

Open Letter to the Student Union and Graduate Student Association Membership

Over the past 6 weeks, the current Graduate Students' Association (GSA) executive has been meeting regularly with the Student Union (SU) executive over the GSA's standing within the SU.

What is the Graduate Students' Association?

The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) is a student-operated organisation representing the interests of all 175 graduate students on campus (79 part-time and 96 full-time students). We represent graduate students on university committees such as the Research Advisory Committee, the Graduate Studies Working Group, the Masters of Island Studies Steering Committee, the Atlantic Veterinarian College Health and Safety Steering Committee and the Atlantic Veterinarian College Library Committee. Furthermore, the GSA is the only student body on campus that distributes the International Student Identity Card (ISICard), to all UPEI students and our membership in particular; as we are often in transit, going to and from academic conferences and other places to conduct our research.

What's the issue?

According to the SU constitution, there are 3 "classes" of membership: (1) Active Members; (2) Associate Members; and (3) Honorary Members. As you can see in the selected section of the constitution below, all graduate students (part-time and full-time) fall under the second class, that of Associate Members.

Article IV — MEMBERSHIP There shall be three (3) classes of members in the UPEI SU: Active members, Associate members and Honorary members.

1 The following shall be Active members: Students who have registered for instruction at UPEI for at least three (3) courses per semester and have paid the current and full Student Union fees, appropriate for Active members, as prescribed by the UPEI SU Council (hereafter referred to as Council).

2 The following shall be Associate members:

a Students who have registered for instruction at UPEI in less than three (3) courses per semester and have paid the current and full student fees, appropriate for the Mature and Part

Time University Students (hereafter referred to as 'MAPUS'), as prescribed by agreement between Council and MAPUS. MAPUS is recognized as an Associate Member of the UPEI SU, distinct from a Sub-organization.

b Students who have registered in either provisional part time, or full time UPEI graduate program and have paid the current and full student fees appropriate for associate members, as prescribed by agreement between Council and the UPEI Graduate Student Association (hereafter UPEI GSA). UPEI GSA is recognized as an Associate Member of the UPEI SU, distinct from a Sub organization.

3 The following shall be Honorary members: Persons upon whom Honorary membership in the UPEI SU may be conferred by Council.

Although graduate students are considered Associate Members in the constitution, we have not been accorded the rights of Associate Members in practice, i.e. the Student Union has been collecting full student union fees from us and has refused to negotiate with the Graduate Students Association concerning student fees graduate students members pay.

According to another selected section of the Student Union constitution (below), the Student Union can only collect fees from Active Members.

Article V — STUDENT UNION FEES

A 1 The Student Union Fees for Active members shall be determined and set by Council.

Student Union Fees for Active members shall be refunded when a student changes status from an active to an Associate member of the UPEI SU in the following manner: one hundred per cent (100%) until September 30, eighty per cent (80%) until October 31, fifty per cent (50%) until January 30, and forty per cent (40%) until February 28. There will be no reimbursement after February 28.

2 The Student Union Fees for MAPUS shall be determined and set by agreement of Council and MAPUS.

The Student Fees for MAPUS shall be refunded in full if a student withdraws from the University before October 15 in the first semester or February 15 of the

UPEI Hosts Regional Undergraduate Biology Conference

Michelle Wark
Contributor

This year, UPEI hosted the Atlantic University Undergraduate Biology Conference (AUUBC) which took place from March 3rd to March 5th in the newly renovated Duffy science building. The conference is organized to allow undergraduate students from universities in the Atlantic region to present results from their honours projects or senior research projects from all areas of biological science to peers and colleagues. Often students use the conference to debut the results of their work, making it a great opportunity to see original research presented for the first time.

Up to four students per each university in the Atlantic region are selected to present research at the conference; two students give oral presentations and two prepare poster presentations. The two students who represented UPEI in the oral presentations this year were Paul Young and Carolyn MacLean while the two students who entered poster presentations were Shannon MacDonald and Man-Sum Yau. Students were judged on their presentations and awards were given to the top presenters in both the oral category and poster category. Various other awards were handed out,

second semester.

B 1 The Student Fees for Active members shall be collected in a manner to be arranged by the UPEI SU Executive (hereafter Executive).

2 The Student Fees for MAPUS shall be collected in a manner agreed upon by the Executive and the MAPUS Executive.

This is why the only other Associate Member, the Mature and Part Time University Students (MAPUS), negotiate their membership dues with the Student Union.

Why do we think we should pay a negotiated student union fee?

We believe that graduate programs are more research based than undergraduate programs, and as a result, the needs of our membership are different from an academic and economic point of view. For example, our membership rarely utilizes: the photocopying services available to the Student Union at large or the student union building. It is for these reasons that we are recognised by the Student Union constitution (see above) as Associate members and not Active members.

including one to Paul Young who received the Botanical Association Award for his project entitled "Mefenoxam resistance in Canadian strains of *Phytophthora erythroseptica* and the impact of *P. infestans* on mefenoxam efficacy".

The conference is a great opportunity for all undergraduate students in the region to participate in, whether they are presenting research, interested in participating in research in the future, or simply interested in seeing what kind of research their fellow students are doing. The conference also allows students who are considering a post-graduate degree to meet other researchers in the region, and explore areas in which they may want to pursue a Masters degree. This experience is often the first time that undergraduate students are exposed to a major academic conference, and it allows them the opportunity to develop skills needed to address an academic audience.

The conference was coordinated by Dr. Larry Hale and Dr. Donna Giberson from the biology department, and 4th year biology student Sarah Bradley.

That being said, as Associate Members of the Student Union, we do believe that a certain portion of our SU fees should go towards the running of the Students Union facilities, but we also believe that we should be allowed to negotiate the amount charged.

Please follow your own constitution and allow the Graduate Students' Association to exercise its rights as Associate Members.

Sincerely,

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UPEI GSA

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