

Special General Assembly
Teaching and Research Assistants at Concordia (TRAC)
Held at 1450 Guy St., Montreal, Quebec
On TUESDAY January 22nd, 2019 at 5:30 PM

1. Opening of the GA

Meeting called to order at 5:31pm.

2. Appointment of Chair and Minute-taker

Marion Miller appointed as Chair unanimously.

Reza moves to appoint Lucinda Marshall-Kiparissis as Minute-taker.

Jacqueline seconds.

Appointed unanimously.

3. Adoption of the [Agenda](#)

Reza proposes an amendment to the agenda, moving Point 12 (Election of RA/TA Grievance Officer) to Point 5.

Morgan seconds the amendment.

Jeremy Tessier (TRAC President): The executive decided to schedule the agenda this way to make sure that members would have all the information they would need prior to the election process

Motion to amend the agenda passes by majority.

Morgan moves to adopt the agenda as amended.

Reza seconds.

Motion to amend the agenda passes by majority (2 opposed).

4. Adoption of September GA minutes

Reza moves to adopt minutes.

Cameron seconds.

Minutes adopted unanimously.

5. Election of TA/RA Grievance Officer

Eileen Chan and Todd Schneider present themselves as ballot count scrutineers.

Jeremy Tessier moves.

Reza seconds.

Eileen Chan and Todd Schneider elected as scrutineers unanimously.

TRAC Grievance Officer candidate motivations:

Zarish Abbas: At Concordia for the past 11 years (undergrad, masters, PhD). Become TRAC Delegate with Psychology last year, frustrated with mismanagement of TA contracts and lack of consequences for employer mismanagement. Since becoming a Delegate, have helped file grievances for 10 TAs. Currently volunteers as TRAC rep on Standing Committee Sexual Violence, etc. Appalled by Concordia administration for not respecting contracts and Collective Agreement, for race and gender discrimination, and for lack of support for mental health. Especially appalled for administrative reaction to sexual misconduct allegations. My frustration is why I am running for this position, I want to make sure that we are being respected. These three months would be a good opportunity to learn more about these policies. If elected, will do everything in my power to change status quo and change things for the better for all of us.

Cameron McIntyre: Have been working as Orientation Officer during this period, doing mobilisation for this meeting and last Orientation. Have heard so many stories coming out from students regarding problematic power dynamics between professors and students. In my department there has been a long term investigation into sexual misconduct. Have also done work in Engineering Department, and has seen widespread culture of disrespect towards workers. As Grievance Officer, would hope to change these conditions and stop TAs/RAs from experiencing them, and helping to create environment of respect where these problems can be avoided. Want to help to find solutions before grievance process, but then want to do everything in my power for effective grievance if comes to it.

Alex Ocheoha: In Building Engineering, have been involved in student life for quite a while. Have been President of GSA, on Senate, and Board of Governors. Have been contributed to union life as well. On Board, I advocated for TRAC and for the Collective Agreement to be signed. Collective Agreement now needs to be respected, important to have someone there who can effectively advocate for students. GSA didn't have Advocacy Manager when I was President, so I had to step into that role. As TRAC Grievance Officer position, you don't have to file a grievance every time; we don't want situations where you've already graduated and have to do arbitration after. With this position, will do best to advocate for students and make sure the Collective Agreement is respected. Have good relationships with members of administration and would use those to try and avoid grievance, but if it comes to grievance I will do my best. The TRAC Executive have been doing well this year, and would like to join the team to help with that work.

Questions to candidates:

Jeremy Tessier: Being the Grievance Officer requires conflict resolution and

interpersonal skills, to help someone get the outcome that *they* want. How would candidates approach a situation not outlined in the Collective Agreement; what steps would they take?

Cameron McIntyre: With any approach to conflict resolution, it's important to look at history of kind of conflict and how it's been dealt with at University (not necessarily to take that route, but to get a sense of precedent). Also important to spend time with the member filing a grievance, to understand what they need, what they want, and what grounds can be used to proceed.

Zarish Abbas: Agree with Cam, would also suggest that parties meet first to try and find solution.

Alex Ocheoha: If there is nothing outlined in Collective Agreement or historical data, look at the University regulations. Otherwise, turn to relevant provincial and federal laws.

Mario Iorio (Invigilators Grievance Officer): When do you expect to graduate? Our current Bargaining Officer is based out of Loyola; how would you represent members on both campuses?

Cameron McIntyre: I graduate at the end of this semester, although I may take another degree. I currently have a radio show at Loyola, so I'm there at least once a week. Would be more than happy to take office hours at Loyola, and there's lot of opportunity for them to be mobilised.

Zarish Abbas: I have about a year left of my program, maybe more. It's easy enough to get downtown, and I am based at Loyola.

Alex Ocheoha: I am here for as long as it takes to finish thesis, closer to a year. I go to Loyola often, and am happy to communicate Collective Agreement to our members there.

Charles: As TA/RA, you are at mercy of the professor you work with (to get extra hours, et cetera). Hypothetically, a student is expected to work too many hours but needs the employment security. How would you advise a member to proceed without risking their job?

Cameron McIntyre: I have found that it works to mobilise co-workers in department (who are likely facing the same conditions); in a group there is safety in not being targeted. For work to be terminated if contract hours are exceeded would contravene both our Collective Agreement and labour law.

Zarish Abbas: I would advise them to go to their professor and tell them that it's the department's responsibility to hire new contracts if the allocated hours aren't enough, not theirs. Repercussions are technically illegal, but those can be hard to prove.

Alex Ocheoha: Having had a graduate advisor, I know that you don't want to fracture relationship with supervisor. It's the same with a employer relationship. I would look to find solutions without bringing in a grievance process.

First round voting results (secret ballot):

Zarish Abbas: 20

Alex Ocheoha: 20
Cameron McIntyre: 16

Run-off voting results (secret ballot):

Zarish Abbas: 17

Alex Ocheoha: 8

Zarish Abbas is elected TRAC TA/RA Grievance Officer for the remainder of the 2018/2019 Executive mandate.

Reza moves to destroy ballots.

Kathy seconds.

Passed unanimously.

6. Executive report

Jeremy Tessier and Mario Iorio present [TRAC Executive Report](#).

7. TA contact hours data analysis report

Gonzalo R. Quintana Zunito (TRAC Bargaining Officer) presents TRAC [TA contract hours data analysis](#).

8. Discussion of reports

Q: How much will invigilator pay increase? Is this for all departments which accept invigilators?

Mario Iorio: As member of bargaining team -- there over a 1000 invigilator members on our list, including final exams, midterm departmental, and ACSD. We're trying to get increases for everyone -- there may be differences between category as there are now, but doing best to equalise.

Q: Will we get retropayment?

Mario Iorio: Possibly, but depends on when our first CA effectively starts. In whichever direction can be an agreement of no more than 3 years. We'll have a better sense through arbitration.

Jacqueline: Is there comparable data available in your TA contract analysis for Faculties besides JMSB?

Gonzalo R. Quintana Zunito: Yes, we already have gotten the data we requested and are currently in the process of hiring an employee to do data analysis.

Manon: What exactly will the data analyst be looking for? Could we mobilise students to

be concerned that the amount of TA hours have steadily been decreasing?

Gonzalo R. Quintana Zunito: First our analyst will be looking at marker and TA contracts; for example in Arts & Science we've seen a decrease in hours but we don't have the data to know if this correlates with an increase or decrease of TAs. We will be extracting data from contracts to try and explain observed trends with the general averages we've been able to see. If the data shows what we think is happening, this has good potential for mobilisation (with potential collaboration from other campus representative organisations).

9. **2018 - 2019 budget update**

Sahar Alinezhad (TRAC Secretary Treasurer) presents [an update on TRAC's current budget](#).

10. **Discussion on budget**

No questions from the floor regarding TRAC budget.

11. **Call for Equity Committee participation**

Eunbyul Park (Communications and Mobilisation Officer) gives Equity Committee update, call for attendance on February 15.

12. **Voting on [TRAC position on Quebec's religious symbol ban for public workers](#)**

Motion moved by TRAC Equity Committee.

Seconded by Jeremy Tessier.

Jeremy Tessier: Speak in favour of motion; we had a similar conversation last year about this legislation. This legislation is created in vacuum but from general climate; important to not let ourselves think we're not as valuable as everyone else, to not celebrate diversity. Against any law that isolates people and takes away opportunity to participate in public life.

Gonzalo R. Quintana Zunito: Not fond of religion, but strongly opposes the law stopping people from expressing themselves. Legislation is very discriminatory and targeted towards a particular minority population. Our position practically does not do much but it sends a signal.

Todd: Hypocritical legislation; would treat minorities in a different way than a majority. Every law passed at the National Assembly is under a giant crucifix. Government has said that they would use the notwithstanding clause if challenged at Supreme Court, which means that it would only be valid for 5 years anyway and is already incompatible with the law. Uses unionised workers as cannon fodder.

Kathy: Anglophones also face discrimination, Christians who celebrate Christmas are targeted for secularism. Secularism is historical in Quebec.

Alex: Have nothing against motion, but Quiet Revolution suggests that legislation is not motivated by racism, but historical context. Position wouldn't do much good without engaging with lawmakers.

Jeremy Tessier: Unions have power, we represent a voting block in a specific riding and we can use that power to leverage our representatives. Studying Geography, knows that policies and positions have value in shaping their platforms.

Q: Is it within the mandate of TRAC to take this position?

Jeremy Tessier: The current executive has a one year mandate, and this is something we can put forward, our membership can vote on, and will be recorded in our minutes. If adopted, this will go beyond our mandate as executives.

Eunbyul Park: Part of role as labour union is to advocate for a just society, beyond just our collective agreement or immediate labour context. We know that many of our members have been facing increased harassment and discrimination. (from Bylaws: 4.1.b)

Todd: Nothing in motion is out of line with positions which Concordia University has taken (eg. proposed Charter, "niqab bill"). Adds to conversation, well within mandate.

Passes unanimously.

13. Varia

Jeremy Tessier: International Tuition Increase Townhall (CSU event, January 24)

Member: Testimonial of addressing workplace conditions. Preparation time was not enough, came to talk to TRAC members, was told to write hours done every week and if not enough talk to supervisor (if not, go to union). Talking to supervisor, not only gave me 6 more hours but did so for the rest of lab demonstrators.

14. Adjournment

Kathy moves to adjourn the meeting.

Reza seconds.

Passes unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:22pm.