SIMSA Meeting
Friday, March 22nd, 2019
12pm, SIM Common Room

**1. Roll Call**

* All but Colleen present

**2. Approval of Agenda: Yes**

**3. Financial Updates**

* Went to DAGS office before meeting
	+ Asking about the audit documents
	+ Thinking that it is there or it is lost
	+ They said they would help with it if it is not found
* DAGS needs VPs if people are interested
* Cass; will you still give money to IWB?
	+ Once the audit comes through, of course
* The position
	+ Challenging, but well-supported by the rest of SIMSA
		- Challenges mostly from DAGS
	+ Learned a lot
		- Doing the audit

**4. Non-Academic Updates**

* Planning end of year party for April 6th
	+ Red Stag
	+ Menu picked out
	+ Playlist?
		- Robyn? Mike?
	+ Buy tickets
* Sandra is going to email the staff specifically
* Ali; who is doing the google form for the awards?
	+ Cassandra is going to take it on
	+ People should let them know about different awards
* Ali; thank you to Coburg?
	+ Not done, going to do
* Kira has started chatting with JoAnn about orientation
	+ Going over schedule for the first week
* Convocation Brunch
	+ Going to meet with Laurel about that
	+ Ali will volunteer for the brunch
		- Kira will not be able to attend

**5. Academic Updates**

* The talks in the last two weeks have been successful
* Next thing to work on is orientation
	+ Looking forward to what Kira figures out
* Talking with Jen about transition documents and prepping for orientation
* Laura Lunch and Learn suggestion
	+ "Noodles at Noon"
		- Ramen event
* Lunch and Learns for next year - how out of the way are people willing to go?
	+ Off-campus, other libraries
	+ Weather considerations
	+ Cass; look at class schedules when booking them, may mean people will come out
		- Make sure you advertise

**6. IWB Updates**

* End of Cass's two year term
	+ New co-chairs elected
	+ New SIMSA rep hasn't been decided
* Will continue to have meetings over summer
	+ Reach out to students about potential topics for the conference

**7. Communication Updates**

* Ratification can be done as of April 1st

**8. International Students Update**

* Didn't end up doing the coffee thing
	+ May be better to do after everything is done or during the crunch
* Laura plans on making a transition document for the position
	+ Give to the next person who applies for the scholarship
* Amy; how many international students stayed?
	+ Not entirely sure, never given a list
		- They expected Laura to do most of the work when it came to keeping track of the students

**9. Digital Publications Updates**

* Running smoothly now
* Group photo at end of year party for the website
* Would like to do more updates for the website
	+ On top of the events promotion
	+ Would be nice to have more graphics
* Records keeping would be something Robyn wants to improve on
* Work on transition documents with Colleen

**10. Special Projects Updates**

* Hoodies are here and distributed
	+ Shipping the ones to alumni after work
* Talked about book sale but not much interest in donations
	+ Put aside to fall semester?
* When does the position end?
	+ Usually ends at end of term
* Ali; mugs for next year would be fun
	+ 50th anniversary item needed
	+ Cardigans?
* Would suggest not going through bookstore again
	+ Unless it has the Dal logo, then it has to go through the bookstore
	+ SIMSA logo is a little outdated
* Mention all this in transition documents

**10. Co-Chair Updates**

* Entering transition period
	+ So need transition documents
* Courtney needs to submit a report for school council in May
	+ Likely will send out email in April to ask for suggestions
* Ali would like to be an inactive member of SIMSA next year
	+ Help out and stuff
	+ Amy; meetings are open to students
		- Need to communicate this more
		- Ali come as an unofficial liaison
	+ Talk about next year
	+ Last year they filmed meetings
		- Bit of a pain
		- Was through Brightspace
			* They didn't like setting up a spot for associations

**11. Other Business**

* Candidates for Election
	+ Election goes march 22nd-29th
	+ Kelsi provided statement for Financial Chair (not present)
		- Handle money effectively and budget
		- Has experience in finance
	+ Katherine for Communications Chair
		- Wants to work on knowledge management within SIMSA
			* Especially with transition documents
	+ Cassandra and Nicole for Co-Chairs
		- Cass has experience working on committees and has enjoyed it
			* Made lots of changes to IWB to make it run more efficiently
			* Hoping to bring this to SIMSA
			* Make it a more collaborative environment
		- Nicole has a lot of experience with student committees as well
			* Continue improving students' experience
* Fall will be the elections for first year positions
* Questions/statements from students
	+ Mike; problems with IMS class this year
		- Collaborative document made by the students **(See Appendix)**
			* Going to send to SIMSA executives
		- Have talked to Sandra about it
			* Not a lot of action done
		- Going to talk more about it at the All Students Meeting next week
		- Summary
			* Concerns with professor
			* Frustrations with instructor, TA, instructions for assignments and grading
			* Felt attacked by trying to speak up about these things
				+ People in the class are very upset
			* Class time not used effectively
				+ Building up entire semester
			* Feel like the quality of the education has been done poorly
			* Listed potential solutions in the collaborative document
		- Courtney; many of the second years had similar experiences with Data Man last year
			* Very similar experience where we felt that we weren't being listened to
			* SIMSA needs to be more involved with these issues
		- Nicole; people are regretting their decision to choose this program due to this class
			* Especially with this being a mandatory class
		- People feel like students should be more involved with choosing candidates
			* Not informed about process
		- Should set up a meeting with Vivian about this topic
			* Courtney, Mike and others
		- Student Advocacy Association would be worth talking to

**12. Motion to End Meeting:** 1 pm

**Appendix**

Appendix A: Open Letter to SIMSA about Information Management Systems Class

Dear SIMSA,

Below is an open and collaborative letter written by the concerned students in INFO 5590

(Winter 2019). We have experienced a tumultuous, unprofessional and unjust semester being

taught by Mr. Conrad, and have a number of concerns and demands that we have outlined below that express our frustrations.

**Concerns specific to INFO 5590 (including instruction, grading, textbooks, etc.)**

* Having to use an out-of-date textbook at the beginning of a semester that already

acknowledged that the textbook was out-of-date, and supplying little-to-no supplementary readings for course syllabus.

* The textbook also seems to be more appropriate for a business audience (also acknowledged by Mr. Conrad), and applications to the information management/librarianship fields were inadequately provided. This was unhelpful for students interested in librarianship or for those who want to pursue alternative career paths.
* Inconsistent grading practices - the last assignment was divided so that Mr. Conrad marked half and the T.A. marked half which could lead to inconsistencies, the T.A. notified us that they were done their portion significantly before Mr. Conrad, which leads us to believe this was not a collaborative process. Mr. Conrad told the class that the assignment would be graded by him and the TA together.
* Assignment feedback did not explain the number breakdown and was entirely critical.
	+ Comments on our assignment submissions have not provided a clear path for improvement. As an example: in a group “entrepreneurship” project, several of us were told our ideas were not “novel” enough in our feedback; however, we each explained the scope of our proposed apps and how it fit a market niche. Telling us what was not novel and then explaining how novelty could be conveyed in the future would have constituted better, more useful feedback than simply saying novelty was not displayed.
	+ We have also been openly told in class that the T.A. was not sure how to give descriptive feedback on our second individual assignment, leading us to believe that a grading rubric was not appropriately defined ahead of time or that assignment requirements were not clear enough to allow her to formulate consistent feedback
	+ Assignments were not made available to students on Brightspace in a timely manner. Once the assignments were posted and students had begun working on them, we would receive several “updates” and corrections. Very frustrating.
		- A student emailed Mr. Conrad to ask when the final assignment would be released to which he replied it would be at the end of reading week, however it was not released until well into the next week and the deadline stayed consistent.
		- Grades were also not provided in a timely manner. Group assignment grades were given back one day before our next assignment was due.
* Classes were poorly planned and time inefficiently used- hour and a half lecture was basically reciting what the textbooks were already telling us and we felt as though there was little additional information or context, in addition to this clarifying questions were often disregarded.
	+ Mr. Conrad openly stated that he had no idea what the class topic was actually about for some coming weeks and seemed to seriously petition students from the class to lead the lecture on the topic instead of arranging for a professional guest lecturer or complete research on the topic.
* Labs were poorly planned for and did not take the allotted time, both the T.A. and Mr. Conrad often seemed to push to finish early so they could leave. Little to no instruction was given during lab portions.
	+ At the beginning of the semester labs were framed as “optional but recommended”. A more structured approach, with considerations made prior to the labs regarding the equipment needed and troubleshooting potential issues, would better facilitate learning and be a better use of time.
	+ Disorganized labs, no context given or connection made with the course material. Mr. Conrad informed us a few weeks ago that since the class “does not enjoy the labs”, he will spend less time on them. This misrepresents how students feel about the labs. We want to have labs, but not the way they are currently being delivered. Depriving us of our lab time and failing to take responsibility for their inefficiency and instead putting the blame on students, is disheartening and robs us of valuable opportunities to learn technical skills, an area which would greatly benefit the students in this program.
	+ On several occasions, Mr. Conrad was ill-prepared (i.e., did not send students login credentials needed to do the lab, programs not working, did not answer questions clearly when asked).
* Mr. Conrad often deflected teaching responsibility by stating students should just “research” to fill gaps in knowledge about business strategy and budgeting for building an application (as just two examples). Many students entered the class without any training or background in these areas. As the course is supposed to provide a foundation for students to be able to do these kinds of things in real world situations, refusing to give even a solid theoretical understanding during class time seems inappropriate. Mr. Conrad does not seem to know his audience or their skillset and did not adjust his instruction style when told by students the areas in which we feel we need more instruction.
* Throughout this semester, Mr. Conrad has repeatedly expressed to the class that he knows next-to-nothing about our program or field. He has suggested that libraries are a dying institution, leaving many of my fellow students interested in library work feeling discouraged and disrespected. Mr. Conrad has made disparaging remarks about the content of his course the bulk of which was created by Dr. Mike Smit. He has suggested that university credentials are of a waning value, a statement which was particularly poorly received, in light of the financial hardships that many students must endure in order to pursue higher education. Mr. Conrad does not seem to take any pride in empowering future librarians with information management skills, instead seemingly preferring to suggest that we should instead be pursuing IT opportunities.
* Rest assured, if SIM does not want our tuition dollars, there are other schools that do and many students have considered transferring.

**Concerns about this course’s impact on our degree (including doubts about degree validity,**

**concern for ALA accreditation, how the rest of courses in this program will go on, etc.)**

* Doubts concerning the proper placement in this program from students of various backgrounds and interest (i.e., we’re not all trying to be librarians, and still do not understand why this course was mandatory).
* The topics seemed disconnected from each other and also from libraries or other fields related to IM. Having a management course makes sense, but this tries to cover too much and I don’t think that this course is adequately preparing me for other management focused courses.
* IMS is a required course, and having to take it prevented me from pursuing other winter elective options that would have been more useful and relevant to my career path.

**Other concerns regarding MLIS at SIM that have been brought to light in this experience**

* Is students’ feedback actively being used in the hiring process? How was it weighted and impacted in the hiring process of a new faculty member? Please tell us direct examples and shed light on the hiring process so that we can understand the results thus far.
* Is this degree actually preparing us for the working world? Would I be getting a better quality education elsewhere? Many students have expressed they feel the need to take supplementary training courses to feel qualified, we are all paying lots of money to get a “quality” education, though feel as though our concerns are not being heard and have been referred to as “guinea pigs” by the instructor in terms of figuring out this course.
* Even though SIM is in the process of switching the degree from MLIS to MI, several of us came to this program to learn to be librarians, and we feel that we am not being adequately prepared for that career path.
* It was also stated that this program will equip students for careers in archives and museums, however little to no acknowledgement of these fields are given in our core courses and little consideration is given in electives. I was told upon application that there are courses and content related to this field available as electives, however archives are rarely mentioned in out core courses and I have received no information whatsoever on museums. I feel as though truths were stretched during my application process to make the program seem appealing to a diverse audience when in reality the school is ill-equipped to meet the diverse interests and needs of their students.
* Degree concentrations are very limited within the MLIS. (This is clear from the types of courses offered but can also be plainly seen on the SIM website: https://www.dal.ca/faculty/management/school-of-information-management/current-students-site/concentrations.html). Are there plans to make true degree concentrations in the future? As it stands, the program does not seem to be especially robust in offerings for either library or non-library students. I’m concerned that the number of required courses throughout all four terms prevents students from customising their degrees, inasmuch as that is possible.

**Collective demands for the INFO 5590 - Winter 2019 experience**

* Since the grading of the course has been flawed from the beginning, course marks should be weighted differently in this course than the others that students are registered in. For students who have performed poorly consistently throughout the semester, and are in jeopardy of not receiving full marks, they should be allowed to take a “pass/fail” mark in completing the course so that their overall GPA is not dragged down by this course. If students perform well and want to keep their letter grades, they should be allowed to keep them. Any student who has completed the coursework in this course should be allowed to receive a passing mark, as they have demonstrated their understanding of the course material to the best of their abilities despite the circumstances.
* A written explanation as to why the hiring committee chose to hire Mr. Conrad to a full-time position despite the protests of multiple students. It has negatively impacted the attitudes, confidence, and well-being of students in this course towards their overall pursuit of a MLIS degree because of the lack of care, finesse, and effort put forth by the instructor this semester. How are we expected to complete this degree when Mr. Conrad has demonstrated obvious and blatant disregard for students is teaching courses within the department? What does that say about the overall reputation of the School of Information Management?
	+ Evidence as to how student input was used in the hiring process of this individual. Countless students spoke up on the issue of hiring this individual and many were told that their “concerns were heard.” How were they heard? What was done to follow through with these concerns?

We would like action to take place based on our demands, or thorough justification as to why the decisions outlined above have been taken.

Signed,

Concerned MLIS students of INFO 5590 (Winter 2019)