



Plenary

*Minutes*

September 25, 2020

**Attendance**

**Present:** Silvia Rivera Alfaro, Katherine Anderson, Samantha Barthelemy, Joseph Boninger, Edward Charnley, Sarah Chu, Gonzalo Costa, David Dansu, Jennifer de Rutte, Prathmesh Deshmukh, Sharanya Dutta, Kyle Fraser, Sonja Gandert, Michael Greer, Edward Grimsley, Alexis Hardy, Sierra Holt, Roderick Hurley, Bertrand Ithurburn, Efthimia Johanides, Luke Kayga, Adam Kocurek, Raj Korpan, Deborah Leter, Chuxin Liu, Marianne Madore, Fedor Marchenko, Christian Martinez, Carolyn McDonough, Mary Jean McNamara, Lisa Millsaps-M-Graham, David Monda, Pedro Cabello del Moral, Sara Ortiz, Christina Pardo Porto, B. Natacha L. N. E. Pawa, Carmin Quijano-Seda, Irina Fanarraga Robles (by proxy), Sami Sauma, Alaa Sharif, Dohyun Shin, Pamela Stenberg, Meltem Topaloglu, Otilio Torres, David Udell

**Absent:** Dhanya Babu, Yuliya Barycheuskaya, Giacomo Bianchino, Saroj Chand, Daniela Echeverria, Felix Grezes, Jane Guskin, Cecilia Salvi, Milo Ward

Meeting called to order at 5:12 PM

**I. Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve agenda with the emendation: Sara Ortiz (Int'l Migration Studies)

Seconded: Lisa Millsaps M Graham (Urban Education)

Vote: Passes unanimously

**II. Approval of Minutes of the past DGSC May and June 2020 Meeting**

Motion to approve the minutes: Adam Kocurek (History)

Seconded: Raj Korpan (Computer Science)

Vote: Passes unanimously

**III. Executive Committee Reports**

**A. Co-Chair for Student Affairs (Sharanya Dutta)**

- Chartered Organization Updates: The following chartered organizations are in danger of being de-chartered. I've sent them all emails; waiting for their response. Some of these orgs would like a chance to reactivate and they will let me know their reactivation plan by Oct 18. If you know of anyone who may be interested in taking any of these orgs over, please ask them to email me at [ccsa@cunydgsc.org](mailto:ccsa@cunydgsc.org). The constitution and most of the structure already exists, we just need to breathe new life into them. There is also money available for these organizations for events etc.:
  - [Africana Studies Group \(ASG\)](#) - will be dechartered
  - [CUNY STEM Outreach](#) - will be dechartered
  - [Jewish Connection Group](#) - they really want someone to take over!
  - [Latino and Latin-American Students Association \(AELLA\)](#)
  - [CUNY Women in STEM](#)
  - [Food Studies Collective](#)
  - [Global Studies Collective](#)

- A new chartered org has been proposed: **Boosting Research Area Interactions in Neuroscience Engagement Hour (BrainE Hour)**. We will distribute the materials over email. Please look over the materials and we will vote on it during the next plenary meeting.
- Sign the chartered org rosters at <http://cunydisc.org/chartered-organizations/>. For Fall 2020 active Chartered Org status, they require 20 signatures and Fall 2019+Spring 2020 reports submitted BY DECEMBER 20.
- Hiring Committee Updates: The Adjunct Project hiring committee has been finalized, and the call for positions put up online. Deadline is Oct 15th. Please apply! Here is the link: <https://cunyadjunctproject.org/2020/09/15/job-opening-co-organizer-for-advocacy-and-education-due-oct-15/>
- Election Updates: The Philosophy Program is getting a second Program Rep. Elections are underway. They have until October 1 to vote. Any Philosophy students here, please encourage your fellow students to vote?

## **B. Co-Chair for Communications (Rod Hurley)**

### Activities/Recent Meetings:

- 8/7 - Met with Martin Ruck, Senior Advisor to the President for Diversity and Inclusion - They are asking for DGSC input in evaluating GC policies and creating safe spaces. They want to encourage all programs to put together a DEI committee in the Fall semester with the Urban Education program as a model, and would want to compensate students for their work on these committees.
- 8/20 - GC Reopening Committee Meeting: I raised several student concerns regarding reopening and distance learning including stipend/fellowship payments, direct deposits for non-resident students, extensions for deadlines to deposit dissertations, access to library materials, access to student services and administrative offices, Graduate Assistant and guidance on the format for synchronous and asynchronous classes at the GC.
- 8/24 - Followed up with emails to Deputy Interim Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, Ken Tirino about the administrative and financial issues, and to Provost Julia Wrigley regarding the grad assistantships and class format
- 8/29 - Co-chairs/OSA Meeting - We asked for updates on several issues. They said they would meet with the various offices and get back to us. They are looking at ways to have phone service in student service offices and chat service where needed. Want to work with us on having some Zoom calls to reach campus-based students.
  - We have a new interim director of childcare center - which is still operating remotely, doing zoom sessions for now.
  - WIFI at GC residences is problematic and has become a big concern, which is being addressed. Also several students have moved out, so there is space available if anyone is looking for accommodation.
- 9/17 - GC Reopening Committee met again and I reiterated student concerns. While safety is everyone's priority, several faculty heads also supported our demand for some access to physical services and spaces for some students who need them. Coming out of that meeting, the reopening plan is to be revised with these considerations.
- 9/24 - Co-chairs/OSA Meeting - Financial Aid Director Phylis Shutz also attended the meeting. NRA fellowships will now be sent by direct deposit - for students who are already on GC payroll. Any Payments for leadership position must be done through the bursars and will, as a result count toward financial aid. We pushed back on this again, and asked Matt to pursue the matter with CUNY central.

- There is a plan in place to reinstate a Nurse Practitioner at the GC, but the details of how that will be done
- 9/25 - DGSC Leadership meeting with IT Services
- Beware of scams and phishing emails! These attacks are on the increase and several students have lost money to scammers.
- CUNY has acquired site license for Zoom for all students, as well as a limited number of Adobe Licenses. These will be available soon and will be assigned on a first-come basis.
- Live chat licenses - Financial Aid, HR, Wellness Center chats available mon - fri 9:00 to 5:00. They also purchased a chat bot for after hours and weekends - working on programming it.
- Within the next few weeks, STF will have a dedicated webpage FAQs, Guidance, data, etc.

Updates:

- We will be hiring a new Social Media Correspondent with the next week.
- DGSC Website Upgrade - We finished reviewing the content types on Works and will move forward with the next phase which is actually building the new site on a staging platform where we can all go and test the features. Room reservations and Locker requests on works since these services are unavailable. Also, we are experiencing a few glitches with the Works site at the moment that we hope to get fixed soon.
- We launched our new logo recently and the response has been really good.
- Open House/Town Hall was a success! Several new students attended, shared concerns, and got answers to questions they had.

Announcements:

- If you have any input or questions pertaining to any of the updates or anything you would like to have raised at an upcoming meeting, please email and let me know.
- Let me know if you have any ideas for how we should honor the 50th anniversary this semester

*Discussion*

Carmin Quijano-Seda (LAILAC): Can you tell us more about what was discussed at the Reopening Committee?

Roderick Hurley (Psychology): One thing is that the layout of the GC building makes planning for social distancing very difficult. Also, plans have to fall in line with CUNY decisions, which have to fall in line with NY State policies and decisions.

**C. Co-Chair for Business (Adam Kocurek)**

- Budget updates: I received the new student enrollment numbers just a few hours ago; once I have the opportunity to go through them, I can calculate the total DGSC income based off of the SAF contribution and make the necessary changes to the budget. I do not have anything concrete yet regarding numbers for individual programs, though it looks like enrollment totals are comparatively healthy to last year; the dire situation we were foreseeing has not come to pass, at least not yet. Enrollment numbers for Fall 2019 were 3533 students, and they look to be about 3600 students for Fall 2020. Of course, the Board of Trustees could authorize another refund of the SAF, which would lower our budget. Thankfully, we have a carryover of approximately \$55K from last semester, which will help us float along if these cuts are made to the budget.

- Note: Room reservations, use of the lounge, and locker requests have all been suspended until further notice; the GC reopening plan does not have us returning to the physical space until at least Fall 2021, so we will not be able to take advantage of these features for the foreseeable future. .
- The Adjunct Project: In the process of hiring a new co-coordinator, working towards building a just contract and adjunct job security, continuing to organize towards Full and Fair Funding, and building cross-CUNY campus organizing with adjuncts. They are eager, in the midst of the adjunct firing crisis and the Covid crisis, to work on behalf of CUNY adjunct workers, and to increase the amount of interaction they have with DGSC representatives.
- OPENCuny: I am scheduling a meeting with members of OPENCuny soon to assist them with their projects and to provide you with an update of their work.
- The Advocate: last academic year they were able to improve the number of contributors and readers of The Advocate, as well as its presence online. They have also successfully moved forward with most of their goals last year, and have also welcomed a new member to their team: Queenie Sukhadia, who becomes our new assistant editor after Emily Holloway's departure. They plan to continue to work on building their online presence, are searching for printing alternatives in our new virtual context and also searching for a new printer for when we do return to the Graduate Center, are continuing their Database Legacy project which revolves around creating a database for The Advocate that will facilitate the transition between teams working on the newspaper, and will be temporarily postponing physical copies of The Advocate. They will be striving to publish 6 issues for the academic year, and will be continuing their Spotlight project, giving voice to the achievements of CUNY students/faculty/staff, and their "Archiving the Pandemic" project, promoting stories about the pandemic impacting our community.
- Legal consultations: We have two lawyers on retainer who provide legal consultations for GC students that the DGSC will compensate. Should you be facing any legal concerns and feel like you need to contact a lawyer, please reach out to me at [ccb@cunydgsc.org](mailto:ccb@cunydgsc.org)
- Website updates: We are in the process of developing a new Drupal website to replace the old DSC Works website and the Wordpress website. The new website should hopefully be up and running in a matter of months. The current works website seems to be running slowly; I am in communication with our web hosting team to rectify the situation.

#### **D. USS Delegate (Sara Ortiz)**

- USS Virtual Retreat - Meet & Greet & Legislative Advocacy Training - Saturday, September 19th: (Sara Ortiz, USS Delegate & Efthimia Johanides, USS Alternate were in attendance) There was a lot of great energy and camaraderie coming out of this online retreat. Incoming USS Delegates and Alternates got to meet one another and share mutual student concerns and networking opportunities. Many opportunities for student activism rallying behind concerns around access to quality, affordable higher education for working-class students of color, concerns about tuition hikes and budgetary cuts, students recapped rallying behind fighting against cuts to CUNY ASAP Program and Student engagement in legislative advocacy
  - Tim Hunter, Outgoing Chair of USS, presented a brief history of USS, recent accomplishments and areas of growth

- Currently USS is working on updating databases with incoming co-chairs, delegates and alternates, marketing and (re-)branding.
- Currently onboarding a new Legislative Director, as Smitha Varghese is no longer the Legislative Director of USS
- 1st USS Plenary of the Fall 2020 Semester - This Sunday, September 27th @ 12 noon. - I will have updates from this Plenary Session at our next DGSC meeting so stay tuned for USS updates!
- Last night (9/24/20) I enjoyed a collegial conversation with Juvanie Piquant, current Vice-Chair of Legislative Affairs about shared goals, concerns and interests of GC students and the larger CUNY-wide student body. Primary concerns were support with digital access, student fees and tuition hikes, cuts in funding to student programs, and support for students who are parents juggling both their own distance education and that of their children. Call for any parent activists who are organizing around the reopening of child care centers? There seems to be an interest in organizing around both child care and K-12 (esp. public education) around safe reopening. Contact me if you are affected and would like to get involved ([uss@cunydgsc.org](mailto:uss@cunydgsc.org)).

*Discussion:*

SO (Int'l Migration Studies): I'm also working with students to work on a more involved student leadership. Sending students to Albany. Pushing against a tuition hike, reinstatement of the CUNY ASAP program. I'm looking forward to coordinating between other campuses and the GC.

RK (Computer Science): How has the USS been advocating for students with CUNY central on issues of reopening and the pandemic?

SO (Int'l Migration Studies): They just had a hearing, discussing a safe reopening. Most of the discussion was about access. Wifi etc.

**E. UFS Liaison (Natacha Pawa)**

- Had a transition meeting with me Teresa Ober, former UFS for 2017-2018 on Sunday, September 13. This was very helpful in terms of learning more about what this role requires.
- Attended the UFS faculty Senate Plenary meeting on Tuesday, September 22st.

**IV. Steering Officer Reports**

**A. Officer for Funding (Christian Martinez)**

- Deadlines and Grants Committee meetings are as follows:
  - September 18, 2020 (Grants Committee Meeting on 9/30 from 4:30pm-6:30pm)
  - October 16, 2020 (Grants Committee Meeting on 10/28 from 4:30pm-6:30pm)
  - November 20, 2020 (Grants Committee Meeting on 12/02 from 4:30pm-6:30pm)
- We are making sure that all events are following NYC and NYS COVID-19 rules and regulations
- Brainstorming ideas to help encourage students and organizations to submit grant applications

*Discussion:*

AK (History): A lot of internal GC grants exist. ERI is one of them, you apply to them usually before you submit your proposal. The DSRG also exists, and a Provost's Pre-Dissertation Award. You can contact Edith Gonzales of Office of Research & Sponsored Programs. Information on the provost's website as well.

**B. Officer for Governance & Membership (Katie Anderson)**

- PLEASE submit proxy request forms (with a proxy in mind, ask a friend)
- The move to increase program representation within the DGSC seems promising. Many have stepped up and seem eager to join
- today we will vote to elect 4 new program representatives across three programs (Biography and Memoirs, Theater and Performance, and Economics (2))
- Petitions to open seats in two additional programs (Earth and Environmental Sciences and Women and Gender Studies) have been completed and will be voted on at the October Steering and Plenary meetings.
- Music PhD (2) and DMA (1) seats are in progress of being opened.
- initiative to install lines of self-renewing representation within programs is still on my mind - thinking of ways to incentivise this.

**C. Officer for Health & Wellness (Interim) (Silvia Rivera Alfaro)**

- The Committee for Health & Wellness has met for the first time on August 24th and we are already working together. The Committee members are: Deborah Leter (Anthropology), Pedro Cabello del Moral (LAILAC), Pamela Stenberg (Digital Humanities) and myself, Silvia Rivera Alfaro (interim Officer for Health & Wellness, LAILAC). Our main goal will be improving the website to provide students with information about our health insurance; this objective responds to the transition memo of the previous Officer, Ming Chen, who added that the website is out of date.
- Current activities:
  - Participating in the search committee for the new NYSHIP Manager: I attended the searching committee training on August 18th, which was organized by Elise Perram, Director of Student Affairs. We are waiting for the next meeting of the committee.
  - Communicating with the Wellness Center to learn more about their online services for the students during Covid.

**D. Officer for Outreach (Cristina Pardo Porto)**

- The Outreach Committee has met, and we are already working together. The Committee is formed by: Oriana Mejías (LAILAC), Katherine Rivera Gómez (Biology) and myself, Cristina Pardo Porto (Outreach Officer. LAILAC)

**International Students:**

- Fellowship bulk checks should have arrived by now. They are being sent in the same payroll schedule as stipends.
- Reminders:
  - Update and upload forms into Sprintax TDS site by clicking on Document Exchange. Send a confirmation that you have uploaded your documents to [gcfica@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gcfica@gc.cuny.edu).
  - Click REQUEST on CUNYFIRST under FICA Tax Exemption (Personal information - FICA - Request). If this is not done, you may lose an important amount of money from your checks. NOTE: It may appear as on hold to approval / Pending or even Rejected. If this is not solved soon, contact asap [gcfica@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gcfica@gc.cuny.edu)
- To share, respond, subscribe: (I will be sending follow up emails with links)

- International Students Listserv (remember to confirm email):  
[https://gc.listserv.cuny.edu/Scripts/wa-gc.exe?SUBED1=DSC\\_INTERNATIONAL&A=1](https://gc.listserv.cuny.edu/Scripts/wa-gc.exe?SUBED1=DSC_INTERNATIONAL&A=1)
- New Twitter account: @outreachdgc
- International Student Culture Survey  
[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfl2rHRRkipDaUgQ4NiaqbVAKk24I\\_8k7So3P5xBq6qvyc\\_OA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfl2rHRRkipDaUgQ4NiaqbVAKk24I_8k7So3P5xBq6qvyc_OA/viewform)
- Survey for 1st year International Students that are currently abroad:  
<https://forms.gle/6bQTaZNWEZChi4Lw6>
- Currently working on situation of 1st year International Students
  - Finding out how many 1st year IS are currently abroad and not being paid by the school. My goal with this research is to have a better understanding of the situation of these students in order to advocate for them.
  - If you have information about your department (how many students are currently abroad and not being paid), please email me to outreach@cunydisc.org with their contacts.
- News:
  - DHS Proposes to Change Admission Period Structure for F, J and I Nonimmigrants - No official notice or news from OIS yet.  
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHS/bulletins/2a25ba1#.X2zRqFtRW8k.twitter>

*Discussion:*

SD (English): International students are not responsible for paying FICA taxes. Email [gcfica@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:gcfica@gc.cuny.edu) to address any problems you may have surrounding FICA taxes.

**E. Officer for Student Life & Services (Edward Charnley)**

- Reminders:
  - Games Night and Trivia Night are now running on alternating weeks.  
The next games night will be Wednesday 30th 2020, 18:30. Turnout was small last time but it was really fun - please consider coming this Wednesday.
- Currently working on:
  - I am trying to get a broader sense of problems with the way in which student services are currently functioning.
    - For example, the music department is struggling to provide all of its students with practice space and instruments.
  - If you have information about you or your department is facing specific problems with vital services, please email me via services@cunydisc.org with the details
  - In conjunction with this, we are looking into ways in which we can improve the library services currently available.
  - Library services are doing an impressive job at adapting to the new problems we are facing. Certainly the best results have emerged from increased dialogue between students and librarians. I encourage everyone to arrange to schedule a one on one research consultation with a librarian.
    - We all respect that the library has been doing fantastic work in difficult conditions. But as in any situation like this, it is easy for people with very specific needs to fall between the cracks. We

are going to encourage the library to develop a more active dialogue with students regarding their needs.

- If you are facing any difficulties in accessing material please let me know!  
Understanding the specific nature of various problems, and the way in which they differ across departments, will be very important moving forward.
- Please contact me if you would like to join a new committee for student life and services.

#### **F. Officer for Technology & Library (Carolyn McDonough)**

- Fall 2020 IT/DGSC Leadership Meeting on Friday, September 25th from 11am to 12:30pm which various DGSC Officers are attending earlier in the day of the DGSC plenary.
- I met with Emily Drabinski on Sept. 8 and Sept. 21 and was informed thus: As a state budget funded institution, CUNY is beholden to the State budget which is usually done in August, but is delayed due to Covid as the State is waiting on Federal funds. The GC has been operating on Emergency Budget Allotments. Given this, the good news within the “down to the bone” austerity is that the library collections are a priority.
- On Sept. 22, Roxanne Shirazi sent this email to the UFS-FGL listserv: “In August, the Committee on Libraries and IT convened an Ad Hoc Collections Advisory Group composed of library faculty to report on the status of library collections and difficulties in procurement due to the Covid-19 crisis.” and she attached the brief that was endorsed by the LIT committee and shared with the Budget Advisory Committee.

#### *Discussion:*

SO (Int'l Migration Studies): we've had some questions in my program about the possibility of opening the library. Will printing be made available? Students are experiencing screen fatigue.

Carolyn McDonough (Digital Humanities): I am heavily advocating for a printing station and I did today. Our allotment isn't being transferred over in any way.

EC (History): About a week or so ago, I met with Steven Klein for one on one research consultation and he was fantastic.

CmD (Digital Humanities): that is very helpful! I encourage everyone to go to the librarians for help.

RK (Computer science): We are all paying a student tech fee. The fee budget was finalized - where is it going?

CmD (Digital Humanities): They are reevaluating what happened with the disruption in the year. There are few hard and fast answers regarding that. I have had multiple conversations about this with Emily and M. Greer.

David Monda (Political Science): Is there a policy relating to returning books students may currently have? If we're online in the spring, what happens to the books?

CmD (Digital Humanities): All fines are in amnesty. I am not 100% clear on the specifics of returning physical materials at this moment. The GC library has a 24/7 live chat and the online library is a great resource.

#### **V. Election of Steering Officer (Voting)**

AK(History): Nominates Silvia Rivera Alfaro for the position.

EC(History): Secons the nomination.

SRA: accepts the nomination.

Vote: SRA elected unanimously.



## **VI. Ratification of Elected Officer (Voting)**

SRA: Reads the Oath of Office.

Ratified by unanimous consent.

## **VII. Reconstitution of Ad-hoc Committees (Voting)**

RH (Psychology): Participatory budgeting proposals usually need access to the building, but we could do that differently. Accessibility issues are very important right now, so this is essential. The person who moves to reconstitute the committee serves as the interim chair of the committee.

AK (History): Moves to reconstitute the participatory budgeting committee

CM (Cognitive Neuroscience): Seconds

SRA (LAILAC): moves to reconstitute the accessibility committee

EC (History): seconds the move to reconstitute the accessibility committee.

Vote to approve Participatory Budgeting and Accessibility committees.

Passes unanimously.

## **VIII. Approval of New Program Representatives (Voting)**

1. Biography and Memoir - Sierra Holt
2. Theatre and Performance - Dohyun Gracia Shin
3. Economics - Chuxin Liu
4. Economics - Meltem Topaloglu

KA: Moves to approve these program reps.

AK(History): Seconds the motion,

Vote passes unanimously

## **IX. Presentation of 2020-2021 DGSC Budget**

- AK (History) presents the proposed budget.

*Discussion:*

Alaa Sharif (Linguistics): What happens to program funding that rolled over from the spring - will that still be part of the budget for the fall of this academic year?

AK(History): It will still be a part of our academic budget. That money has been distributed in the budget lines already.

RH (Psychology): Program allocations do not roll over from one academic year to the next. But this year the allocation was increased - so you have access to more money because of that carry-over.

AK (History): for those of you who are program representatives, work with us to figure out ways to improve the quality of life of the students in your program. use the money to pay for online gift cards - be creative! programs receive the greater of \$5 for each student enrolled OR \$200.

David Monda (Political Science): when you reflect on the income streams of the budget, does it hurt or benefit the DGSC one way or the other when we have more masters students and less PhD students - or vice versa?

AK (History): does not seem to matter. could be dependent on the program.

RK (Computer Science): Masters students pay the same student activity fees as PhD students. Might depend on whether or not they're part time/full time.

**X. Petition for New Chartered Organization**

- Students have submitted a petition for a new chartered org: **Boosting Research Area Interactions in Neuroscience Engagement Hour (BrainE Hour)**.
- Regis Shanley presented the proposal to the plenary and materials have been sent to representatives.

**XI. Announcements**

RK (Computer Science): The Middle States Committee virtual site visit is coming up and I am one of the student reps that will be meeting with the visiting team. Please reach out to me with any questions you may want delivered to the middle states committee.

DM (Political Science): Is there anything that has been done by the DGSC for student bereavements? Three Political Science students have recently passed away.

RH (Psychology): The Wellness Center has traditionally been good at offering support, but I am not aware of anything specific that has been provided.

SO (Int'l Migration Studies): I was a former volunteer intake counselor at The Door- A-Center-for-Alternatives (youth wraparound services non-profit - [www.door.org](http://www.door.org)), which has a very robust grief counseling. I can share these materials with you all.

SD (English): in terms of memorialization, email alerts are sent out for the passing of faculty and staff. We should talk about maintaining a count of lost lives as a way to memorialize.

LMG (Urban Ed): there was something on PSC cuny's website about faculty and staff that had passed due to covid – don't recall anything about students. It would be nice for the DGSC to have something for students.

SRA (LAILAC): The wellness center has a few resources - I can connect you with them.

SD (English): International students are yet again being given another thing. non-international students, please support. There are surveys that you can fill you, the data that will be collected will be used to inform upper officers what is needed from them. International students should not have to fight these causes alone. When you receive a notification about "international student problems" please act on them - they affect you as well.

**XII. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.