

MAUT President Exec Report 2022-3

It's been a very busy year, full of chronic and acute issues, a new union, numerous meetings with the administration, and some successes.

Asbestos

The end of January, buildings at Mac campus shut down. The following month, Stewart Biology was closed. Both were because of asbestos. Professors and students were told to vacate their offices and labs; instructors were told to teach online or cancel classes. MAUT hosted two townhalls in February for both sets of affected members, where we worked collectively to construct action items. We held an emergency meeting with the Principal and Provosts about Stewart Bio. We continue to work with individuals to help them mobilize and to ensure our members are protected.

French

MAUT is monitoring the impact of Law 14 on our members. We've discussed the issue a few times with the provosts. The administration is convinced that their offerings are sufficient, which they are not.

NewMad

The administration has proposed innovations in university instruction with a concept called the New Model of Academic Program Delivery. NewMad hopes to combine lessons learned from teaching during Covid with new teaching initiatives elsewhere. In our meetings we've stressed that NewMad must serve as a set of guidelines and not mandates; it must give ultimate decisions about development of new programs to departments and instructors; it must not create new burdens for existing faculty; it must not use new programs as a way to create a precarious set of instructors; and it must elevate health and wellness of instructors teaching in these programs to the same level it desires for the students in these programs.

Covid

Covid remains on our campus and in our academic community. Throughout the year we have continued to advocate for greater protection for our members. We've reiterated MAUT's resolution that instructors must be able to select the mode of instruction best suited for their courses. We continue to advocate for greater support for any members who develop long covid, in such a way that doesn't let Human Resources dictate how we care for our academic community.

Academic Freedom

In response to a demand from the Quebec government, the administration has proposed an academic freedom policy. We responded with numerous revisions and are monitoring the drafts.

Research Ethics Boards and Human Participants

The administration proposed a revision to the policy on research involving human participants (aka human subjects research, research ethics board submissions). We responded with numerous revisions and will monitor the drafts.

Committee on Academic Staff Compensation (CASC) and pushing back

We negotiated with the administration a salary envelope of approximately 14.5 percent over three years. We definitely did not achieve all we wanted and pushed back as much as we could and explained our efforts in the newsletter, including a call for greater transparency in the merit process and requests for appeal.

Staff Benefits Advisory Committee (SBAC)

We worked this year to arrange for the very first set of SBAC pre-meetings, similar to pre-Senate meetings. SBAC covers benefits for all McGill employees. MAUT over the years has discovered the limits of this committee, which is consulting-only. In the recent past MAUT has advocated against a particular policy and convinced the other employee groups to agree. The administration just ignored the collective will. The first pre-meeting generated a list of conditions that the members return to at each meeting.

The Association of *McGill* Professors of Law (AMPL)

The Faculty of Law professors voted to form a union called AMPL, the first faculty union in McGill's history. The union has been certified by Quebec's Labour Tribunal and the union is involved in collective bargaining. Three things are important for MAUT. 1. MAUT should not stand in the way of instances of bottom-up governance by its members and that has been our official position vis-à-vis AMPL. Law faculty members wanted a union and MAUT voted not to stand in the way of that desire; 2. According to our constitution, these individuals can remain a part of the MAUT until they receive a collective agreement, and 3. MAUT looks forward to collegial cooperation on matters affecting both of us.

Grievance Policy

After six years of work on this issue, MAUT managed to get passed updated regulations on academic staff, disciplinary and grievance. These regulations fixed one important loophole in the prior version in which contract academic staff had no path to grievances.

Libraries

Academic librarians, who are members of MAUT, have had a difficult relationship over the years with the administration (and MAUT, at one point) being respected for their important role in academic life. Many current administrative initiatives have negatively impacted academic librarians. These include not providing adequate working environments at Schulich Library, the Fiat Lux program and at 550 Sherbrooke. 550 Sherbrooke was the site of the New Model of Work (NMW) pilot, concluded this year. We have had numerous meetings with provosts to make sure librarians' voices are heard. For example, in those meetings, we've continued to assert that the NMW, even after the pilot's ending, is not suitable and not a

productive working environment for its staff. We're heartened that the new Dean of Libraries, with whom the presidents of MAUT have met, is a strong advocate for her faculty.

Proliferation of Exams

During Covid, an additional version of some instructors' final exams was demanded. This would constitute a seventh version to the up to six versions of an exam that some faculty members already have to create in advance of holding the exams and whether or not the extra versions are necessary. We brought to the provosts our concern that this will become standard operating procedure. We continue to monitor the situation.

More Representation in MAUT of Contract Academic Staff (CAS)

MAUT serves multiple constituencies besides tenure stream faculty. The other constituencies (academic libraries, retirees) have had reserved seats on Council and associated committees/councils to organize concerns. CAS, who also can be part of MAUT, has had no formal representation on Council (i.e., a reserved seat). We plan to introduce at the 2023 AGM an amendment to the constitution and to the bylaws to remedy this situation. This also will require establishing a committee and CAS Council, which is part of the amendment.

Not enough staff

We've been short-staffed this year and are looking to increase the number of staff to support these varied activities.

Opt-out

After three years and many many emails, MAUT finally obtained opt out status for our membership. Starting in July 2023, new faculty members [including CAS? Academic librarians?], will be automatically enrolled in MAUT. Members can opt-out if they choose. This is a long term strategy to grow the membership numbers.

Graduate Student Funding

McGill's traditional model of decentralizing graduate student funding largely to individual faculty members is fundamentally broken. The solution thus far seems to be occurring at the faculty-level as deans and unit heads standardize minimal levels of funding. This only reinforces the decentralized model and places graduate students out of reach of numerous faculty. So this solution is not working either. This is problematic since there's wild unevenness of funding of graduate students, leading some students to seek assistance from food banks and mutual aid associations. We began working with the post graduate student society (PGSS) to find ways to shift student funding to the deans and central administration. The goal is to adequately and equitably fund graduate students while not placing the burden solely on individual researchers. A secondary goal is to ensure that PGSS's and MAUT's efforts are aligned and that the administration does not pit us against each other.

Research Institute (RI)

In late 2022, we were notified of an issue with one of our members, who's employed at the Research Institute, which is at the McGill University Health Centre. He alerted us to an untenable working situation there. Namely, principal investigators (i.e., individuals who are McGill professors) who hire research assistants are personally responsible for those RAs. The RAs are employees of the individual PI, not the university; this includes the PIs must take out liability insurance for their employees. We're continuing to work on the situation. We've met with the impacted PI several times and have arranged meetings with representatives of the RI. Terry Hebert has been approved to ask a question in Senate on whether the administration even knows of these issues at the RI.