

BiG COW
Meeting Summary, July 11th 2008

TAFAs meeting: Andrew and Krystle

There was a last minute information session with Andrew and Krystle, members of TAFAs (Teaching Assistant and Fellow Association): the Queen's group that is leading unionization efforts on campus.

TAFAs: - Trying to organize with PSAC (Public Service Alliance of Canada), current campaign has been several months in the making

PSAC emerged in 1966 (mostly federal public service), campuses etc... compared to other unions is less militant, they are heavily involved in "progressive politics" including equity issues etc..

Goals of the union include formalizing:

-how TAs are distributed and allocated

-grievance procedures which include an advocate/representation for the TA/TF

-would also seek to include health benefits etc.. to TAs from University (supplemental health/dental), help for international students

- Don't want to be last people to unionize if budget cuts are an issue

Pay usually increase for teaching assistants (increases usually fractionally greater than the ~1.5% dues)

TAFAs is seeking more representatives to orchestrate and organize union drive at department level. Responsibilities include, attending steering committee meetings, keeping track of card signing.

Campaign is in early stages now, the plan is to ramp up to september, going door to door etc... lots of social events, and to be around for orientation week

Office is at 177 Wellington, room 201, www.qtafa.com . Visitors are Welcome

Some comments from the members present:

"Getting university position (preferably from someone who has experience with the previous union drives) would be desirable"

Potential Unionization Disadvantages include:

- tension between employers and employees
- potential effects on students
- organization out of our hands (at the department level)
- splitting of graduate students into unionized/non-unionized members (primarily on external scholarship basis)

“Nothing really changed at western as a result of union”

“We should keep the Department informed and make sure to get a dialogue going?”

“Union information should be included in orientation package”

Need more general information: More formal information session to be held in the near future with TAFAs, with adequate notice given to all BioGrads. Hopefully a session can also be held with a university or department rep to get an alternative perspective.

Some of the information we seek includes:

- Positions of other Departments (official or not)?
- Current grievance procedures?
- Do we already have the ability to negotiate anything at the department level?
- Interaction of Budget Cuts with Unionization efforts?
- Comparison of funding levels.

SGPS Rep (Richard and Tony)

Clarification of SGPS position regarding TAFAs:

- SGPS position is to support effort to unionize, but *not* advocating unionization
- SGPS will develop a position depending on the consensus of departmental reps

Upcoming budget meeting: should be some monies for Biology

SGPS social and our social reps have been put in touch and should be talking to each other

Treasurer (Trina)

Fundraising ideas:

Fundraising Party Date: Roughly August 8-9

- Chocolate fountain at Welcome back BBQ
- Fruitalicious: we buy chocolate, he buys back xtra chocolate, with fruit
- Basically zero financial risk to us

Fundraising Auction?
Buy your prof for a day
Duct tape to wall

Extra money from soccer and softball to be forwarded to BioGrads

Bank Account
Look into options (TD, Local Credit Union)

Social (no-one present)

Academic (Cheryl and Kyle)

TA Database, notes exchange proceeding well:
in process of scanning notes etc... Database will be online and password protected
notes drives ongoing (target outgoing students)

Student Handbook: will start getting busy in mid-August

Other projects (Equipment database, grad course assessments) on hold until TA Database is completed

GC (Grace)
TA assignment meeting to be held soon
Orientation Session is being planned

RTP (not present)

Staff/Faculty

Gathered information on stipends in other universities, including general info about salary etc...

Queen's Biology students are relatively well-funded
Info to be put online

Will week official recognition from the Department at next meeting
May need to get this put on Agenda

September Orientation

Grace's place is available for social events

Welcome back BBQ
on campus or off ? Likely off, but could do a hybrid
two events: party + departmental event?

Labcrawl at the party (each lab is responsible for an activity)

Icebreaker ideas:

Activities for new students

frisbee/softball/soccer game -> can get equipment from PEC
department tours

Sport Tournament? *Mini-olympics* at the same time as BBQ?

Synching Icebreaker event with the BBQ?

Advertising: people don't get on allgrads and we need to ensure new students are included

events should be listed in orientation packages

Clothing?

Need logo, deadline. send allgrads e-mail for logo contest.

Sport Teams

Many active students in departmental sports are graduating with no replacements lined up: we should consider including a sports rep in the executive or at least make a concerted effort to find replacements.