

MAUT Fall General Meeting, November 17, 2017

Report of the President-Elect

Axel van den Berg

Academic Freedom Forum

On October 26th, MAUT organized a special Forum on Academic Freedom to discuss issues that have arisen from the affair surrounding Andrew Potter's resignation as Director of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC). Invited panelists were: Brendan Gillon, Linguistics, Yves Gingras, Professor of History at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Eve Haque, Professor of Multiculturalism at York University, Jacob Levy, Political Science, Renee Sieber, Geography, and Daniel Weinstock, Law. The panel discussion was preceded by a keynote address by Neil Guppy, Professor of Sociology and Senior Advisor on Academic Freedom to the Provosts, at the University of British Columbia. The speakers were asked to address the following question which the Potter affair has raised for us: "Is there a justification for imposing limits on what an academic administrator may say in public, limits that would not apply to a regular professor in exercising his/her academic freedom?" By design, the panelists presented a wide range of opinions about this question. The ensuing discussion was lively and illuminating. Our video of the event can be viewed here on YouTube: https://youtu.be/o19aw_eZI-Q. The panelists' well-articulated responses to our leading question and the clarifications that emerged from the subsequent discussions will form the basis for the formulation of MAUT's position on how we should proceed to strengthen and safeguard Academic Freedom at McGill. The executive committee and members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Freedom have begun to discuss possible proposals to be presented to Council in the near future.

Campaign to Combat Administrative Overload

MAUT's campaign to combat excessive administrative burdens on faculty members has now officially begun. MAUT members received a brief questionnaire soliciting suggestions from them of administrative routines, regulations, forms, etc. that seem excessively burdensome, redundant, inefficient, and which could be eliminated, simplified or made more efficient. At the end of the day after the questionnaire was distributed through the MAUTFORUM listserve we had received well over 100 answers from our members, many of them with detailed descriptions of excessive administrative routines and suggestions of possible solutions. An ad hoc working group on administrative overload consisting of Sarah Severson (Library), Renee Sieber (Geography), Nathan Hall (Education, VP-Communications) and Axel van den Berg (Sociology, President-Elect) will analyze the survey results and report on the major themes emerging from them. Once we have formed a clearer picture of the range and types of possibly unnecessary administrative burdens our members have to deal with we propose to form a joint standing committee on elimination of administrative overload, consisting of representatives from the administration, MAUT, MUNACA and MUNASA. This committee will serve as a repository of complaints about seemingly excessive red tape within the University and will have as its mandate *either* to find solutions that reduce the burden *or* provide a convincing explanation for why the burden cannot be reduced. Any members who would like to be considered as MAUT representative on such a committee should contact Axel van den Berg at axel.vandenberg@mcgill.ca.

Travel Management Program

What we hope will be the last wrinkles in the new Travel Management Program that provoked much protest from faculty members last summer were ironed out in September. The administration initially only exempted 2F and 2M research funds from the obligatory use of Vision Travel for travel bookings. After some further discussion, though, VP Finance Yves Beauchamp issued a new directive revising the policy once more. As of the middle of September 2017, “regardless of the source of funds, travel by McGill academic staff, including librarians, for academic research and teaching purposes is not subject to this requirement [to use the University contracted Travel Company, Vision]. This exemption extends to travel arrangements for academics, including students, visiting the University (other than those coming as job candidates)”, according to the VP’s memo. We once again want to thank Catherine Lu, MAUT’s representative on the Steering Committee of the Travel Management Program, for her hard work in getting the administration to implement the changes to the initial program that faculty members and MAUT have been asking for.

Bullet points:

- **Academic Freedom Forum**
- **Campaign to Combat Administrative Overload**
- **Travel Management Program**