

Service Overview

- Service Mandate/Mission
 - The Union for Gender Empowerment is a trans-positive feminist organization centering the following anti-oppressive values: anti-racism, anti-colonialism, anti-ableism, anti-capitalism, harm reduction, and solidarity. We provide resources, education, and a space for anti-oppressive feminist advocacy. Consistent with the historical mandate of the UGE, our services are provided regardless of gender or student status. For over fifty years, we have operated by consensus of our members, striving to equally empower each member.
 - Our operations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - A co-op providing alternative menstrual products, safer sex supplies, and gender empowerment items
 - Referrals for health, legal, and immigration issues to partners in community organizations
 - A lending library of feminist books, periodicals and zines
 - A drop-in office, lounge, and breastfeeding-friendly space with access to a refrigerator
 - Popular education workshops and action groups
 - Cooperation and coalition building with other organizations that share our values
- Contact Info
 - Email: collective@theuge.org

Activities & Operations

- Key Activities this Semester
 - **Frosh:**
 - Rad Frosh: UGE workshop (Aug 30) ≈ 60 attendees - education on gender affirming products and art activity (feminist blackout poetry)
 - Frosh Inclusivity Committees: Meeting with UGE (Aug 5) - consultation on improving accessibility and inclusion issues at Frosh
 - Arts Frosh: Secured distribution of 4000 UGE flyers at Arts Frosh
 - **Early year** (Members table at events to promote the UGE's resources, mission, location, and volunteering opportunities to the campus community):
 - Discover McGill (Aug 25)
 - Activities Night (Sept 3 & 4)
 - Queer Orientation (Sept 11)

- **Staffer training:** Members train new volunteer staffers (prospective staffers sign up at early-year tabling events) in : knowledge of co-op products, managing online co-op requests, using library lending software, implementing active listening and conflict resolution techniques.
 - Sept 18 (13 new volunteers)
 - Sept 19 (15 new volunteers)
- **Internal cooperation:**
 - **Academic Research at McGill:** School of Information graduate research (supervisor: Prof. Rebekah Wilson) currently ongoing on the UGE library + interviews with library users.
 - **SSCOW and EDI committees:** Main issues raised by UGE this semester at committees:
 - Abolishing arbitrary abortion term limit in McGill International Student Health Plan (ongoing, unresolved)
 - Upcoming changes to McGill Sexual Violence Policy (latest mtg: Sept. 24, discussions continue over email)
 - **GSAC:** Biweekly meetings with GSAC voting partners + disbursement of QUIPS
- **External cooperation:**
 - **Quebec Federation for Family Planning (FQPN)**
The *Fédération du Québec pour le Planning des Naissances* is the largest reproductive rights coalition in Quebec. The UGE is a voting member of the Federation.
 - GA (June 9) - The UGE votes to elect the BoD of the FQPN.
 - Closed strategy meeting for defense of abortion rights (Oct 27) - Facing threats to abortion rights in Quebec Bill 1.
 - Contraception subcommittee (8 oct, 27 nov) - The UGE is advisory on student and gender minority issues in contraceptive coverage.
 - **AIDS Community Care Montreal (ACCM)**
 - Collaboration with UGE on reprinting out-of-print safer sex guides addressed to transgender young adults, to distribute to user base
 - **Lowkiki (inter-campus gender empowerment and student wellness event)**
 - Tabling event + Gender-affirming care Q&A (Sept 27 at UQAM)
- **Regular Activities:**
 - **Reading circle:** Every other Wednesday night, 6-9pm in office, group meeting to read and discuss feminist essays, short stories and novel extracts.
 - **Education workshops:** Open to the public, scheduled 1x semester, but especially addressed to new volunteers of the UGE : "Colonial History of

McGill University 1821-present”, “Gender and Feminism 101” (Sept 18 & 19); “How Not to be a D*ck to Refugees”, “Organizing by Consensus” (Jan date TBD)

- Key Operations this semester

- **Internal Operations:**

- Weekly collective meeting every Monday 6-7:30pm (open to all members). Members divide tasks, report on email and social media correspondence, fulfill financial and activity reports, plan activities, report back from external meetings, agree on purchases, supervise co-op request fulfillment by staffers, etc.
 - Bi-weekly co-working session (open to all members) every other Wednesday from the reading circle, 6-8pm, to work together on tasks distributed at the collective meeting

- **Supplies Operations:**

- Created a tester program to identify cheaper and more size-inclusive chest binder options, recruiting 12 volunteer student testers in early September. Comparing comfort and price/quality point of two different chest binder brands.
 - Ordered 107 new chest binders for transmasculine students (restocking high-traffic items + new size-inclusive options according to tester responses) on Sept. 29 and Oct. 21st
 - Ordered 53 reusable menstrual underwear (restocking high-traffic items) on Nov. 15
 - Fulfilled requests for custom consultations (in office or by telephone) from students on special need co-op products
 - Throughout semester:
 - 3 consultations (1 in-office measurement & fitting assistance) for students purchasing their first bra
 - 1 consultation for education on women's-specific safer sex barriers: oral sex barrier dams and internal condoms
 - 5 consultations for students seeking to try menstrual cups from our co-op and/or resolving menstrual cup fit issues
 - 1 consultation for education on hypoallergenic safer sex supplies: latex-free condoms, latex-free gloves, and hypoallergenic lubricant options
 - Ordered 150 safer sex, STI prevention, and harm reduction guides addressed to marginalized youth from CATIE Distribution

- **Usage/Participation statistics**

- Office open every weekday at approximately 9-5 schedule, by trained volunteer staffers
- Staffer training: 28 new volunteers trained this semester
- Fulfilled co-op requests since beginning of semester:
 - 17 requests through our online form
 - 20 requests via direct email or social media DM
 - 35 walk-in requests in our office
 - 15 requests fulfilled at tabling events (Discover McGill, Rad Frosh, Queer Orientation, Activities Night)
- Fulfilled referral requests since beginning of semester
 - 1 request for women's shelter/domestic violence resources (in person)
 - 2 requests for immigration support resources (DM)
 - 1 request for food bank resources (via email)
 - 3 requests for trans-friendly commissioner of oaths services (email/DM)
 - 1 request for trans-friendly hair removal technician services (DM)
- Attendance at Reading Circle since beginning of semester: high of 15, low of 3, average 6 regular attendees.

- Highlights & Success
 - Well-attended staffer training - success of efforts to improve visibility at Frosh and Early-Year events
 - Implemented bi-weekly co-working sessions in person, saw increase in collaboration and efficiency between collective members and volunteer staffers
 - Increased walk-in requests compared to previous Fall semester thanks to open office
 - Staffer schedule is stable thanks to increased membership (20 staffers have regular office hours, 15 more available to fill in)
 - Consistent attendance at feminist reading circle + engagement of users from the campus at large (non-members of the UGE).
- Challenges/Barriers Faced
 - Delays in payment processing for our large orders
 - Our typical supplies orders (eg. menstrual underwear) are beyond the SSMU credit card maximum and must be fulfilled via Purchase Order with SSMU Accounting
 - Accounting delays can be excessively long (regularly 2-3 months, up to 9 months), affecting our relationship with suppliers and our ability to receive discounted prices
 - New structure for Services:
 - New Internal Regulations created over the summer, without notice to Services about changes affecting them:
 - New IRs reduced Services representation at Services Committee

- New IRs established a new process for Services' ballot measures without direct contact with Legislative Council, now at the discretion of the Services Coordinator.
- Despite heightened responsibilities, Services Coordinator post was unfilled until mid-November.
 - As a result, a UGE fee increase referendum question, postponed from last semester after an internal error at the SSMU, once again could not be presented at the Fall referendum.
 - Without a fee increase, the UGE opt-outable fee has remained at pre-pandemic level, despite inflation in the cost of co-op items, particularly menstrual supplies.
As a result:
 - The UGE operates with limited paid hours to continue to afford supplies, limiting the scope of our operations and increasing skill loss from student employee turnover
 - The UGE operates with a strongly reduced events budget compared to pre-pandemic (when the UGE hosted speaker series, workshop collaborations, an annual dance night, etc.) The lack of events limits our visibility and our ability to network on campus.

Finances

- Budget allocations
 - See 2025-2026 UGE Budget:  SSMU - UGE 2025-2026 Budget.xlsx
- Previous year surplus
 - From previous academic year: 9K\$
 - Reasons:
 - Accounting delay on processing of large supplies order meant the payment was not processed in 2024-2025, but instead fell into the current fiscal year
 - The collective made a consensus decision in 2024-2025 to limit the amount of hours worked that would be paid to employees in the collective, in order to recover a 1K\$ deficit from the previous fiscal year and save money in the budget for supplies.

Future Plans/Projects

- Upcoming projects this semester
 - Co-op room:
 - Reorganize co-op room to better organize inventory

- Create more space and a better mirror view for users in the change room area
- **Pilot project with McGill Rare Books and Special Collections**
The UGE is applying to the Community Digitization Project Grant (supervisor: Gregory Houston, McGill Libraries Digitization Specialist) to preserve rare books in the UGE library collection. Projected start date: February 2026.
- **Long-term plans**

Priorities outlined in the UGE Three-Year Plan:

1. Visibility
 - a. Increase awareness of our activities and events
 - b. Affirm our voice on campus
 - c. Be a go-to group when discussing feminist & trans issues on campus
2. Accessibility
 - a. Increase supply in our co-op
 - b. Increase hours we are open
 - c. Increase participation in events in and outside of the university
3. Advocacy
 - a. Tighten ties to feminist research in and around McGill
 - b. Be a louder feminist voice at the SSMU
4. Organizational sustainability
 - a. Increase core membership
 - b. Increased budget