

ADVANCED DEGREE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

TST's Advanced Degree Students' Association (ADSA) is tasked with providing professional development and social opportunities for students in graduate programs at TST, representing students' needs to the various committees and councils at TST, and advocating on their behalf. The 2014–2015 school year saw another strong year of progress and achievement in all three of these areas.

The 2014–2015 academic year began with a well-attended workshop on grant writing, and a barbecue that helped introduce new students, and welcome back older ones, to TST. This year the ADSA Board decided to have fewer professional development seminars but to have social events after each one. The goal was to focus on doing fewer programs but having a stronger turnout. This seems to have borne fruit as attendance and participation have increased. In terms of professional development, this year we hosted seminars on thesis writing (geared especially for the MA students), issues of mental health, and how to publish book-length manuscripts. We also hosted our annual theology conference on the subject of Jewish/Christian inter-religious dialogue. We are happy to say that this very popular conference had papers accepted from every college with students in ADSA. We were pleased, due to the generosity of TST and the Catherine Gilbert Memorial Fund, to have Professor David Novak as the keynote speaker. At all of these events, we were happy to welcome faculty from TST. We hope that in the next year we shall be able to build on those relationships and encourage greater participation in ADSA events from both students and faculty.

There were three advocacy issues that ADSA took on this year as well. ADSA held a town hall meeting to discuss the inclusion, for future years, of incidental fees (Hart House, Athletics and Recreation, and Student Life fees) with students. We also discussed the possibility of our part-time students joining the Association of Part-Time Students Union and the raising of the ADSA fee. Graduate students at TST were given the opportunity to vote on each of these issues. As a result of this consultation, our student body did not request that we look into what would be required to gain access to Hart House (which was the main part of the incidental fees that students had expressed an interest in) because it would mean paying for all the incidental fees (at a marginal increase in cost of approximately \$800 for fulltime students). Students did, however, vote to authorize the adjustment in the ADSA fee, a fee which had not been adjusted since at least 2010. This increase will allow ADSA to continue to offer the same amount of programming, workshops and events as in the past and, hopefully, also to consider offering even more. Finally, the part-time students at TST authorized the ADSA Board to look into pursuing an agreement for them to join the Association of Part-Time Students Union. This will be an ongoing project, starting in the summer, with the goal of moving toward a full referendum regarding joining the union or not.

The 2014–2015 academic year was also the first year that the ADSA Board had an MA representative as a full member. While there were, and still are, some learning curves when it comes to finding out the best ways to involve MA students in the life of ADSA, the Board is in full agreement that the continued representation of students at the MA level on the

Board is a positive thing and we hope to continue to find ways to involve those students not in doctoral programs in all the events and work of ADSA.

Our future is exciting, more so because the Board is in the middle of a huge turnover as a good percentage of the ADSA Board have come to the end of their terms of office or have retired as they approach their graduation, and will thus be leaving TST. Consequently, the coming year will be one with many new voices at the Board level. We have begun discussions on the changing of the name of the Advanced Degree Students' Association in an effort to be more in line with TST's new terminology around the Graduate Centre as well as making some basic changes to our policies and procedures and constitution to be in line with the new structures at the Graduate Centre. We also hope to develop new and exciting professional development seminars and social events for our students. The 2014–2015 year for the association was one that shall surely provide a firm groundwork for the next year, and it was made possible through the hard work of all 18 members of the Board, all the students, faculty, and staff that came out to our events, and all those who helped in so many various ways too numerous to mention. As President of ADSA, on behalf the Board and all the students, I thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Spellacy
President, ADSA Board 2014-2015