

**Minutes of the Joint Steering Committee Meeting
of the Doctoral Students' Council
Monday, May 24, 2004**

Present—Outgoing:

Celia Braxton
Moirra Egan
Caroline Fisher, Co-Chair, Student Affairs
Sheryl Gordon
Tina Lee
Paul McBreen, Co-Chair, Communications
Camille Tipton
Jose Zambrana, Co-Chair, Business
Missing: Brenda Jenkins

Present—Incoming:

Celia Braxton
Eric Doviak
Moirra Egan
Tomo Imamichi
Tina Lee
Paul McBreen, Co-Chair, Communications
Aleta Styers, Co-Chair, Business
Camille Tipton
Missing: Stephanie Dominici, Co-Chair,
Student Affairs

Present *ex officio*: David Golland, U.S.S. Rep.

Chair: Caroline Fisher
Minutes: Celia Braxton
Meeting called to order at 7:15 pm in Room 5414

I. Agenda

Changes were made as below. Paul McBreen moved to approve. The motion was seconded and the agenda was passed with the following changes.

- A. “/Ongoing situations” was added to the end of the title of Item III
- B. Four topics of discussion were added to Item III, to wit:
 - a. Political Science Situation
 - b. Student Space
 - c. Student Participation
 - d. Open discussion
- C. Item V, “Next Year,” was added with two topics of discussion:
 - a. Fall orientation
 - b. Open discussion

II. The minutes of the April 30th Steering Committee meeting were approved unanimously and without changes by the Outgoing Steering Committee.

III. Review of year’s accomplishments and lessons/Ongoing situations

A. Political Science situation.

Caroline Fisher provided the following background: She has received about five separate complaints from students in the Political Science program regarding some actions of the new Executive Officer of the program. Carrie first wrote a memo to the administration under her own signature to advise them of the complaints, then brought a similar memo to the Steering Committee for discussion. The Steering Committee recommended she investigate the situation in the Political Science program as a whole, not just as it affected the five students. A petition was written and was distributed over the Internet to the Political Science students this past weekend. Carrie is serving as intermediary between students and administration, as

several students who spoke to her mentioned fear of reprisal if their names were known. Therefore, the petition is anonymous. Signers are asked to check off one of two options:

1. "I want my name added to the petition"
2. "I dissent to what the petition says."

When complete, the petition will be sent to the administration with a numeric tally of those signing and those dissenting to the petition.

Aleta Styers, a member of the Political Science program, stated that the issue had already been put to the Vice President of Student Affairs and gave her opinion that "it is doubtful wisdom that it should go back again." Carrie stated that the Steering Committee was aware of this, and had voted to proceed with the matter as representatives of these students. Moira Egan commented that the Co-Chair for Student Affairs needs to respond to student complaints. "Our roles are not to adjudicate but to act on behalf of the students" and to facilitate discussion. Eric Doviak suggested a concrete policy be put in place as to when the Steering Committee will get involved and when we won't. Carrie stated the unofficial policy as follows:

1. First students speak with the Co-Chair, Student Affairs, privately.
2. The matter is then brought to the Ombudsman. Usually the matter is resolved at this step.
3. If the problem is not resolved, the Co-Chair brings the matter to the Steering Committee, which then brings the matter to the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Carrie stated her philosophy has been that the DSC will get involved when it seems all other options for students have been exhausted.

Paul McBreen moved that the discussion proceed to the next item of business. This was seconded and passed unanimously.

B. Student Space

Jose Zambrana reported that Gail Moynihan, in the Office of Reservations, recently asked if the DSC would be able to host the Labyrinth bookstore in DSC space—room 5414 or 5409—for the first several weeks of next semester (and presumably thereafter). The space on the 8th floor that has housed the bookstore is space that could be rented out to make money, and Gail seems to be under pressure and see it as her mandate to use GC space to raise funds. Jose and Carrie felt putting the bookstore in these DSC spaces would cause problems, because both are heavily in demand for student functions. Jose noted that Gail is the "go to" person for the Co-Chair for Business if a student group cannot be accommodated in DSC space. She seemed to indicate that the DSC was being unappreciative of her willingness to accommodate student requests. Jose suggested a policy needs to be mandated to her stating that student requests get priority consideration. Carrie reminded us that the DSC has a mandate to reserve rooms 5414, 5409, and 5489 for student use. Tina Lee commented that the DSC has become the reservoir for the administration for services they have refused to provide but which they know students feel are important, such as meeting space, money, health care, etc. Obtaining space on the Concourse level has become particularly problematic for students. The space reserved for the Fitness Center, for instance, is now used primarily for income-producing classes. Paul McBreen stated that this is a U.S.S. issue; student space is being encroached upon CUNY-wide.

C. Student Participation

Eric Doviak suggested that in the upcoming year, we should work to make DSC representatives better known and more important to their departments. What can DSC representatives do for their constituents? What can they take back to their departments with their name on them? Celia Braxton asks how we can provide incentive to the reps to do this? Aleta suggests a running pot of coffee available in the Steering Committee office every Friday (for instance), so reps can stop in. As this issue appears to be one of planning for the next year, Eric moved to move on. This was seconded and passed.

D. Open Discussion. Carrie moved that this discussion be combined with the open discussion under Item V. This was seconded and passed.

IV. Discussion of Staffing

A. Office Assistant

Jose stated there was \$1500 budgeted for an office assistant for the DSC in 2003-04. Traci Steffi, who filled the position in previous years, has billed us for just \$600 for this year. The question is raised as to whether an office assistant is needed, and whether funds for such a person should be budgeted for 2004-05. The Outgoing Steering Committee members agreed they had not noticed the lack of such a person. Moira suggested perhaps we should budget enough to hire someone to help with the elections, which is when Traci billed most of her time (getting the ballots and labels printed). Tina suggested bringing in DSC reps to work on the election and paying them. Sheryl asked for clarification: can the Constitutional Convention material be sent out by email? Camille stated the materials must go out and be returned by U.S.P.S.

B. Adjunct Project Coordinator

Paul McBreen stated this is a position paid for by the DSC to advocate to PSC-CUNY specifically for adjuncts who are Graduate Center students, and provide a liaison with the union. Heather Gautney has been Adjunct Project Coordinator for two years. Carrie reports that Heather has appeared at Plenary meetings just three times this year, although she has been asked to report at each meeting. She has been difficult to get hold of. The question becomes, do we rehire her or open the position for another person? The bylaws specify two co-coordinators, but only one has been hired. The bylaws do not give any procedure for or mention review of performance before rehiring. Aleta asked if there is a written job description for the position. Carrie said there is not. Jose mentioned that we have sponsored her August trip to COCAL on the condition that she report back to the DSC and use the experience to forward her work as adjunct coordinator. If we fire her now, the money is wasted. Celia mentioned that we cannot ethically wait until the beginning of next semester and then fire her; she is counting on the income.

Aleta suggested a review process be initiated. We need to let her know that there are serious concerns and that her job is in jeopardy. A job description should be written by the new Steering Committee and presented to her. From that point on, she reports to that job description. The job description should include mention of the review process. Paul McBreen, as Incoming Co-Chair for Communications, offered to write the job description and post it on the shared drive for our purposes only.

Jose moved that Carrie Fisher, as outgoing Co-Chair for Student Affairs solicit information from Heather Gautney as to whether she is interested in continuing as Adjunct Project Coordinator, and whether she will have the time to fulfill the duties

of the position. If not, the Steering Committee should formalize procedures for a new hire, including the job description; if so, she should be made familiar with the job description and be informed she is on probation. Moira seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

C. *Advocate* Editors

Carrie noted that as with the Adjunct Project Coordinator, hiring procedures for *Advocate* positions are “fuzzy.” Further, one of the editors is thinking about taking a Leave of Absence from the Graduate Center. There is no provision regarding whether or not we can rehire a person whom we know is not going to be actively a student. The question was raised as to whether a person must be a member of the DSC to be hired for any of these positions. The answer is “no,” but DSC members are generally the only people who know about them. Tina Lee suggested that in the interests of fair hiring practices, we should advertise these positions more broadly. Aleta stated there should be a job description for every job we hire for, and it should be clear to which individual Co-Chair the position reports. The Steering Committee as a whole may do the hiring, but no person should report to nine people. Each job description should also include information on the review process.

Paul stated the *Advocate* editors need an increase in pay. They are working on 1990 wages. Celia mentioned that the situation is the same for the Co-Chairs and the Steering Committee members. Jose stated that if we give one position a raise, we have to give all a raise. The DSC currently pays fifteen positions, and as mentioned above, the bylaws stipulate an additional Adjunct Project Co-coordinator.

V. Next Year

A. Fall Orientation

Paul suggested that Fall Orientation is the perfect opportunity to introduce new students to the DSC. He suggested each student be provided with the list of DSC representatives. Carrie stated she will be suggesting to Stephanie Domenici, Incoming Co-Chair for Student Affairs, that the Chartered Organizations Fair be held *during* orientations. Moira suggested we think of further ideas for Orientation over the summer and have an email discussion closer to the time.

B. Open Discussion

1. Shared Folder: the new people need to be authorized for access to the shared folder. Jose will take care of this.
2. University Student Senate representative: David Golland asked whether the U.S.S. rep. should be an ex-officio member of the Steering Committee so he knows first hand what the concerns are and how the Steering Committee is thinking. It is agreed the new Steering Committee will consider this appointment first thing in the fall, and that he will have a key to the office.
3. Jose stated the new IR system will provide students with space for their own web pages, and will allow people to access their GC files without use of a VPN.
4. At-large vacancies: Carrie and Jose are not currently representatives on the DSC. However, there are still two vacancies in the At-Large representative list, which may be appointed by the Steering Committee. They would like to be appointed as At-Large reps. next year.
5. Use of the blackboard in the office to keep Steering Committee reps knowledgeable about what needs to be done is mentioned.

6. Eric wanted to know when we set goals and the agenda for the fall—before the first Plenary? Paul suggested we meet or discuss in August.
7. The Steering Committee officially ends its duties six days after Commencement.
8. Space reservations during the summer will be the responsibility of Aleta Styers, Co-Chair for Business.
9. Jose stated he will need keys to room 5495 returned by Sheryl and Brenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.