



## **Fall 2018 President's Report**

**Axel van den Berg**

The following issues have preoccupied us during the first seven months of my presidency:

### **Sexual Harassment and Violence Policies**

As I took over the MAUT presidency from Alenoush Saroyan on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the crisis occasioned by the publication of the SSMU's Open Letter claiming that there had been systematic mismanagement of sexual violence allegations against professors in the Faculty of Arts was in full swing. MAUT's executive issued a response [we should have this on our website and a link to it here] in which we supported the students' call for more transparency but cautioned against any conflation of the disciplinary processes that should govern cases of alleged sexual violence or harassment on one hand and the process of obtaining tenure on the other.

Since then, MAUT and SSMU representatives have met on a regular basis to discuss these issues and others of mutual interest. These meetings have contributed greatly to better mutual understanding of our perspectives on these matters. The administration, the MAUT and the SSMU have been busy throughout the summer and the fall with the work of revising the University's regulations and policies on Sexual Harassment and Violence.

One positive development is the appointment of an independent Special Investigator, Me Caroline Lemay, on the advice of a joint SSMU-administration committee, to oversee reports on sexual misconduct on campus. MAUT can take some credit for this as we have advised the Principal and Provost from the beginning of the recent crisis that an independent assessor who enjoys the confidence of all those affected would be a valuable first step towards the greater transparency the students have called for.

### **Survey on Intimate Staff-Student Relations**

In response to the formation of the Ad Hoc Senate Committee on Teaching Staff-Student Intimate Relationships MAUT conducted a survey of its members in October on the principal question that the committee was asked to address: should the University prohibit such relationships outright? Of 374 respondents a substantial majority felt that such relations should *not* be prohibited outright but many qualified their answers in a variety of ways that should be useful in informing the deliberations of the committee. MAUT's report analysing the results was sent to the Chair of the committee, Ms. Julie Lassonde.

### **Conversion of Endowed Chairs to Limited Term (Renewable) Appointments**

At the end of May, holders of endowed chairs received a letter from Provost Manfredi informing them that their Chairs would forthwith be converted from unlimited to limited-term appointments. MAUT vigorously supported the campaign led by Prof. Paul Yachnin to persuade the Provost that such a sudden and unilateral decision, *without extensive consultation with MAUT*, was unfair and contrary to the principles of collegial governance. We have had several written exchanges and meetings with the Provost and are now waiting to see whether he is willing to reconsider his decision.

### **CASC**

The Committee on Academic Staff Compensation has met several times this fall. Highlights include a new dataset and analytic toolkit to examine gender differentials in salaries which will be a principal source of information on which to base future policies to rectify inequities; a slight increase of the overall salary envelope for the coming year from 2.0% to 2.15% in view of rising inflation expectations and a slightly improved budget situation; the formation of a Strategic Working Group of CASC members to consider and recommend medium- and long-term policies to raise McGill's salaries relative to those in the other U-15 research universities; and the creation of a system of individual online access to the balances on our professional development accounts.

### **Ongoing discussions about the Regulations Relating to the Employment of Academic Staff (RREAS)**

These discussions have been going on for quite some time in the wake of the highly undesirable outcome of the dismissal process of one of our colleagues some years ago. In the course of these discussions MAUT has succeeded in getting the administration to agree to the insertion of a committee of peers to advise the Principal in cases where dismissals for cause are being contemplated. But we are still at an impasse with respect to the other main MAUT proposal to introduce an internal process of arbitration that would have the jurisdiction of reinstating the faculty member if his/her dismissal was deemed unjustified. To be continued...

### **Fossil Fuel Divestment**

After MAUT Council nearly unanimously voted to divest MAUT's own fund from fossil fuel producing companies, MAUT also actively supported members' efforts to have Senate adopt a motion recommending to the Board of Governors that the University do the same. This motion finally passed in Senate on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

## **Health Insurance**

MAUT's representatives on the Staff Benefits Advisory Committee (SBAC), Edith Zorychta and Al Shrier, are doing great work helping to monitor the management of our current plan. But their mandate is not to explore alternatives to the plan. MAUT's Council has recently created a Health Care Benefits Monitoring Committee headed by Prof. Sandra Hyde to do just that. The Committee will examine health care plans available at other universities and advise Council on what kinds of changes might be possible to improve the quality of our plan.

## **Advising**

During the past seven months, MAUT's advisors, led by our legal officer Joseph Varga, have taken on 119 cases. Of these, the most frequent ( $\geq 5$ ) related to conflicts of interest, harassment, discipline, tenure, benefits, reappointments, salary, tenure appeals and grievances.

## **Workshops and Fora**

MAUT organized or helped organize several events this year to help members and prospective members find their way through the University's sometimes perplexing regulations and procedures. These include Orientation for New Tenure-Track Academic Staff (August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018; 50 participants) and MAUT's Guide to the Univers(ity) (November 8<sup>th</sup>, 39 participants). From participants' reactions it is clear that these events are greatly appreciated.

## **Social Events**

In addition to these serious concerns and occasions, MAUT organizes several highly successful social events for members and prospective members every year. The MAUT Welcome Gathering on September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 drew a crowd of 101 participants. No fewer than 253 participants showed up for the popular Octoberfest Apple Picking event on September 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **Acknowledgements**

In short, MAUT has been extremely active on a great variety of fronts to help improve the working conditions of its members, and to maintain the collegial culture and governance practices that make McGill the great university that it is. But all this activity would be impossible without the rock-solid support of our tiny but immensely hard-working staff:

Honore Kerwin-Borelli, our Administrative Officer, Joseph Varga, our Professional and Legal Officer and Jo-Anne Watier, our Membership Engagement Officer. And last but not least we need to thank all the members who have volunteered to take on a variety of roles, from advising to serving on committees to sitting on Council, without which we cannot function as a voluntary organization. I just want to remind all our members that working for MAUT is not just working on behalf of your colleagues. It is also something to proudly put in your service dossier for tenure and merit!