

Dalhousie University Computer Science Society

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Winter 2009

End of Term Report

What did I do?

DSU Council

Meetings

I attended biweekly DSU council meetings this term. The DSU published a new policy on 24-hour study space, urging the university to have some facilities open for students, day or night. I was present at all but two meetings of Council this semester. I see my role on DSU Council as being the most important external advocacy venue for the CS Society, since the DSU has far more resources than we do. I was not involved in any committees of Council, but I vow that if I am elected to this position in the future, I will sit on at least once committee.

Imagine '09

The DSU held its quasi-annual Imagine campaign this February. I helped out by manning a booth in the Student Union Building two days, for about an hour each time. The goal of the Imagine campaign was to get feedback from students on what they want from the DSU. By the President, Courtney Larkin's account, the campaign was a moderate success.

Annual General Meeting

The DSU held its Annual General Meeting on March 11th, 2009. I promoted the event among Computer Science Society Council because a campus group named SMAC was proposing some resolutions at the meeting that would be detrimental to our Union and our University. The issue that overshadowed all else was a motion that would withhold NSPIRG's (Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group) student funding, evict the group from the SUB, and hold a referendum to decide the future of the group's funding. This was hotly debated, and both sides used every procedural tool at their disposal to shift the odds in their favour. The March 11th meeting ended up resolving nothing, only getting through the acceptance of the agenda, and two reports of the Executive.

A second AGM was scheduled for April 1st. The NSPIRG issue once again used the lion's share of the meeting time. The motion was reduced to a single demand that Council hold a referendum in the fall to decide NSPIRG's funding. The motion failed. The other motions on the table, including constitutional amendments, did not get addressed because of time constraints, and thus will have to wait until next year's AGM.

I attended the AGM as a member of the Union, rather than a Council member. That being said, I am in favour of a referendum on the issue. NSPIRG receives \$4 from 99% of students, and as such they must be held accountable. I feel that the group does too many protests and not enough research. I'm not convinced that they require their current funding to conduct their activities. I'm also troubled about NSPIRG's antagonistic attitude toward the DSU and the student body in general. In my experience, despite being an organization which ostensibly promotes critical thinking, their leaders are unwilling to consider views other than their own, and will go so far as to accuse students with opposing views of racism, sexism and any other form of discrimination. At the March 11th AGM, a leader in the organization personally accused me of supporting murder when I voted against motions she supported. NSPIRG leaders have a chronic lack of respect for people with views other than their own, and it's time for the student body to remind them where their funding comes from. I strongly support a referendum in the 2009/2010 school year to decide the future of NSPIRG's levy.

CS Society Council

This term was a bit of an off-term for our Society. Elections were an issue, with no candidates receiving enough nominations in the first election. We got off to a rocky start, but toward the end of term, we got things going.

Web site

I took it upon myself to completely overhaul the CS Society web site, since our existing site was very difficult to update, and unattractive.

I made a motion in council to create a web site committee. Athletics Rep Justin Joyce joined, as did Co-op Rep Mike Porter.

Having recently made a Drupal-based web site, I set off to redo the site with Drupal. I can now say that the web site is complete, for the most part. I trimmed down a ton of content that was redundant or unnecessary, and reorganized everything to make things easier to find. It's my hope that the web site will be a portal for students to find out what's going on with our society and in our faculty.

The new site has an event system, which automatically updates an event calendar. I have been urging Council members to update the site with news and event postings, but as it stands, I post most of the content.

I ran into a few major problems when I was redoing the site. First, no one in the society knew anything about how to get FTP access, etc. to the old site. The second is that we do not have control of the domain name www.cssociety.ca. Personally, I'm not convinced that we need that domain. I think society.cs.dal.ca is fine, but I'm not opposed to having two domains. After some research, I discovered that Dal-ACM hosts our site, and I kindly asked them to get us access so we could replace the old site. I'm not fond of the idea of another group on campus hosting us, when we could probably look after our own hosting, and not have to worry about whether they will respond to our emails for access to A, B, or help getting C or D working.

The website will definitely require an administrator each term. I've done a ton of configuration on the site, including adding a bunch of modules to improve functionality. I've written an article on the Knowledge Base page of the site about how to update the site.

I strongly recommend future council to use the Knowledge Base page to update How-To guides and any information that will be valuable to future and current council. For example, I made a page on "How to Advertise an Event" which lists all the available means of advertising on campus. These are things that people running events should know.

Council eventually approved a motion to delete the old site and put in the new one.

Artwork

I noticed one day that our Learning Centre and Teaching Labs' walls are totally bare. Inspired by the striking Math Learning Centre in the Chase Building, I started an initiative to obtain art for our own Learning Centre. Unfortunately, this was near the end of the term (mid-March) and I decided that there wasn't enough time to find art properly.

My goals were:

- Student art, if possible
- 2 pieces, maybe 3
- \$500 from Society
- Learning Centre top priority, Teaching Lab 2 second

In our April 2nd meeting, I moved that we allocate \$500 from our budget for this purpose, and strongly recommend that the council in Fall 2009 use that money for buying art for the Learning Centre. The motion passed.

Meeting with Faculty

On February 10th, the President (Jeremy Gallant), VP Internal (Liam Spencer), Social Rep (Yongke "Bill" Yu), Treasurer (Liz Legere), and I had a meeting with the Michael Shepherd, Anne Publicover, Peter Bodorik, and David Green. We discussed communication issues, and the goal was to initiate some communication between the Society and the Faculty. The faculty members expressed a desire to have a vibrant and active CS Society, since they want students to enjoy

their time in CS, and make Dal CS more appealing to potential students. I recommend that the executive should have a meeting with the Dean and other administrators at the beginning of each term to touch base, and make sure everyone is on the same page. The Dean and others noted that there has been a lot of information lost between each term of our society's council. We are working on this with our website's knowledge base.

We discussed briefly with David Green the possibility of getting our Society's TV screens running again, and probably replacing them with new flat-panel equivalents. He is open to any proposals about them, and would like to sit down and figure out how to do it. He's waiting for someone from our society to come to him with a proposal. I strongly recommend someone in future council talk to him about it, since these screens have huge potential. All it takes is someone with a little initiative.

Goals for future:

- LittleBoard upgrade
- Learning Centre and Teaching Lab 2 artwork
- More athletics-related events, like paintball
- Have intramural team—at least one