Doctoral Student Association

Fall 2012 Report to Faculty Council, November 30, 2012

Report prepared by Quinn DuPont, DSA President, November 13, 2012

2011-2012 Review

Improved DSA communication
Website set up (ischooldsa.ca): populated with DSA executive member listing, DSA constitution, Tech Fund Bylaw, blog (focusing on informal transfer of information for PhD students), calendar, planning tools for DSA events.

DSA social events
Held usual pub nights, social events on campus. Little change from previous years.

DSA Meetings
Held once per semester. Little change from previous years.

DSA space arrangements
Transitioned from iSouth to Bissell. Students allocated space in Bissell 705, Bissell 6th floor, Bissell 3rd floor, Semaphore Lab, Coach House. See PhD “life improvement survey” below.

DSA Tech Fund purchase planning
Attempted to leverage Energy & Resource Management Fund. After initial assessment was determined that proposal would not achieve sufficient ROI in time period required for ERMF. Proposal retracted.

Extensive consulting with PhD students about Tech Fund purchases. Decided to focus on outfitting “common area” in Bissell 705—consulted with administration to have extra cubicles removed to create space. No Fund purchases made in 2011-2012 academic year (see below for review of 2012-2013 purchases).

2012-2013 Status and Plans

(Year to Date) DSA Tech Fund purchases
DSA Tech Fund purchases made, totaling ~$10k (of ~$45k budget). Focused on Bissell 705. Purchased two armchairs, couch, storage sideboard cabinet, iPad kiosk (iPad pending), LCD TV & wall mount, 4 Internet-enabled media streaming devices, lock devices for media devices, 3 pairs of noise-cancelling headphones, and various
cables and power cords. DSA would like to pay special appreciation to the hard work of Susan Brown and Glen Menzies for assisting in these purchases.

(Planned) DSA Tech Fund purchases

Completion of Bissell 705 space. Planned purchase of wall-coverings/art, plants, coffee tables, iPad. Soliciting further input.

(Year to Date) PhD Space & Social assessment

Quinn DuPont (not in DSA President capacity) conducted an informal, anonymous, online “PhD life improvement survey”. 18 respondents. DSA will evaluate responses and assess how DSA can make improvements.

Are you satisfied with your allocated PhD space? 4 no, 14 yes.

Do you use your allocated PhD space as much as anticipated? 6 no, 1 “kind-of”, 11 yes.

How could PhD space be improved (in general)? (14 respondents) General issues: room 323 needs improvement (cleaning, power outlets, coat hooks, secure storage), 6th floor small concerns (fluorescent lighting annoying), room 705 concerns (cubicles too close, fluorescent lighting annoying/requesting light switch, need keys to desk, better Internet access, too loud/too much chatting, waiting for “common space” furniture, desiring atmosphere for more collaboration/interaction)

Do you feel like there are adequate opportunities to socialize with other PhD students? 3 no, 2 sometimes, 13 yes.

Would you attend social events if there were more of them? 3 no, 3 maybe, 12 yes.

What could the DSA do to help establish a more collegial environment? General issues (7 respondents): desiring weekly PhD “hangouts”, desiring less PhD student collegiality, desiring drop-in occasional PhD events.

In a perfect world, how would your PhD experience be better? General issues (11 respondents): improved/faster administration interaction, more PhD-focused social/academic events, less email interaction (desiring alternatives), more PhD collaboration, more institutional guidance, more regular social interaction, PhD program is growing too fast (number of enrolled students).

Would you be interested in attending weekly meetups/coffee at the iSchool? 1 no, 4 maybe, 12 yes

Would you be interested in being a “buddy” for incoming PhD students? 7 no, 2 maybe, 9 yes

Other issues brought to the attention of the DSA:

Several students have expressed frustration and worry about lack of TAing opportunities. Additionally, there appears to be a general sense of confusion with respect to what opportunities exist, and what each student’s contract provides with respect to TA duties.
(Planned) Improved DSA communication

Encourage use of DSA website & greater calendar collaboration. Planning more visibility of PhD-focused calendar.

(Planned) Improved PhD social and academic interaction

Planning semi-weekly “tech and research” sharing days for PhD students (to be held in Bissell 705 common space). Waiting on availability of 705 common space to commence; planned events so far: open source alternatives for qualitative and quantitative research software, Zotero and bibliographic management tools, data security for academics (VPNs, backups, Dropbox, encryption options), privacy and security in the web browser, show and tell your favourite books & articles, show and tell your favourite Firefox/Chrome/Safari extensions.

Planning coffee/”water-cooler” meetups in 705, perhaps weekly.