



DOCTORAL AND GRADUATE STUDENTS' COUNCIL

The Graduate Center, CUNY
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Plenary Meeting

Minutes

—

December 9th, 2022

4:30PM

Meeting Chair: Christopher Campbell

Minutes: Alex Jiang

Minutes Assist: Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic

Attendance

Present: Ian Williams (IW), Margaret Matte (MM), Sharanya Dutta (SD), Giacomo Bianchino (GB), Philip Wiles (PW), Nan Coffee (NC), Justice Evans (JE), Hadley Newton (HN), Itsue Nakaya-Perez (INP), Fedor Marchenko (FM), Christina Weinbaum (CW), Sayantika Mondal (SM), Alex Jiang (AJ), Katherine Rivera Gomez (KRG), Astrid Wik Hallaraaker (AWH), Natalia Lara (NL), Jeremy Kane (JK), Zoe Hu (ZH), Silas Grossberndt (SG), Amour Castillo (AC), Katherine Anderson (KA), Jonathan Hanon (JH), Zara Khan (ZK), Robert Wrigley (RW), Zhuo Yin (ZY), Pablo Yanekelevich (PY), Alexander Pau Soria (APS), Nathan Nikolic (NN), Christopher Campbell (CC), Mariatere Tapias (MT)

Zoom: Roderick Hurley (RH), Deborah Leter (DL), Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic (PMO)

Absent: Bryce Barthuly, Michael Williams, Shibanee Sinavagayam, Cassandra Barnes, Eva Steinberg, Zara Khan, David Amoh-Boateng

Guest speaker: PSC CUNY GC Chapter

Meeting called to order at 5:48pm

Giacomo Bianchino: The negotiation team should've come, but we don't have a contract yet, so they are not showing up today. Renegotiation of our contract is up in February. PSC has not been incredibly transparent and accountable to the students.

Zoe Hu: GC-PSC has been having more relationships with the DGSC, we are interested in contract bargaining, but also things beyond that. For example starting our own food pantries. There are things that PSC-GC and DGSC do together.

Ed (History): I have this resolution of no-confidence in the PSC [reading it out loud]. Why are we paying our dues? We should start talking about the fact that we need our own union (union for adjuncts).

Zoe Hu: I am unsure about the legal process of detaching ourselves from the PSC, and have not yet pursued that path. If there is a significant interest in doing that then we definitely should. I think it is hard to tell how motivated/activated people are.

Giacomo Bianchino: I have felt exactly like you have in the past 3 years, that we should separate ourselves from the PSC. In terms of pragmatically speaking, there are going to be structural issues that we will face. For example [... I missed ...] the other part is that it is illegal to strike as a public sector union. This semester we have been trying to say that it is impossible to strike. Many schools have done and succeeded with striking, there is no reason why we shouldn't do that. There are people on the inside, e.g. the 7k or strike people, that are pushing for change. It is also possible to construct a rival caucus to the New Caucus inside the PSC. There are many options, and we should talk about the different possibilities.

Zoe Hu: If we separated without a renegotiated contract, then management could say you don't have representation and we're not dealing with you.

Ed: I sympathize with some of the problems you said. I don't really push my positions in the DGSC meetings is partly because I really don't have the time and the power to push this through.

Zhuo (Physics): What we can do as DGSC: maybe next semester we can try to revive the adjunct project; your concern is that you cannot bargain directly with CUNY central, and that they may not reflect your demand, one way we can reach CUNY central and state legislature is through USS. The USS meets with the Chancellor, etc. If we can draft our demand right now and pass it, we can bring it to the USS plenary, and pass it to the Chancellor, to the provost, etc.

Zoe: I think whenever we work with USS or DGSC they are more scared of us. Legal counsel stops us from raising student issues. We can collaborate on issues.

Jonathan Hanon (CS): if we look at the 1980s, we had the graduate students union under the DGSC. Why don't we move back to try to start our own union.

Giacomo Bianchino: The graduate student union can't negotiate funding. But maybe graduate student workers union.

Zoe: Starting a new union is extremely challenging. I don't know how it looks like to start a new union vs breaking off. I am open to it, but we will need more people onboard to get this started. My sense is that people here are more radical than what the PSC is at.

Giacomo Bianchino: If people are interested in activism, there is a lot of ways to get involved.

Parisa (Sociology): I am curious about your concern about breaking off from the PSC. What would it be like if all graduate students refused to teach during the spring, as members of the PSC. How can we work inside the PSC and let them know that we are not happy with the current situation and we can withhold our labor. Are most adjuncts students or the other way around?

Giacomo Bianchino: No we are a small minority.

Parisa: So we would need to mobilize all adjuncts? How does that look like?

Giacomo Bianchino: Adjuncts are difficult to organize, because they are in difficult situations but also have very little job security. It would take some time to work with Can we built within the PSC to work towards a strike motion, I think that is possible. I overwhelmingly feel that we need to lead through the GC. I don't think in the immediate term we should split off. In the long term we don't need all adjuncts we just need a graduate students union.

Parisa: What would the PSC do if we just striked?

Giacomo Bianchino: They could get sued, but they are not going to eject us. I am not sure how much support we would get. "Vision for Equity" some group of people are trying to push that through the PSC leadership. There are people on our side.

Jeremy: I like Ed's resolution. We can't pay a bureaucracy to fight for our interest. If we are to split, we would need to do a lot more work. But I think a resolution on behalf of graduate students would put some pressure on PSC leadership. I don't know how much it would work to threaten to leave because we are such a small unit. We have a natural organizing tool because we have people at every campus.

Zoe Hu: I like the resolution as well. There has been an attempt to break away from the PSC after a resolution in support of Palestine. This is from the KCC. Even though they are smaller, it did scare the PSC. I think passing a resolution will definitely put pressure on the PSC leadership.

Giacomo Bianchino: If we pass this resolution, we can take it to assembly and say to them that a whole section has thought that they are ineffective. Organizing a strike also takes a lot of work. We need practically a supermajority on board.

Zoe Hu: I think it is possible, it just take an initial push. I think a lot of people get involved when there is something to get involved in. What can we do on campus right now? That might be somewhere to start from.

Ed: Adjunct provides 60% of teaching. I always thought if we strike this whole thing goes to a halt. The school cannot replace us. It always mystified me why the PSC won't strike. But you guys make it more clear why it is difficult to organize strike.

Giacomo Bianchino: Basically we've been told that we can't strike but that is the point of the union (tailor law). But people have done it in the past semester, so we probably could do it. A strike authorization resolution would scare the PSC.

Ed: It's absurd that tailor law covers us.

Giacomo Bianchino: The law is being challenged right now, it covers people like farm workers.

Nathan (English): I like this idea of vote of no confidence. We shouldn't accept the structure that we are being told is the case. E.g. we shouldn't accept that the bargaining team is the only one that have the right to bargain (open bargaining). I understand the frustration of breaking away

from PSC. I believe in CUNY and we should mobilize the whole CUNY. For things like bargain for CUNY.

Sharanya (English): There is a disparity between the humanities grad students and STEM. We need to address the fear of striking. E.g. would students keep on getting their funding.

Logistically we need to tell people how this works. The ethics and needs to do this is pretty clear, but funding is confusing.

Zoe Hu: If we are doing a strike authorization we need to know exactly what could happen, for every department. The number 1 fear may be SCAB. Also science students have PI power dynamics.

Giacomo Bianchino: We have helped more science students this semester precisely because of the fragility of the students' relationship with PI. Some of the fears are reasonable but not material.

Astrid (Political Science): There hasn't been a wage increase in 10 years. I think we need to aim for the long game. We need to show that there are factions and distrust, within the union. I think that if DGSC passes this resolution, it is not the leadership of the PSC-GC revolting.

Zoe Hu: I don't think CUNY management will use this against PSC. I think the one danger may be the bargaining team not pushing for graduate student rights. I don't know what Luke would do. I think the risk of the resolution is minimal.

Giacomo Bianchino: The fact that the bargaining team didn't show up and we passed a resolution tells them they better be attentive. But if we show them the resolution without passing then it would be to the same effect. It would be a great way to tell them that we are pissed off.

Zoe Hu: I would include in the resolution the demand for more worker militancy and worker action. I think recent events have affected what PSC leadership thinks, and that they might be more open to it.

Ian (Social Welfare): No plenary in Jan, next one is in Feb. Tailor law says that union leadership can be subject to arrest. Union leadership have to be willing to take risk. GC don't care what we do. As long as students seemingly to be doing fine, the administration don't care.

Giacomo Bianchino: Couple years ago PSC was big on getting arrested as a show of solidarity. They should put their action on where their words is.

I. Approval of Agenda

Motion to amend the agenda to include the following prior to Executive Committee Reports:

1. Approval of the 21 October 2022 Plenary Meeting Minutes
2. Approval of New Program Representatives
 - a. Linguistics - Vicki Li
 - b. Classics - Nancy Coffee
 - c. Educational Psychology - Ligia Mendonca
 - d. Theater & Performance - Philip Wiles

3. No Confidence Resolution, moved from after Steering Officer Reports
4. Resolution for Reproductive Justice

In that order.

And 5. Officer for Health and Wellness as first Steering Officer report

Motion to Amend: Jonathan

Seconded: Ian

Vote: Unanimously

Motion to Approve: Jonathan

Seconded: Silas

Vote: Unanimously

II. Approval of the Minutes of the 18 November 2022 Meeting

Motion to Approve: Jonathan

Seconded: Sayantika

Vote: Unanimously

III. Approval of the Minutes of the 21 October 2022 Meeting

Motion to Approve: Jonathan

Seconded: Katherine

Vote: Unanimously

IV. Approval of the New Program Representatives

Linguistics - Vicki Li

Vote: Unanimously

Classics - Nancy Coffee

Vote: Unanimously

Educational Psychology - Ligia Mendonca

Vote: Unanimously

Theater & Performance - Philip Wiles

Vote: Unanimously

V. Resolution on Statement of No Confidence in the Graduate Center Senior Administration

Bringing the resolution to the DGSC

Motion: Chris

Seconded: Silas

Motion to move the question to a vote: Jonathan

Second: Sayantika

Vote: 30 yes, 1 abstention

Voting:

Vote:

27 Yes

1 No

3 abstained

Resolution passed

VI. Resolution in Support of a Plan for Reproductive Justice on Campus at the Graduate Center and CUNY

Bringing to the floor:

Motion: Chris

Second: Jonathan

Bringing to a vote:

Motion: Ed

Second: Jonathan

Vote: Unanimous

Vote for Resolution:

Vote: Unanimous

Zhuo motioned to move Ed's resolution to the floor

Second: Sayantika

Vote: Unanimous

VII. Resolution in Support of No Confidence in PSC

Move: Jonathan

Second: Zhou

Vote: Unanimous

Discussion:

Silas (Physics): Bargaining committee specifically chose not to be here tonight should be added to the Resolution. Right before bargaining starts there is the politics of the personal. Personal

politics can sink us, however, there is a fair point of making a very specific vote with significant showing today. My department feels like we are not being listened to, whenever we have an issue we just gets pushed around over and over again.

Motion to amend (Adjuncts -> Adjuncts & Graduate Assistants): Zhuo

Second: Sayantika

Vote: Unanimous

Motion to amend (PSC -> PSC leadership & Bargaining team): Silas

Second: Sayantika

Vote: Unanimous

Discussion:

Ian: Include lack of transparency of the bargaining team in the resolution.

Silas: This further shows why we have a vote of no-confidence.

Syantika: We are seeing this document for now right, it seems like this would take a lot of time.

Jonathan: Motion to amend (staff -> staff & faculty), passed unanimously.

Zhuo: We can vote now and revise later.

Silas: Would it be possible to not pass it and have it in the minute as a draft.

Motion to vote on the resolution: Zhuo

Second: Sayantika

Vote: Unanimous

Vote on the resolution:

22 yes

2 abstention

The resolution passes.

VIII. Executive Committee Reports

A. Co-Chair for Student Affairs (Silvia Rivera Alfaro)

Updates:

- Please remember to complete SPARC on Blackboard. This is a requisite to be a student representative. If you already have done it but it is not appeared as completed, please reach out to Eric Brown: ebrown2@qc.cuny.edu

- **Dining Commons** The petition for the cafeteria is out! Please help us move it and have more signatures: tinyurl.com/GC4food
- In coordination with Office of Student Affairs:
 - The Child Care Center Survey will be ready in the next few days.
 - OSA is finding out if the survey on food insecurity should go through other offices or with them.
- **Chartered Organizations**
 - This has been a very active semester for many organizations. They do a very important job to bring student life back to campus.
 - I have completed the process of dechartering organizations that were inactive for more than three semesters and were not continued by any students after an open call to save organizations. Currently we have 41 organizations.
 - I reassigned offices on the 5th floor. All the current organizations will have a space. I will be reaching out to them with more information about this.
 - The roster for the chartered organizations are open on Works. Please collaborate with the organizations by signing their rosters as support. Signing does not require you to become a member of the organization.
- **Room request and use of DGSC spaces**
 - This semester we had around 80 room reservations. It is good to know that we are being more active within the building.
 - Reservations are done via Works. When you make a reservation please include if you will have people from out of CUNY as this requires some additional steps to clear people for entrance. Such as it is criticized in the Statement of No Confidence, the admin is requiring students and staff to come to the entrance to help checking the ID and vaccination of people coming to the events. This should be a task done by security, but we have a structural problem of not having enough workers and these tasks are being asked to others who are not prepared for the labor of security.
 - Please help us make students in your programs know that they can come anytime to make coffee or tea in the DGSC lounge.
- **Surplus.** The Steering Committee is working on participatory processes to make decisions on the surplus. This will include a poll over the Spring semester. The other co-chairs will refer more about the surplus.

Upcoming meetings:

- Graduate Council Budget Committee - Mon Dec 12th
- Graduate Council - Wed Dec 14th
- Chartered Organization Leaders' Coffee - Fri Feb 3 2023 at 2 p.m. Room 5414

Discussion:

B. Co-Chair for Communications (Christopher Campbell)

Updates:

- Steering has been working on the \$300k surplus survey to disseminate to program representatives, who will then send to their constituency. I've spoken with Luke Waltzer from the Teaching & Learning Center, and have reached out to set up a meeting with the Futures Initiative. If anyone is interested in reaching out to specific initiatives or programs across the university, feel free to do so. The survey we submit will include pricing for each of the different ideas we have. The survey will also ask you and your constituency to provide feedback or suggestions if you have them.
 - That said, there's so much to consider here. Should we divide funds amongst different initiatives and departments across the university to give them a choice of what they'd like to do with the money? Or should we gather as many options as possible and ask students to vote, and then take the top options adding up to ~\$300k as our final decision? Your input on this during discussion will be incredibly helpful.
- Sayantika and I recently underwent digital signage training. If you'd like to submit a poster for inclusion in the rotation of signs, please email me so I can send you a link that includes specifications on the size of the digital poster as well as details you will need to consider to assure that your poster is ADA compliant.
- The Community Meeting of the GC was this past Tuesday. What looked to be over 100 people attended the meeting in person, including faculty, staff, and students. The president and the provost provided vague ideas of what the future of the Graduate Center might look like, and the question and answer section of the meeting was somewhat scathing. If anyone would like a transcript of the meeting I'm happy to send it.
- There will be an International Students meeting with the PSC next Thursday at 5pm in this room, 5414.

Discussion:

Parisa: we should talk about what the big ticket items now, e.g. if we want refrigerators, nice coffee machines.

Chris: Business office want a plan by the end of March beginning of April. If people have ideas right now they should mention that.

Jonathan: Construction has to be union. Can't have capital expenditure.

Katherine: we are supposed to spend all the money in one semester?

Chris: We need to have a plan on how to spend the money by the middle of Spring 2023 that details how it will be spent in the next few years.

Adam: They don't want that money to be unaccounted for. It makes sense that they want it to be spend over a couple years. It is late, maybe we should continue this conversation over email or zoom.

Sayantika: [about digital signature and plan to spend money]

Astrid: Do you plan to have the survey open to everyone?

Chris: Eventually a referendum. Distributed through program representatives.

Zhuo: Is there anyway that we can stop charging student activity for maybe 1 year?

C. Co-Chair for Business (Jonathan Hanon)

Updates:

- Updates from meeting with business office
 - Purchases of food for Plenary
 - OSA has been helping us with invoices for the caterer, and will have a purchasing card very soon to help us. We will discuss with OSA what else we can use this for. Fingers crossed we can get a system set up so everyone can do fewer reimbursements.
 - CUNYBuy Marketplace
 - I attended a CUNYBuy training session this past Monday. We can use this to purchase directly from contracted vendors (currently Staples/Proftech, Grainger/Edge, Complete Books & Media, more soon).
 - Honoraria
 - We have been having difficulties getting honoraria processed - I just got a few honoraria bounced back.
 - Reimbursements
 - I just got new instructions again for reimbursements (enough with the changing instructions, Brian Peterson has got to go). Hopefully this should resolve our reimbursement issues. I'll keep you all posted.
 - We will talk to EDLAB about honoraria and reimbursements.
- Surplus
 - The surplus of ~\$300k does not need to be used over one year (the money can be used over the course of a few years), but to use the surplus, we need to discuss our plans for approval by the College Association.
 - This needs to be done by late March / early April, to ensure that we can start moving these funds as soon as possible.
 - This surplus will need to be authorized annually by the College Association

- The College Association currently has no faculty members, because of yet another failure of the administration.
- Meetings Attended
 - Testified at Board of Trustees Public Budget Hearing at LaGuardia Community College on Monday December 5th. The topics I testified on were:
 - Low graduate student wages and how CUNY Central is no longer paying the 2% increase.
 - Business Office incompetence
 - Lack of food services at the Graduate Center and lack of concern for this matter from the administration.
 - Lack of transparency at CUNY, citing CUNY's upcoming Fall 2023 migration from Blackboard to D2L Brightspace, a move that was done with no public input, that was voted on on August 23rd, 2022, less than a week after the decision was announced.
 - Auxiliary Enterprise Corporation Meeting December 7th
 - Responsible for food services, vending machines, room rentals, advertising, merchandising, and other external activities.
 - Meeting was held over Zoom.
 - The ASRC was transferred back from the GC to RF CUNY.
 - \$100k in Conference Travel Grants were approved for OSA.
 - We discussed food services, including renovations to the kitchen. There were no new updates.
 - The GC is slowly moving towards ramping up its outside activity again.

Discussion:

Sayantika: What is the conference travel grant?

Jonathan: Office of student affairs is now able to provide conference travel grant.

D. University Student Senate Delegate (Alex Jiang)

Updates:

USS preparing for a statement on the raise of wages of the management admins.

Maybe we can have a follow up.

I have stepped down from the USS VC for Graduate Affairs

USS VC Election this Sunday!

Zhuo will run for VC for Graduate Affairs

Discussion:

E. University Faculty Senate Liaison (Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic)

Updates: There was no November UFS plenary, the next meeting will be 12/13 and they are hoping to establish a test run on 12/8 for remote attendance.

- The 10/25 meeting, as discussed in our last steering meeting, was focused on CUNY wide budget issues. Docs with Chair Verzani's notes and the presentation on Tuition Revenue Trend by Ned Benton are uploaded in our google drive.
- The November budget committee meeting was also primarily focused on low enrollment and impact on their income/budget flow
- What I'm seeing across campuses is initiatives to increase student awareness of course offerings and appeals to faculty to entice students to register for their classes asap so they can get concrete spring enrollment numbers

Discussion:

IV. Steering Officer Reports

A. Officer for Health & Wellness (Katherine Rivera Gomez)

Updates:

- Yoga classes started 11/7 Monday mornings 7:30am. They were stopped 12/5 due to non-attendance.
- They will be starting again in January with classes on Mondays and Thursdays. We will be sending out a survey for the preferred times for these dates.
- I am working with the Co-Chair for Student Affairs and the Office of Student Affairs to get information on how much we can pay instructors to facilitate onboarding instructors and planning activities in the future.
- Improv class might be available in the Spring, waiting on information from OSA.
- NYSHIP open enrollment has ended. In the following days we'll have information on the rate changes. If anyone has had problems with their coverage, they can reach out to William McGowan: healthinsuranceinfo@gc.cuny.edu and CC me to expedite the process.

Discussion:

B. Officer for Outreach (Natalia Lara)

Updates:

Will attend PSC student meeting on Dec 15th.
Organizing end of semester party

Discussion:

C. Officer for Student Life & Services (Sayantika Mondal)

Updates:

Organizing end of semester party December 16th.

Discussion:

Jonathan: Sign on to the chartered orgs please!

Zhou: Maybe CCC should send out an email to everyone. About end of semester party, about the resolutions we passed

Syantika: We need a bartender, poster around the building.

Zhou: We can send it to APO and ask them to distribute. Most science students don't go to the graduate center.

D. Officer for Library & Technology (Daniel Okpattah)

Updates:

We now have Extended Hours on Weekends: 10 am - 8 pm.

Discussion:

E. Officer for Funding (Angela LaScala-Gruenewald)

Updates:

- We have several upcoming Grant Deadlines throughout the spring to fund projects in the spring and summer. The next three are:

- January 20th
- February 17th
- March 17th
- Please reach out for extensions or exceptions for any of these deadlines
- Grants Committee is considering two grant proposal for future funding
 - Meeting today canceled due to quorum issues (COVID/flu)
 - Rescheduling for December 16 or early January
 - Reviewing two proposals:
 - Graduate Students in Music Conference (\$300)
 - CUNY Directed Reading Program End-of-Semester Talks (\$700)
- Grants Committee has done an excellent job reviewing grants throughout the semester. To summarize our work:
 - We met four times throughout the semester
 - Evaluated 9 grants (2 rejected, 2 currently under review, 5 approved)
 - Average award amount \$607/grant (minimum grant was \$233 and maximum was \$700)
 - Funded several student-run conferences, cultural workshops, and performances/celebrations

Discussion:

F. Officer for Governance & Membership (Ian Williams)

Updates:

Attendance

- Owing to the **Extraordinary Circumstances Resolution** adopted at the November Plenary, remove attendance (when in compliance with OML regulations - meaning remaining on-camera and having audio enabled) will count for attendance for reps. However, it does not count towards quorum. Just keep that in mind.
- I plan to digitize our sign-in process in the Spring term. For now please continue to use the sign-in sheet.

Petitions

- We have four petitions to ratify tonight, to create Program Representative positions and appoint representatives nominated by students in the respective programs. It's on the agenda.
 - Linguistics - Vick Li
 - Classics - Nancy Coffee
 - Educational Psychology - Ligia Mendonca

- Theater & Performance - Philip Wiles

Removals

- 2 at-large positions, and 2 program reps (Biology, and Earth & Environmental Sciences), were removed this month for consecutive non-attendance of Plenary sessions and lack of communication regarding proxy arrangements or requests.
- We are working on following up with representatives

Constitution & Bylaws Committee

- The committee will meet on 12/15/22 at 4pm, on Zoom, to plan for the spring.
- There is now one vacancy on the committee due to the aforementioned removals

Discussion:

V. New Business

VI. Announcements

VII. Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn: Chris

Seconded: Jonathan

Voted: Unanimous

Meeting is adjourned at 7:24 pm.