

New grad association begins to move forward

BY LILLI JU

The Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students has made some changes, and says it is ready to begin working for its constituents.

Jim Leger, a graduate student in the anatomy department, was acclaimed as the new Dalhousie Association of Graduate Students (DAGS) president last week. Three other students were acclaimed to fill three of the 21 available councillor positions.

Last Wednesday and Thursday, DAGS held a referendum bringing about some significant constitutional changes to the organization.

During the past couple of months, DAGS has been busy picking up the pieces since members of its executive resigned

last November over uncertainty surrounding the Grad House's financial viability. In early December, Leger was appointed interim president by the DAGS council.

The most significant change to the constitution concerns the make-up of the DAGS council. Currently, not all graduate faculties are being represented. Beginning with DAGS' regular annual elections in the Spring, a specific number of representatives will be elected from each faculty.

Another important change will see all members of the executive being elected during the regular election period. According to the DAGS constitution of 1979, only the president used to be elected, and it was the president who appointed the rest of the

executive members. Other changes include the official addition of a vice-president communications to the DAGS executive, a position that has always unofficially existed as part of the executive.

Although the number of voters for the referendum was small, an overwhelming majority supported these constitutional changes, according to Lisa Underhill, chief returning officer for DAGS.

DAGS has also moved quickly to address some graduate student issues that it had been criticized for neglecting last term, when all attention was placed on the fate of the Grad House.

After investigating both sides, the DAGS council voted to support CUPE local 3912 representing teaching assistants and part-time

instructors. In a letter to Barb Moore, president of local 3912, Leger states, "We share the concern of CUPE local 3912 for the administration's attempts to reduce the teaching assistants' budget and to hold part-time instructors' salaries at sub-standard levels... It is our concern that with tuition increases and the proposed reduction of salaries to those graduate students who act as teaching assistants, a greater pressure would be put on students to seek other part-time employment."

As well, DAGS will be launching a letter-writing campaign to the government concerning cuts to the budget of the Medical Research Council, a granting agency that provides significant funds for a number graduate departments.

As for the Grad House, DAGS has given manager Mike Leigh the go-ahead to make changes that will hopefully improve business — repainting the third floor, redesignating smoking areas, creating a smoke-free reading room, a new pool table, adding pizza to the menu, and offering a 10 per cent discount on food and drinks to grad students. DAGS has been negotiating with the Dalhousie Student Union for assistance with its accounting services, which would also save money for DAGS.

DAGS has even moved to a smaller office — a suggestion made at an open forum discussion on the Grad House last term in order to make more space for business. This moved helped DAGS reorganize their filing system with older records being sent to the archives for safekeeping.

Canadian athletics toys with an American idea

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(OUA). CWUAA have come out in support of changing the current awards guidelines, whereas OUA is opposed to such changes.

"What we're trying to do is put a program in place that would allow us to provide athletic awards at the level of tuition for a limited number of athletes in each sport," said Ian Reade, Director of Athletics at the University of Alberta.

"There's certainly a real concern with high calibre Canadian athletes going to rinky-dink American schools thinking they're getting a better education and sport experience. We think we can have an impact on that," Reade said.

The other regions, AUAA, Quebec Student Sports Federation, and the Great Prairies Athletic Conference, have not taken positions on this issue.

But Danny Grant, head coach of the Quebec Major-Junior Hockey League, Halifax Mooseheads, says he saw firsthand how Canadian universities are in a different

league than American ones when he played for the Detroit Red Wings and attended University of Michigan sporting events.

"There's absolutely no question that we're losing athletes to the States. But the reality of sports is much different there. They have 100,000 people attending football games, 70,000 for hockey games and 5,000 at a swim meet. At a university hockey game here, you might draw 200," he said.

Proponents of athletic awards argue the current funding regulations are unfair and do not even come close to covering tuition, which they originally did when they were set in the 1980s.

"Right now, athletes are treated worse than other students," Reade said. "The CIAU puts stipulations on athletes, but there are no stipulations for other students."

Mike Tanner, athletic director at Queen Elizabeth High School in Halifax, agrees.

"We give music scholarships. We give all kinds of academic scholarships. What's the problem with an athletic scholarship? As

long as the kids meet the academic requirements of that university, are sound students and are gifted athletes, why shouldn't they be rewarded for that gift as mathematicians are for theirs?" Tanner said.

"The kids that are affected most are the ones with a lower socioeconomic background. Most of these kids could get their degrees and perform for the university at a very high level if they were given that opportunity through athletic scholarships."

Grant agrees, saying that athletic awards should have more to do with giving young people opportunities, and less to do with winning.

"Athletic awards are incentives for kids coming out of high school. If it helps a young person attend university, I don't see anything wrong with that," Grant said, adding that "the area I'm concerned with is when universities put too much emphasis on just winning. How far will a university go to win? Where do you draw the line? Does this include tuition, room and board, transportation, and visits from the parents? Whatever gets decided, it has to be very well defined."

But many say that if the money were there, financial awards for athletes would be a good thing.

"I agree that it would be nice to be able to offer at least the level of tuition," said Darrell Young, coach of Dalhousie's hockey team. "Some of these kids are putting in 20 to 40 hours each week for their training."

Karen Moore, acting director of athletics at Dalhousie agrees. "We would certainly like to be able to support our athletes more,

considering their inability to work part-time and during the summer because of their commitment to their athletic programmes, but we want to see the academic component remain in the criteria."

Almost all agree that an academic component should be kept as a key criterion for athletic awards.

"There's certainly a real concern with high calibre Canadian athletes going to rinky-dink American schools thinking they're getting a better education and sport experience"

"If it's an open-ended thing, [with no academic requirements], there's a holy war going to start," Butler said.

But some say they are sceptical that any Canadian institution could compete with the American level of funding for sports (where some institutions even offer golf scholarships).

"It is naive for someone to think that an athletic scholarship of one, two, or three thousand dollars is going to make any kind of impact to those concerned that they're losing their athletes to the colleges in the States," said Tom Lynch, a Dal alumnus who played football for Dalhousie and is currently the chair of Dalhousie's Advisory Council on Athletics.

"Those kids that go to the States go essentially on a free ride or a partial ride that amounts to, in four years, upwards of \$100,000 US. It just couldn't be done here in Canada."

Butler is also opposed to the principle behind athletic awards.

"I have extreme difficulty with young athletes being recruited with a dollar sign attached to their heads. I'm not a visionary, but I can tell you that [athletic awards] would create a very divisive situation in the country."

There is a concern that schools

with less money will be disadvantaged says Butler.

"Here at Memorial, even though we're a large institution, we're not financially well-off in terms of athletic funding, and I think a lot of my sister institutions in Atlantic Canada are in the same boat," he said. "Funding for athletics is quite limited, and it's not getting any larger."

Young says his hockey team is already feeling the financial squeeze.

"My big concern is where would the money come from," Young said. "Our budgets have already been cut here and there. We have less money for equipment and uniforms. We raise money through fundraisers and hockey camps."

No one is predicting how this CIAU awards committee meeting will end up, let alone what all the members will decide later in June at their annual general meeting.

"I don't see any reason to be optimistic. I just think that there's a lot of people with different understandings of the issues," Reade said.

Brenning agrees.

"Who knows what the outcome will be at the end of this. I think it will have to be some kind of middle ground," he said. "We're trying to come up with some compromise position that everyone can live with and play together with — a policy that maybe everyone will be satisfied with — well, not satisfied, but can live with."

According to Robert Tennant, Dalhousie's assistant registrar-awards, there are currently no scholarships at Dal that are based on athletic merit alone.

"There is one scholarship, the Dalhousie Alumni Leadership scholarship, in which among the criteria is extracurricular activities, and among that includes sports," he said.

There are also Black and Gold Awards which are given to returning student athletes but at a \$1,500 maximum.

Graduating?

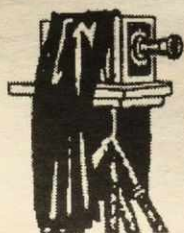
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