations (Shannon)

- IDW will be the first week of February, and we have already agreed to do certain things leading up to and during the week.
- Shannon said there will be an event with a workshop with the UN and undergrad association. Shannon asked if everyone remembered what she was talking about, and Abby said no. Shannon replied that Abby should put an asterisk in the notes and go reread the minutes later. Abby reminded Shannon that she would not be able to participate in the conversation if she doesn't know what Shannon is talking about.

- Shannon said it was with the Center for Global Health, Security and Diplomacy. Abby asked if it was the event with Elissar Sarrouh, and Shannon said yes.
- This event will be the Monday of IDW.
- The event on the Tuesday will be another Turning the Tables workshop, but there will be less input by the Senior Fellows. The undergrads are doing most planning for this (booking, translation, etc.) and we will probably not be giving any money.
- On Wednesday, there will be an event with the IDRC. For now, we don't have all the information on that event, but we will be finding out more soon.
- On Thursday, there is a WUSC event, and Eric will speak more to this later.
- Shannon said that we need to decide who is doing what for IDW. Eric suggested that we should probably wait until January to decide who does what because things can change.
 - Rebecca said the January meeting will be too close to IDW and that we should take things on as they come.
 - Shannon is open to not putting names on things now, but is warning us that she will need help with this. She explained that it has been brought to her attention that she does not ask for help in an obvious way, but if she is asking because she does need it.
 - Shannon said she will try to make sure meetings are in the evenings.
 - As things come up Shannon will ask for help on them.
- Kayla asked if the events will be during the day. Shannon said Yes.
 - Kayla said a lot of people can't commit to attending events during the day yet.
 - Eric said that the WUSC event will be in the evening.
- Kayla helped with Turning the Tables a lot the last time, and Shannon was wondering if she will be able to help again. Kayla said she could help, but not on content as she did not actually attend last time. Jen can help as well until she leaves for fieldwork.
- Those in charge of the UN collaboration didn't make it seem like we had to do anything to help plan or execute the event, but our name will be on it.
- Things will start happening soon for the IDRC event, but for now, the event is to be determined. We do not have details yet on what it will be.
 - Shannon asked if India, Rebecca, and Abby would be able to help. Everyone said yes.
- **Abby** will send out an email with who is doing what for these meetings so other people can join on.

3.2. WUSC Research Symposium (Eric)

- The Symposium will be on the Thursday of IDW starting at 4. There will be an opening statement, a keynote speaker, a panel discussion, a break, the poster competition, and finally the 3MT competition and awards.

- The organizers are looking for recommendations for keynotes and contestants.
- Eric doesn't know the theme. Adrian and Shannon think it might be sustainable development.
- Shannon asked if they are looking for someone not from WUSC to be the keynote speaker. Eric explained that they want us to be involved and offered this to us.
- WUSC would need help finding contestants (they will send us the call for contestants to send out on our social media), a committee to read through abstracts for applicants; they would want us to help provide a moderator; and would use our logo on publications for the event.
- **Eric** will let us know if he needs anything from us, and he will send us details with what they are looking for in terms of contestants.

4. Next meeting date