

# TST Advanced Degree Students' Association

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*Annual Report*

*2013-2014*

2013-2014 was another banner year for the Advanced Degree Students' Association (ADSA). The year began with our standard workshop on writing successful OGS/SSHRC applications, which we paired with a welcome BBQ at the Newman Centre. Both were well attended by new and returning students. Our other professional development seminars included the usual subjects of finding and applying for an academic job, stress and work-life balance, and getting published. This year we also experimented with a new seminar on non-academic careers and jobs, which attracted significant interest. As always, our seminars were only possible thanks to the generosity of TST faculty, staff, and alumni, who volunteered their time and expertise.

The highlight of the year was again our student conference in March. In response to a decline in revenue, our treasurer Matt Eaton took the lead in applying for a grant from TST's Reynolds Fund. Thanks to the support of CORM, the generosity of the Reynolds bequest, and the assistance of Alan Hayes, Jerry Skira, Eve Leyerle, and Elaina De Luca, we had the financial resources to match the high standards set by last year's conference. The ADSA Executive chose a speaker and reviewed the proposals, and everyone on the Board collaborated to make the conference run smoothly. On March 14 an impressive 16 student papers were presented, with 8 focusing on the conference theme of spirituality and sexuality. Natalie Wigg-Stevenson of Emmanuel College moderated a lunchtime panel on the Teaching for Ministry program, and introduced our keynote speaker Ellen Armour of Vanderbilt University. Over 50 students, faculty, and guests packed into boardroom one to hear Professor Armour's address, which stimulated much discussion over the subsequent wine and cheese reception.

The Board worked hard to advocate for students this year. Board members participated at many levels of TST governance, including meetings of all four departments, the Advanced Degree Council, the Board of Trustees, and special committees to reappoint the TST Director and the AD/Graduate Director. Another survey was conducted over the Christmas break, with over 90 students giving information on funding levels, ThD/PhD transfers, academic and non-academic activities, wait times, and overall satisfaction. We also conducted smaller, targeted polls that found unanimous opposition to closing oral thesis defences and very limited use of the University of Toronto Career Centre. In March we held a successful referendum on amending the ADSA constitution to accommodate changes at TST and better coordinate and focus our representation; we then made significant revisions to our policies and procedures. Finally we began a conversation with TST about taking over administration of travel bursaries, after receiving a record 26 applications for support to present at conferences outside Ontario.

Although it was a busy year for the ADSA, it was also very rewarding, thanks entirely to the enthusiasm, patience, and collaboration of our Board members. They made this year great, and I was honoured to serve them as President.

Michael Buttrey

ADSA President, 2013-2014