

# **Presidential Report, Winter 2006**

04/01/06

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## Overview

This report contains an overview of the Winter 2006 term of computer science. Included is a list of accomplishments, problems, and reviews of various positions. A number of suggestions are outlines herein, and it is my hope that whoever reads this will seriously consider a number of them.

## Presidential Position On Council

The first thing you need to do is read the entry regarding your position as it is laid out in the constitution. Go on, I'll wait. Now read it again. Maybe a third and fourth time for good measure.

The president has many duties. This position is supposed to have a grasp of the big picture of what is going on in society. You should know what your fellow council members are doing and what they are capable of. This is important due to the fact that many external parties will contact the president regarding something due to the fact that they are unsure of who on council they really should be talking to. Understanding the various positions and the people that fill them is the first step towards delegating.

Your position might also result in you doing the following:

- Perform speeches at CS events, open houses, DSU award ceremonies (See Appendix C), etc.
- Be asked to write articles for usage by faculty (for example, items for the Undergraduate Handbook)
- Resolve disputes between council members
- Answer questions asked by students and external organizations
- Any other items that don't necessarily fit under other positions.

Note, that the above relies on communication and being approachable.

## **Services**

### ***Infodesk***

This term, the Council actually took a long hard look at the infodesk. Previous terms have had it run without any indication on where money is going, as well as how individuals were hired. Additionally, previous terms have had it manned by only 3 individuals, causing problems when individuals missed shifts for reasons unknown. A number of complaints had been made by both staff and faculty in regards to these eccentric hours. This term, a number of things happened. First, we actually closed the infodesk for a period of time in order to clean it up, perform inventory, and develop policies to be followed. Additionally, an open call to students in regards to this job was performed. A number of applications were accepted in a short order of time, allowing us to properly staff the infodesk for the remainder of the term. To date, the following problems have occurred.

- 1) A number of \$50 bills have been accepted, contrary to accepted procedure.
- 2) Time sheets have been delivered late consistently, resulting in staff members being payed late.
- 3) Infodesk manager not showing up to society meetings.

The infodesk manager does seem to be getting a grasp on the duties they are responsible for, but I advise that clear, constant communication be developed.

### ***ESL Tutoring***

As far as I know, there are no individuals willing to provide ESL lessons to students. This is sad, considering the number of foreign students in our faculty, and I would advise that an open call for tutors be made.

### ***Events***

There were a few problems with social events this term:

- 1) The number of events was quite low. Geek beers were erratic (which, given items such as long weekends, reading week, the placement of St Patrick's Day, etc is understandable) which caused the already low participation rate to drop further.
- 2) Lack of events outside of geek beer. This term there were no additional events such as an end of term party, movie nights, anime nights, Superbowl party, etc. Some of this can be explained due to lack of funds, but some cannot.
- 3) Lack of entertainment. Fewer and fewer individuals have been participating in open mic. The result this term was one band playing the same thing every week for a time. Which, they admittedly said themselves got old after a time.

In the future, a more concentrated effort to promote events, and bring in both new people and new

entertainment is necessary.

### Possibilities

1. Non-CS bartenders – The theory is if we have bartenders from other faculties, they will encourage their friends from other faculties to show up, who will encourage their friends to show up, and so on.
2. Provide incentives for band members to show up – this includes discounts/drink tickets

### **Grants**

Last term, the grant process was discussed. One issue was that there is nothing keeping track of who gets money over time, which can lead to cases such as individuals asking for grants every term. Additionally, there might be cases where individuals ask for grants to show the same paper multiple times. This should be investigated, and a system developed to keep track of some of these items. Note that I am not advocating actually denying individuals grants. In cases where it is shown that individuals are using a lot of grant money, further grant requests should be tabled until the end of the term, allowing for other individuals to have an opportunity for grant requests.

### **DCSI**

In the past, CS Society has been a proud sponsor of DCSI. Over the summer, an amendment was made to the by-laws mandating an automatic \$500 per term. In a previous term, this resulted in a member of the DCSI committee demanding money from the council, without providing any sort of report, receipts or budget. This term it was decided that, while DCSI is a good cause and a good idea, the automatic \$500 no questions asked was inappropriate for the constitution. Instead, DCSI should be encouraged to go through the grants request procedure and provide us with a budget beforehand, as well as a report after.

### **Business Cards**

This term I brought up the concept of business cards as a service to our student body. This idea, originally devised by the Dal-ACM for their members, has a clear benefit to the entire student body. Many Grad students use them for networking, programs such as MEC and MHI, who are required to find their own internships find them invaluable. In fact, MHI students have asked us to subsidize business twice to this date, near the end of each Winter term. I also feel that business cards would be invaluable to many undergraduate students, specifically those taking co-op (which includes all future BI students). While the item was tabled, and the details of actually obtaining the cards was never formally pursued, there are two important things to note. First, a rough draft for procedure was drawn up (see Appendix D). Second, Amir Feridooni, the individual who pursued business cards for the MHI students, has agreed to perform the necessary paperwork for obtaining business cards in the future, should council wish him to. He can be reached at [amir@dal.ca](mailto:amir@dal.ca).

# Council Items

## ***Constitution***

This term, the council made a large effort to clean up ambiguities in the constitution, as well as make additions to cover items that were previously neglected, including bar management and infodesk management, as well as additions for areas where we have grown in the past, as well as where we feel we will grow in the future (for example, BI representative). At the current time, there is still belief that some areas can be improved further. As such, there has been no referendum for official acceptance of said items. I would recommend that any such referendum happen in the spring, so that 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> year students, as well as incoming new grad students have an opportunity to vote.

Keep in mind that the council can make changes to the by-laws without holding a referendum. As such, any changes to the by-laws need to be properly updated when sending the constitution to the Society Review board during the summer re-ratification.

## ***Finances***

This term, a massive audit was begun to discover where the society money has been spent over the last year. It is unfortunate that the previous year contained a number of poor Treasurers, leading to lack of documentation in several instances. Several questions in particular were in need of answers.

- 1) Why was society confronted with a \$5800 bar bill in September, given that during the course of a regular term, events such as geek beer and Snowball break even?
- 2) Where was the revenue for the summer BBQs?

There were two phases of this audit: the first, performed by Margie Publicover, was to go over the books and try to match deposits with expenditures, as well as properly update the books. The results of this portion are as follows:

1. Matching items was difficult, as most deposits in the last year were lump sum deposits over a period of time and included both money from the bar and infodesk tills.
2. A lot of the accounting seems to be done at the last minute.
3. Society was apparently usually deferring bills from their current term onto the following council.

The second stage was an overview of how much revenue should have been brought in based on inventory used. Unfortunately, this term's Treasurer felt required to resign, also preventing the audit from being completed. However, an initial overview seemed to indicate that expected returns were much lower than that which would have been expected, and in fact no financial records from the summer could be located, which includes approved travel grants, expenditures and returns on geek beer, bbqs, and pretty much everything else.

The following should be done in the future:

- 1) The incoming treasurer should go and see Margie as soon as the first bank statement comes in. At this point they can learn what they need to do with the books, and be able to continue to do so over the course of the term.
- 2) After every event, any excess cash in the till should be placed in an envelope, properly labeled with date, event, and amount, and set aside for deposit. In the event that the till is used for multiple events in a given day (such as a BBQ followed by Geek Beer), separate envelopes should be prepared.
- 3) Every Monday, all event envelopes, as well as any excess cash from the infodesk should be taken to the bank and deposited separately.
- 4) Upon receipt of any bill, said bill should be paid. While it is true that the DSU will automatically withdraw overdue funds from our account, allowing that to happen makes it more difficult to match expenditures with returns.
- 5) Properly file all financial data in the filing cabinet.

The above should help the accounting practices immensely. In the case of a future audit (which should happen at least once a year anyway, in my opinion), being able to easily find and analyze all financial data, as well as properly view the flow of money by properly labeled entries in the ledger matching expenditures against any returns, will allow a future treasurer to have an easier time figuring things out.

A number of other issues in regards to finances have also been noted this term. First, when encountered with a participation deficiency, the council's first reaction is to throw money at it by giving away free food. Instances where this has come into play include the Graduate Orientation (\$500 in food), CS Seminars (\$150 in pizza), discussions in regards to referendum ('why don't we give away free pizza/chocolate/candy on the last day'). This is potentially one of the reasons that the finances are so low at the current time. Between essential items such as providing print credits, DCSI, and travel grants, coupled with late payment of bills and irresponsible spending have resulted in the current financial state.

## ***Representation***

Right now, it is pretty much a fact that most people don't know most of the council people from a random arts student hanging out in the building. This statement is based on my observations of individuals asking me who has a certain position, myself providing an answer, and then the individual still remaining clueless.

Easy ways to resolve this matter:

- Have council members introduce themselves in a number of classes (including some they are not attending) and talk about society and their place in it.
- Take everyone's picture individually and put them in the society slideshow.

# Expectations

Various items are unwritten, and while previously understood, are starting to be lost. The responsibilities outlined in the constitution are a starting point. Any expectations you have from individuals beyond that should be discussed with them and outlined in advance. If any individuals do not appear interested in some of their duties, sit down and find out what they ARE interested in and try to shift them into that role, allowing for the other role to be properly filled. This should allow for participation without misrepresentation, as this has been a problem in the past. The sooner any difficulties such as this are sorted out, the more likely you are to avoid problems. Note that the items listed below are not required as outlined in the constitution, however I feel that if several of these items were done by the individual they are listed under, society would have a better presence both in and outside of the building, as well as operate smoother.

Some not unreasonable expectations:

## Vice President Internal

- To ensure that all Faculty council meetings have council representatives
- To ensure program (Grad/BI/MEC/MHI/Undergrad/etc) representatives are communicating with their portion of the student body.
- To contact individuals in programs with unfilled representative positions and encourage participation.

## Vice President External

- To attend Academic and External meetings
- To ensure that any important communications from the DSU (such as elections, DSU AGM, etc) are properly presented to the student body.
- To ensure that any other items from the DSU (such as events, competitions) are at least discussed by the council, so they can potentially be forwarded to the student body where applicable.
- To inform the council of any important issues to be discussed in upcoming DSU meetings, so that it may be properly discussed by the council.
- To attend Community Outreach meetings.

## Secretary

- To provide meeting minutes shortly after meetings.
- To coordinate public announcements for such items as the above DSU items, social events, etc.
- To update content on the website

## Program Representatives

- To talk to the students they represent to remain informed of issues they encounter and any wants or needs that council can provide.

- To introduce themselves in classes that the students they represent attend, in order to ensure that students know who they are.

### **Social Representative**

- To do more than just geek beer
- To encourage other forms of entertainment at geek beer
- To encourage more performers to attend geek beer
- To encourage other societies/groups to attend geek beer

### **Treasurer**

- To perform an audit on the previous term's expenditures
- To update the books and prepare an expenditure report at the end of each month

### **Fundraising Representative**

- To work together with the social representative
- To raise money for charity, as well as the society as necessary

### **Athletic Representative**

- To create public updates of how various sports teams are performing

# Order Of Operations

There are a number of things the President needs to keep in mind:

- 1) Before First Society meeting:
  1. Read the constitution (multiple times)
  2. Familiarize yourself with Robert's Rules of Order
  3. Personally contact every council member and ask for their availability
  4. Read all of the end of term reports
  5. Read the student code of conduct (or the upcoming Student Rights and Responsibilities Guide).
  6. Talked to the Faculty representative
  7. Edit /users/cs/society/.procmail/lists.rc to ensure that all new execs are on said list and all past execs are removed
  8. Edit (location unknown, maybe moved) the cssociety list, adding new members only (old members can and do monitor the list)
- 2) By the end of the first meeting:
  1. Make your expectations for various positions known, based on the previous end of term reports/transition officer's report
  2. Ensured that various meetings have council members sitting on them, including both Faculty and University councils that society has a seat on.
  3. Have a basic plan on what big items (if any) are to be done over the term.
  4. Have council members sign forms stating they are aware of their duties and read the constitution.
  5. Have Ratification/Executive Acknowledgment forms filled out.
  6. Have signing authority forms filled out.
- 3) By the end of the first month:
  1. Any large event (such as Snowball, Spring Ball) should have begun being planned. No details are required, though a general plan should be drafted.
  2. The budget should be created and presented to the council.
- 4) Start of third month:
  1. Any new large business should be avoided if possible. If approached to help with an event at the start of the next term, ensure that there will be a smooth hand-off.
  2. Begin talking about things like transition/elections.
  3. Keep in mind course evaluations will be beginning
- 5) End of term
  1. Write end of term report
  2. Prepare a document for transferring signing authority (if necessary)
  3. Make sure staff have been hired for the infodesk
  4. Make sure infodesk has emptied out lockers
  5. Pay off any bills that are associated with your term

## Appendix A: “Rules Of Order”

Hey folks,

Although I have no official position on the society, I thought it would be helpful to explain the rules of order for meetings. Although the CS Society Council meetings are generally run somewhat informally, for contentious issues I recommend a stronger adherence to Robert's Rules, especially in cases where fairness is a paramount concern.

Of course, a too-strict adherence isn't helpful, as not everyone will be familiar with all 400 pages of Robert's Rules. The most important are the rules of debate, which I loosely summarize here. This summary is a combination of the usual Council procedure, the DSU rules (which are tailored to student societies' needs) and of Robert's Rules. Of course, Roberts Rules has precedence over this summary. This summary is provided to give a quick and easy to understand set of rules to ensure orderly discussion. Enforcement of these or any rules is entirely up to the chair of the meeting.

1. Speak only when you have 'the floor'.
2. Only the chair has the power to give anyone the floor.
3. You can request the floor by raising your hand, optionally saying something to get the Chair's attention. (e.g., "Madam Chair, may I respond to that question?"; or "Madam Chair, I have a direct question to the member who spoke last.")
4. The chair will maintain an ordered speaker's list, which will determine the order in which people speak. Those who have spoken not at all will have precedence over those who have already spoken. An exception to this speaker's list is that the chair may allow a member to respond to a question asked of them, or to ask a question, or to ask a direct follow-up to a previous question. This is at the chair's discretion.
5. All comments should be made to the chair, and refer to individuals using their title (e.g., the vice-president internal) or some other reference (e.g., "the member who spoke last"). As a last resort, use Mr. or Ms. For example, "Mr. Chair, the vice president (internal) has made comments that contradict those of Mr. Smit, and I would ask that Mr. Smit explain the discrepancy."
6. A major exception to the ordered speaker's list is that any member may rise at any time to:
  - protest that a part of the meeting is contravening the Rules of Order (a "Point of Order"). The Chair may respond to these.
  - ask a question about the proceedings or the rules (a "Point of Information")
  - protest that his or her words have been misrepresented or misquoted, or that the conduct of another member is disorderly. Note that this is only relevant to comments or conduct made during the present meeting (a "Point of Personal Privilege")
7. The chair may rule motions out of order, will rule on the Points named above, sets the order of

speaking, may rule comments or questions out of order if they violate the Rules, may set time limits on speeches, may answer questions regarding the history of the Society, may answer questions regarding interpreting the Rules of Order or the Society's constitution, and in general has broad latitude to take steps to ensure the meetings are run fairly, especially to ensure that all members are permitted to speak.

8. Any of the chair's decisions may be challenged by any voting member, at which point the entire Council must vote on which decision they believe to be correct.

9. Any member may call for any vote to be a closed-ballot vote.

10. A two-thirds vote means two-thirds of the votes cast, ignoring blanks.

Cheers,

-Mike

## Appendix B: Key Breakdown

BB69 (6) – Society Office Cage – One for each exec and the social representative

BDB4 (1) – Storage room beside atrium – for social representative

BF29 (2) – Storage room beside learning centre – one for president, one for social representative

BDB1 (2) – Infodesk – One for employee pickup (located at helpdesk) the other for whomever

594 (3) – Filing cabinet – For secretary, treasurer, president

Assorted other keys which include:

Key to cabinet in the infodesk

Key to the padlock holding the BBQs

Cash register keys

## Appendix C: DSU Teaching Excellence Speech

Hey Everyone,

Some of you might know me. My name is Sean Smith and I am currently president of the Computer Science Society. Over the years I have done a number of things within this Faculty, but oddly enough, having a class with the recipient of tonight's award has not been one of them.

However, I have interacted with Dr. Mike McAllister in the past. Last year, he marked one of my co-op work term reports. And boy did he pick it apart. However, I was easily able to approach him and arrange a meeting around my busy schedule at the time to go over what exactly I had done wrong and what I needed to not only improve on the specific paper, but to improve overall for my future work. Based on that, I would have no doubts about his ability effectively teach not only the subject matter of a given course, but on how students can improve their own abilities to ensure their success beyond a given course.

And I am not the only one that feels this way. I have gathered comments from various students, which include the following:

“[Mike] is brutal, but he pushes for people to actually learn. If you pay attention, he will help you will actually learn a lot from his courses.”

“[Mike] rejects rote memorization in favour of challenging students. intellect, critical thinking, and creativity. He clearly demonstrates his command of course material and his breadth of knowledge when questions stray from specific course material. Rather than spoon-feed little bits of information, Mike show students how to learn, how to research, and how to think. His projects give students the knowledge and experience they will need in the real world. “

“[Mike] even uses his personal time to hold special tutorials and extra-help sessions to not only help students with course work, but to teach subjects not explicitly covered in the course that the students are interested in. “

Due to these reasons, as well as many more, it is my great pleasure to present one of this year's DSU Teaching Excellence awards to Dr. Mike McAllister

## **Appendix D: Business Card Procedural Draft**

1. A sign up sheet will be made available to students at the infodesk.
2. Students will leave anyu information they want on their business cards
3. students will pay \$10 at the time they leave their information
4. the infodesk staff will provide the student with a receipt
5. should any student decide that they do not want business cards at some point before the order is places, they can receive a full refund and remove their name from the list
6. Upon receipt of ten (10) names, the list will be turned over to the secretary.