

## DOEIGSA April GA Minutes

Friday, April 10, 2015

5:30pm-8:00pm

*Agenda:* Meg Grieve and Audrey Dahl

*Secretary:* Meg Grieve

*Chair:* Marion Miller (Art Education Undergrad)

*Present:* Junesse Christiaans, Emilie Ladouceur-Bibaud, Audrey Dahl, Jon Summers, Jordan Clark, Suzanne Cerretta, Haritos Kavallos, Reem Talhamy, Stella Carolina Stella, Emily Sheepy, Margaret Grieve.

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### **Quorum is 14 members and we do not meet quorum.**

Moral quorum discussed. Can call moral quorum if we all agree and decisions are subject to contention for 2 weeks after and can be overturned by 5 members.

### **Discussion about moral quorum and mobilization for GA's to reach quorum:**

-Worry that the decisions and mandates that are made during the meetings, are not really reaching our membership so what we do in GA's isn't being communicated to the grad students so maybe it isn't a good idea to keep doing this.

-Mobilization that we did for this meeting:

- Newsletter stats are pretty good, as in people are reading the newsletter.
- Class visits
- Website

Question asked: Do we have an idea about why people are not coming to meetings? Why are people hesitant?

- Possibly the format may not appeal to a lot of people, even though it appeals to the people present.
- Personal reasons perhaps. Sometimes people find meetings boring.
- Personal reasons about striking messing up their degree, financial issues.
- People thinking more about their present personal situations rather than the "bigger issues"
- Class visits: some reps found that there were some students who expressed hesitation to come based on the media and police events. Seems that there is a feeling of pressure about voting and/or if people can discuss openly what they think. Seems like there is pressure from other associations and not from personal choice/voice/discussion.

Culture of/attendance of General Assembly Discussion:

- We don't have that culture of student activism at Concordia. We tried to remedy that with this meeting by setting it up as a discussion and not a vote. Less pressure.
- Maybe we didn't do a good enough job to advertise the new format of this meeting.
- In some departments/associations at Concordia the GA culture is there. What is the difference between our group and the others?
- Problem of attendance isn't unique to the fact that we are discussing austerity but that overall there hasn't been a lot of people showing up for GAs. We just don't know why people aren't coming and if we speculate it isn't really worth it.
- Maybe we need to find ways to implement discussions more often, plant a seed for discussion. Without pressuring people. Be patient and not give up.
- Speak openly that there are a diversity of opinions here.
- People make excuses not to come. If people thought it was important they would be there. So we need to take a stand and do what we need to do.
- Suggestion to shock people and say things that really get them thinking during class announcements.

**Audrey motions to open the assembly with moral quorum.**

**Passes unanimously.**

**Jon motions that Marion is the chair and Meg is the secretary.**

**Passes unanimously.**

**Meeting Commences Officially:**

Marion explains the outline of the meeting, which is different than usual.  
 This meeting called specifically for actions towards austerity in education.  
 Discussion format for today's meeting has 4 steps:

**STEP 1**-We start the meeting with a question and answer period to understand the affects of austerity on education. This way allows us to make sure we start with a common understanding about an issue.

**STEP 2**-We brainstorm about collective actions that may be done in the following weeks: all answers are considered and written somewhere, no discussion about feasibility or relevance, only ideas. Brainstorm on the whiteboard all ideas introduced.

**STEP 3**-Discuss each of the action items that were introduced in the brainstorm in more detail. More info are briefly given by the proposer. Sign up for who is ready to commit to such actions.

At this point you can commit to all actions you like regardless of time constraints, so just what you might be interested in. If there are at least 2 people who are interested than the suggested action item stays on the brainstorm.

**STEP 4-**We have to make a choice. Everyone thinks realistically about their schedule commits only to which action they can really commit to. We look at the results and if it is judge realistic we end assembly with committees in charge of different small actions or one big.

Students are always welcomed to bring items to be discussed on the floor.

### **STEP 1: DISCUSSION on AUSTERITY:**

- Intro point/starting point: What does austerity mean in our department and at Concordia?
- One point that Jordan learned: Concordia is one of the few educational institutions that have fully complied with budget cuts to education. Jordan read this on one of Concordia's association (CSU possibly) print material or website.
- Jon shares that Alan Shepherd originally said that they wanted to keep the peace with the government. Since then Shepherd has said that he doesn't support the budget cuts.

What happens if we don't comply with the budget cuts? How have other institutions dealt with a refusal of the budget cuts? Priorities? Policies?

- budget cuts happen and then you have to deal with the \$ changes
- 2012 CREPUQ meeting together to take a common front against budget cuts. Presented a deficit budget to the government. But this didn't really follow through?... but it is an idea.

How has this affected our department?

- We now have policies that say we have to have 10 students in graduate classes.
- Stopped tenure track hiring in departments. 180 people given a 1 year severance package at Concordia. "Tighten your belt" is the message, but this gets passed on to students, faculty, departments, etc.
- Increases in tuition fees.
- Increases in the number of students in classes: all courses in department of ed are
- Over-filled with 20+ and 30+ students whereas before they were at 5-10 people.
- Budget for the GSDE cut
- Cuts to faculty's pay; conference travel funding.

- Why aren't faculty doing anything about this?
- Austerity is an ideology, it's not that the money isn't there. The money is there it is just going elsewhere. Activism around austerity is about pressuring the government's ideology in a bigger way.
- It's normal to go into deficit when you are drastically underfunded. Pressure on the presidents to conform to the budgets they have been given. The only reason not to run a deficit is to conform to ridiculous budgets. Deficits are normal and welcome.
- It's the quality and reputation of our institution that is going down the drain. Brilliant minds will go somewhere else, and this will impact us too.

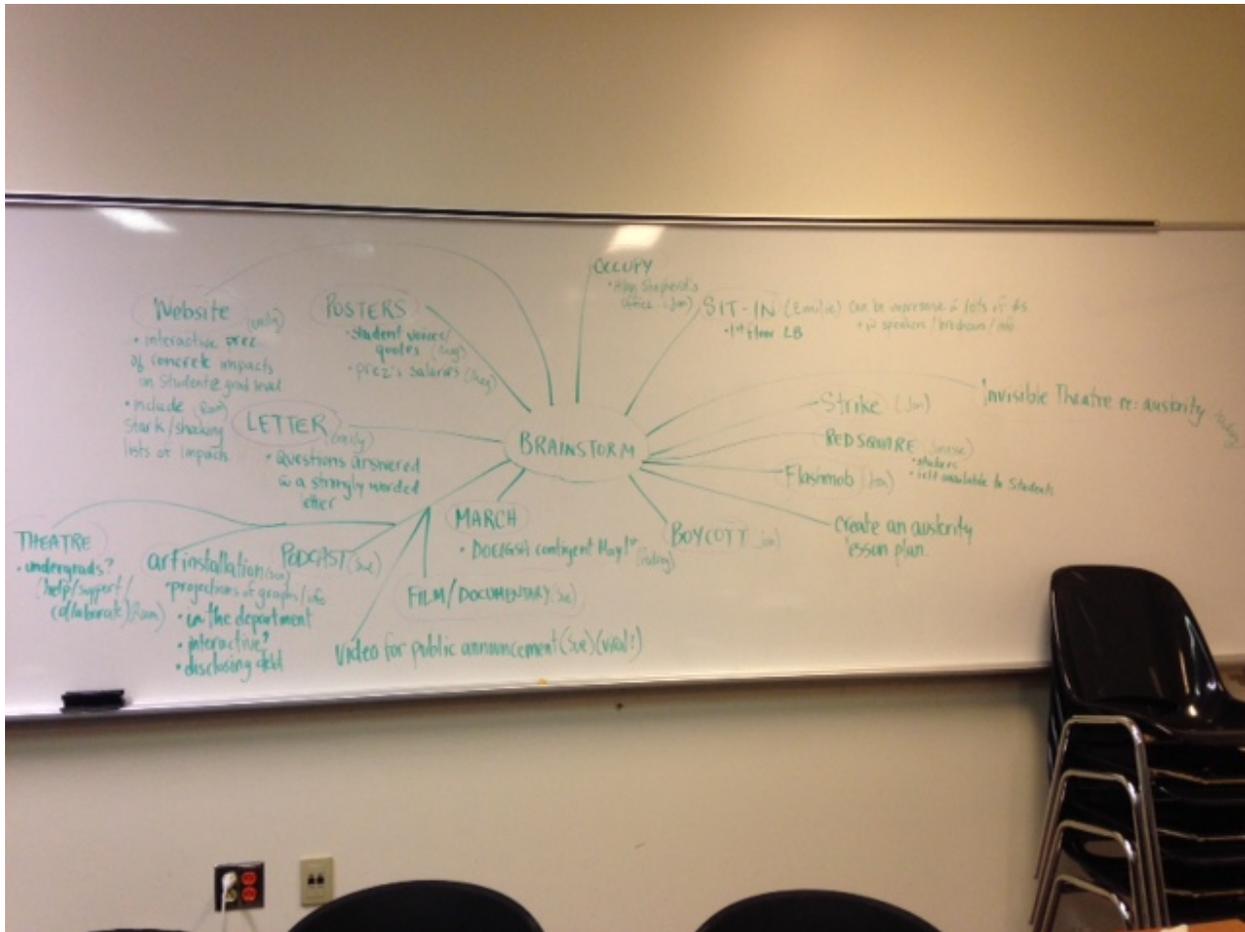
Does anyone know any specific information about where the money is being allocated to? Actual budget details?

- Jon was at a budget meeting-- the budget was presented.
- Budget is public. Email Patrick Kelly (CFO), Benoit-Antoine Bacon (Provost) for this budget.
- There is a document prepared by the Coalition opposée à la tarification et à la privatisation des services publics (a.k.a. the Coalition main rouge) about the ways that the government could save \$10 billion-- could look into this too:  
<http://nonauxhausses.org/outils/alternatives-fiscales-justes-et-equitables-pour-les-finances-publiques/>

## **STEP 2: BRAINSTORM ACTION ITEMS**

Stakeholders/Action directed at whom?

- Administration
- Government
- Broader society
- Students in our department
- Professors/Faculty
- Media
- Teachers



**Action Items suggested in brainstorm session**

- Occupy (Alan Shepherd's office)
- Sit-in (1st floor of LB, to organize with other students/departments)
- Invisible Theatre
- Strike
- Red Square Campaign (stickers, felt)
- Flashmob
- Create a mock austerity lesson plan for government/administrators
- Boycott
- March
- Make a film or documentary
- Viral video for public
- Podcast
- Art installations (interactive, in the department, multimedia)
- Theatre

- Letter: write a strongly worded letter asking for answers to specific important questions regarding the effects of austerity on our department (answers from admin)
- Website: displaying research and pertinent information
- Posters (student voices, president salaries, etc)

### **STEP 3: REVISE and CLARIFY ACTION ITEMS and SIGN-UP**

Everyone signed up for things they were interested in the above list.

### **STEP 4: REALITY CHECK and DECIDE WHAT WE WILL EACH DO**

Out of this large brainstorm we decided to specifically commit to and work on the following actions and have decided not to pursue the action items that are crossed off. (I have left the crossed off items here though so that people can see what was decided on and what was not of interest to the present group).

- Subcommittee members names are in red.
- Anyone not present can sign up to help in any of these subcommittees. Please email: [doeigsa@gmail.com](mailto:doeigsa@gmail.com)

~~Occupy (Alan Shepherd's office)~~

~~Sit-in (1st floor of LB, to organize with other students/departments)~~

~~Art installations (interactive, in the department, multimedia)~~

~~Strike~~

~~Create a mock austerity lesson plan for government/administrators~~

~~Boycott~~

- **Red Square Campaign** (stickers, felt): Subcommittee: Junesse, Audrey, Sue
- **March:** organize for a DOEIGSA contingent to join the Concordia contingent. Make DOEIGSA posters and banners. Subcommittee: Jon, Emilie L., and Audrey
- **Make a film or documentary and/or podcast:** This group is discussing how to create a media piece that communicates different voices and topics of interest based on the topics of austerity in Quebec and in education. Subcommittee: Sue, Emily S., Reem
- **Theatre and/or flashmob and/or Invisible Theatre.** (ex. in the metro?) Subcommittee: Audrey, Jon, Jordan
- **Letter:** write a strongly worded letter asking for answers to specific important questions regarding the effects of austerity on our department (answers from admin and the department). Subcommittee: Emily S., Harry, Reem, Jon.
- **Website:** displaying research and pertinent information. Subcommittee: Emily S., Harry.
- **Posters/Print Ephemera:** of student voices and quotes, president salaries, "we paid for this space" so that we occupy administration spaces with words, put red squares on doors. Subcommittee: Harry, Emily S., Meg, Sue.

### **Other Business:**

Jon proposes that DOEIGSA take a stance to support our colleagues at UQAM. Position statement to recognize what they are dealing with/ going through.

Jon motions: **Be it resolved that DOEIGSA denounce the injunctions, expulsions, and police brutality at UQAM, and stand in solidarity with students organizing against austerity at that institution.**

Jordan seconds.

### **Discussion:**

Injunctions overruling the strike votes that had been made democratically; students were expelled for being involved in the organization; minister of ed calling for regular expulsions; riot squad called in to clear out students who were trying to enforce democratic strike votes that had been made.

Junesse: doesn't feel comfortable supporting a motion without enough information, and because there is mixed information.

Meg: unclear what "stand in solidarity" means and asks Jon to clarify what he intends for this mandate. What does this mean we will do? In the past we have made these kind of "spirit mandates" that then seem to mean that our association needs to answer with specific actions. Is there a specific action involved with this mandate?

Jon clarifies: This is a statement of principle, that we agree on something. A bases for action perhaps later on.

Point of clarification: At UQAM the associations that voted for a strike mandate should support a strike mandate. They cancelled classes because they had been voted in favour of cancelling these classes. Students demonstrated at classes that were still being held in order to cancel classes. Faculty accompanied students enforcing the strike and to enable understanding and less tension.

### **Motion called to vote:**

**For: 4**

**Against: 1**

**Abstain: 5**

**Motion passes.**

Jon motions; Jordan seconds:

**Be it resolved that DOEIGSA hold another special general assembly in September 2015, at 5pm on a weekday, in order to debate and decide on a possible strike against austerity and extractivism.**

**1 for**

**6 against**

**1 abstention**

Jordan: Keep this discussion going in the Fall but it should take more of a discussion format, and not purely strike oriented. Not main means of expression amongst the students he has heard from.

Audrey motions; Emily seconds:

**Be it resolved that DOEIGSA hold a general assembly in September 2015, at 5pm on a weekday, with a motion addressing among other things a strike against austerity and extractivism.**

**2 for**

**4 against**

**amendment fails.**

Meg motions; Audrey seconds: **Be it resolved that DOEIGSA hold a general assembly in September 2015, at 5pm on a weekday, with a motion addressing, among other things, actions against austerity.**

**motion passes unanimously.**

Sue: point of information: Speaker series information will be coming soon to ask for funds to run this with support from DOEIGSA.

**Junesse motions to adjourn.**

**Harry seconds.**

**Meeting adjourned at 8:10pm**