



# MCGSS Annual Report

2012-  
2013

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**President  
Lucy Lu**

It's been an extraordinary experience this past year to work on the executive committee of MCGSS. We strived to provide a variety of events for Mac grads, including blueberry and apple picking, a Calypso trip and horseback riding. We also continued the traditional and always popular bagel breakfasts, summer BBQs, strawberry social, white-water rafting, and holiday lunch. I am excited about a new recurring event, Seminar Over Tea, which allows grads to learn about research by colleagues across departments and provides a stage to practice presenting in front of a group of people.

One of the main priorities for the first half of my term was to negotiate the separation of MCGSS from MCSS. This was actually an initiative that was started by the 2011-2012 MCGSS executive committee in effort to reduce the amount of student society fees paid by Mac grads. In November, our members voted in a legal referendum in favour of separation. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, Mac grads are no longer members of MCSS and do not pay MCSS fees.

The winter semester was a period of transition for MCGSS. As we separated from MCSS, we inevitably looked to PGSS to provide more of the services we needed, such as accounting and organising events. To this end, Jacinthe, the PGSS Student Life Coordinator, has been paramount in helping MCGSS become more independent as well as strengthening our relationship with PGSS. In fact, our members played a large role in the successful campaign for PGSS accreditation.

Department representatives have also been important in strengthening our relationship with PGSS. MCGSS currently has three votes on the PGSS council so we've set up a schedule where at least three department representatives attend each PGSS council meeting. To keep Mac grads in touch with what's going on downtown, department representatives now make reports of PGSS council meetings. These reports are distributed to grads along with the agenda for the next meeting. I have started to do the same for MCGSS council meetings with the aim to promote interest, awareness, and participation in council activities.

MCGSS is an integral part of graduate student life at Mac and has so much to offer. We've contributed to funding for the Science and Policy Exchange 2012, BioConnect 2012 Symposium, Mac Robotics Club, and awarded numerous international and local travel grants. I feel fortunate to be able to continue working on the executive committee in the next term and look forward to another great year with the 2013-2014 student council.

Sincerely,

Lucy Lu  
MSc Parasitology



## Vice President Jay Arora

I was elected to the office of Vice President of the MCGSS council in February 2013. My experience serving on the council was remarkable. Though my tenure was very short, I did my best to make it fruitful.

During my tenure, I pursued the following particular issues through the Council:

- Increasing the direct involvement of the student body

One of my major aims during the term was to engage directly with the student body, and increase its interaction with the council. I began with increasing the involvement of the general student body in council activities by proposing to make the minutes of the council meeting available on the MCGSS website. This was to increase the confidence our members had in us. I also proposed the idea for mural competition for our graduate lounge. This was well appreciated and indeed a success.

- Access to graduate study room

One of the key issues on my election-agenda was to provide access for all graduate students to the study room in Raymond building. After proposing this to the council, the President and I were successful in making this study room available to all graduate students. The MCGSS will soon install locks and grant access to all the grads.

- Cultural activities

We hosted an “International Potluck” event as a cultural gathering for all the grad students. This event did not receive the response we expected. But, it was a fun event with foods from many different cultures and a stunning performance by happy feet.

- Academic platform for all graduate students

As promised in my election-agenda, I introduced a new event on our campus – “Seminar Over Tea”. This event was planned to bring all the graduate students of the Macdonald Campus together, offering an academic platform. I hosted two sessions of this event and saw a good turnout. It was an amazing learning experience to listen our fellow researchers. These sessions proved to be very interactive and even helped the presenter. I hope that this initiative is continued in the future.

- Facilities for grads

I also initiated the talks with the Mac Athletics to clear out the matter regarding the access to the Athletics facilities. We suggested that since graduate students pay a substantial amount to the athletics already, it would be unfair in case the fee was increased. This matter was cleared, and we anticipate no changes in the present agreement. But, I would urge the future Council to pursue this issue and ensure that it is implemented in entirety.

- Improving the MCGSS governance



There have been some unclear areas in the bylaws and the Constitution of the MCGSS. To sustain the trust of the general student body on the MCGSS, I am trying to make improvements to our bylaws, to ensure better functioning of the Council. This process has been a great learning experience. I will continue to serve for this cause in the future. Further, I brought to the notice of the Council that in the bylaws of the MCGSS, it is mandatory to appoint a Chief Returning Officer for council-elections. This appointment was sometimes overlooked and I expressed the need for this office to ensure propriety and procedure.

- Improving relations with PGSS

With the recent change in the relationship of MCGSS with MCSS and PGSS, it was an important task to maintain good relations with the PGSS. I helped PGSS organize the hustings for the PGSS accreditation along with the campaigning. Macdonald Campus was regarded to have been a significant source of support to the campaign.

Sincerely,

Jay Arora  
PhD Food Science



**Secretary**  
**Maeghan O'Neill**

I was acclaimed as MCGSS secretary for the 2012-2013 term. This was my first year as a member of the executive committee and my first experience with campus politics. I have immensely enjoyed the opportunities I've had to interact with students and faculty across campus and become more involved in the Mac community.

My main duties as secretary were to record the minutes of the executive council meetings, ensure each topic on the agenda was addressed, and disseminate the minutes to the council. I also took on the responsibility of updating the MCGSS website, including updating the new council member page, adding photos of recent events, and posting up-coming events on our homepage.

In addition to my duties as Secretary, I also had a highly active role creating fun experiences for Mac students. I organized the much anticipated and successful white water rafting trip to Lachine. I helped organize the blueberry picking event as well as advertised and kept track of sign-ups for the apple picking event. I oversaw the downtown pick-up of students for the trip to Calypso waterpark. I decorated, helped pick up supplies, prepared/cooked and served food at the holiday lunch as well as the summer BBQs. I was also involved in the cultural potluck, fall/winter orientation, summer movie nights, and the set-up/clean-up of the well-attended bagel breakfasts. These extra-curricular events are important to me since I believed they helped to build-up the Mac student community and were much needed breaks for Mac students from the stresses of grad life.

In addition to these events, I have given my time and effort to other important causes that I think help support an enriching Mac community. I sat on the Founders Day committee that organized the events of Founders Day, which pay homage Sir William C. MacDonald, the founder of Macdonald Campus. This included developing a theme (The Industry of Food), which would be an interest to our students, choosing and coordinating speakers for the event, arranging food services, organizing set-up of the venue, and advertising the event. I also sat on the Gold Key committee, which selects students who exemplify excellence in promoting extracurricular activities at Mac. These students receive a Gold Key in recognition of their outstanding contributions.

Through these experiences I have met many wonderful people and have learned a great deal. I have honed my organizational and planning skills and had the chance to meet and make connections with other engaged Mac students, faculty, and administrators. I have thoroughly enjoyed my involvement in student governance and I am confident that these



experiences will help me in the future. I wish to thank my fellow executives for helping make this an enjoyable experience, and the students who attended the many events through-out the year. I look forward to being involved in student life at Mac again next year!

Sincerely,

Maeghan O'Neill  
MSc Parasitology



**Public Relations Officer**  
**Nelly El-Sakkary**

The 2012-2013 MCGSS Term was one filled with many activities, some new and others, repeat favorites. These included monthly breakfasts, trips to the Calypso Water Park, Berry Picking at Quinn Farm, International Night, Barbeques, as well as the Holiday Lunch, and the MCGSS Summer Movie Nights.

This was my second year as an MCGSS councillor, and my first year as PRO. As PRO, it was my job to keep students informed on events, organized by the MCGSS council, mainly via the mailing LISTSERV, as well as through our Facebook Page. These emails served to notify students of the events, and to remind them of upcoming activities. Apart from sharing in the organization of these events, I also served as “Group Leader” on several outings, some of these organized by PGSS.

The 2012-2013 council year saw a change in fee structure, where the student body, by referendum, decided to pay full fee membership to PGSS, rather than half to MCSS and half to PGSS. This led to a closer working relationship with PGSS. I was often in contact with the PGSS Student Life Coordinator ([studentlife.pgss@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:studentlife.pgss@mail.mcgill.ca)), finalizing details for PGSS/MCGSS events.

At MCGSS events, such as the Bagel Breakfasts, Barbeques, and Movie nights, I sometimes made announcements on behalf of council, in order to relay information to the students.

Being part of MCGSS is a great opportunity to strengthen teamwork skills. As PRO, many of the students know you by name, as a result of the ongoing email correspondence with them, and sometimes approach you with questions at events, or by email. In this sense, I served as a “go-between” between the student body and council.

My term as PRO allowed me the opportunity to interact with students on a level unique to the position. It was a pleasure to interact with students face-to-face, as well as via the emails. The experience has helped to improve my skills in correspondence and communication, and is one which I greatly enjoyed.

All the best to next year’s council.

Sincerely,

Nelly El-Sakkary  
PhD Parasitology



**Faculty Representative**  
**Anthony Sassi**

In June 2012, I joined the MCGSS executive council and took on the position of Representative to the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences for the 2012-2013 term. As the Faculty Representative for MCGSS, I was responsible for attending all faculty meetings held at MacDonal campus and for representing the interests of all graduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences here at Mac. I presented a report of all relevant information from these faculty meetings pertaining to graduate students at the monthly executive council meetings of MCGSS. I also coordinated the assignment of graduate student representatives to various committees where a graduate student presence was necessary.

Besides fulfilling my primary duties as the faculty representative for MCGSS, I was active in several of the events that were arranged by MCGSS for the graduate students at MacDonal campus. These events included such things as student barbeques, orientations, trips, and our monthly bagel breakfasts. Being a member of MCGSS who was involved in these events, I was able to meet and talk to new graduate students and answer questions about graduate student life here at Mac. In addition, I also revamped the MCGSS brochure that is handed out to new graduate students detailing the function of MCGSS and the various services provided by our graduate student society.

I have greatly enjoyed the experience of serving on the MCGSS executive council as well as representing the graduate students to the faculty here at Mac. I was given the opportunity to meet graduate students across a wide range of disciplines, interact with faculty members, and accurately represent the interests of the graduate students to the faculty on MacDonal campus. It was an honor working with the members of this year's council and representing my fellow graduate students to the MacDonal campus faculty.

Sincerely,

Anthony Sassi  
MSc Parasitology





**Treasurer**  
**James F. Chehayeb**

To be honest, serving as a treasurer on the MCGSS (2012-2013) council was a great experience. Different individuals, mostly executive members and graduate students took part in the council. We were always trying to enhance grad student life experience at Macdonald Campus by planning trips and events. As a treasurer, most of the duties related to this position were planning ahead for expenses, grants, revenues and expenditures for MCGSS events and activities. Most tasks consisted of a follow up on the budget and expenses related to events. A total of 8,946.33\$ was transferred from last year's council. This year, MCGSS decided to separate from MCSS and join PGSS. Because of the time it took to tackle all the changes, the fall 2012 and winter 2013 funds were recently deposited. The current balance in MCGSS account, as of April 4, 2013 is of 17,186.89\$.

We were able to plan many events and also plan to renovate the grad student lounge such as purchasing new furniture and having the walls painted and drawn by a talented student. A sum of 2650\$ was given to grad students for travel grants and conferences during last year.

The treasurer duties are far from dealing with only expenses related questions. You get to play a role in organizing and attending events such as BBQs (I got to be the chef) and horse back riding, which I highly recommend. In addition, this was a great experience to help fellow students, to meet people on campus and to share knowledge and ideas with members of the student council.

Best,

James F. Chehayeb  
MSc. Parasitology



**Environmental Advisor**  
**Pablo Godoy**

During the last year, MCGSS has been doing great support to environmental issues on campus. Also we have been engaged with several activities regarding eco-friendly sustainability promotion across the graduate students. This is reflected in aspects such as the famous “ Green drinks events”, where is shown a movie or documentary or is given a talk an outstanding speaker that raise some environmental topic, serving healthy veggie-oriented beverages, followed by a brief discussion and concluding remarks which represent the student thoughts about the film or talk

Likewise, in all MCGSS events occurring on-campus such as lunch, BBQs, or bagel breakfast, has been always boosted among the students to bring their own plates, cups and cutlery in order to keep a non-sense waste of dishes.

Another highlighted activity on campus related with environmental initiatives is the beautiful butterfly garden, which is run by students like and staff like Sara Rehling and Caroline Begg. This garden usually starts from mid-spring and lasts all over the summer. The garden has a great variety of plants and flowers whom strongly attract several species of butterflies producing a colorful landscape enjoyable to see when students look for some inspiring moment or meditation hiatus to continue with their duties.

In addition, groups like Gorilla compost, sustainability initiatives and the common garden available on summertime, represent a set of continuous actions in which participates not only grad students but also staff and some motivated undergrads.

This is just a bunch of environmental activities going on at Mac but promoting and creating new ideas that could be implanted on campus will be always welcome to take place. As Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Faculty, there are plenty of ideas that can be generated to encourage grads to be involved in.

Sincerely,

Pablo Godoy  
PhD Parasitology



**MCSS Representative**  
**Sumesh Kapoor**

It was my first experience to be part of any student run society at McGill University. I joined the MCGSS executive committee in June 2012, and represented the MCGSS at MCSS meetings. I kept both the councils informed of the developments going on in the respective committees regularly. As a responsible committee member, I worked in collaboration with all other colleagues to perform the tasks allocated to me efficiently. Being a part of MCGSS committee was a great learning experience as I was actively involved in organizing trips for graduate students which included trips to LaRonde and Calypso Water park. I was also involved in helping my colleagues with their events and helped in MCGSS barbecue and Bagel Breakfasts.

Overall, I enjoyed being a part of the committee, and I appreciate the contribution and congratulate all the members on successful completion of this term by the committee.

Sincerely,

Sumesh Kapoor  
MSc Bioresource engineering