

**CUNY Graduate Center  
Doctoral Students' Council  
Steering Committee**

**October 3, 2008**

**Chair:** Rob Faunce (RF)

**Present:** Jill Belli (JB), Gregory Donovan (GD), Ally Foster (AF), Anton Masterovoy (AM), Christine Pollock (CP), Chris Sula (CS), Suzanne Tamang (ST), Denise Torres (DT), Tasha Youstin (by Proxy: Philip Kopp),

**Guest:** Neil Blangiardo

Meeting was called to order at 6:11pm

**I. Approval of Agenda**

RF asked if there were any items to add to the agenda, there being none, GD motioned to approve the agenda, CS seconded.

**II. Approval of Old Minutes**

RF asked if there were any additions, corrections or items left out of the minutes. There being none, AM motioned to approve the old minutes, JB seconded.

**III. Old Business**

**A. Student Survey**

Need to reach agreement regarding sections and questions. The goal is for a draft. GD will resend the email; CS will forward who volunteered to do what for inclusion in the email.

**B. Health Insurance**

RF: much information has been coming through recently regarding the HI plan for students. There is mixed info coming so there are currently no definitive answers. JB asked if students currently receiving PSC Welfare Fund insurance will be kicked off and made to transfer to the students' plan. This is unclear but CS indicated given

the financial burden of providing insurance and PSC's role in "supporting" GC provided health insurance this might occur.

6:18 RF exits meeting and asks GD to assume the Chair in his absence.

### **C. Printer & Server Problems**

GD describes the printer/server issue and states there are problems with printers especially on C level. Konica Minoltas seem to be the primary problem as there have been no new problems with the HPs. There is a contract with KM and the GC has been replacing all of the HP and older printers.

6:22 RF re-enters the meeting and assumes the Chair.

GD states that it is worth pointing out that the upgrades conducted by Research Computing have caused any Web 2.0 applications to experience problems. Because of the security upgrades done by Research Computing Web 2.0 server based sites like our Wiki were not operational once the upgrades went into affect in August. These have now been corrected. RF underscores that as soon as the DSC was informed of the correction all minutes that were unable to be posted were up in an hour. GD stated we need ways to address this. CS asked why not keep Library HP printers? GD stated the upgrades eliminated a variety of programs. This has been going on all of Sept & August. RF stated that AM could collaborate through the Library Committee as the library is being impacted. PK stated it was an issue of knowing how to send print jobs to printers without long job cues. ST stated that she experienced long delays with printers still indicated they were waiting to print jobs sent at 1pm while she was attempting to print a 4 pm. GD stated that the IT committee will raise as it is an issue of tech fee use. JB asked who buys the department printers since most offices tend to purchase HPs. GD stated that it is an issue of high capacity versus low capacity and that the KM are for high capacity printers whereas the HPs are low.

## **IV. New Business**

### **A. Medicare and SS Exemption for Adjuncts**

RF states that he forwarded info that FT grad students should not be charged with Medicare and Social Security. GD encouraged adjuncts to check with their departments. RF people should be pursuing and we should be anticipating a tidal wave. ACTION Step is to send to plenary and Google groups. PK suggests RF should upload the form. GD stated students should be getting their forms from their administrations since the form available to us is only from Baruch. DT suggested that Medicare is always pulled. RF stated NYC law indicates otherwise and if there is any conflict between Fed and local

laws or interpretations it becomes an elastic clause issue as the Human Resources Administration of the City of New York should be following their own laws. Members are shown the following information accessed from <http://www.nyc.gov/html/opa/html/taxes/socialsecurity.shtml#cuny>:

*CUNY Students Working at CUNY*

*You are exempt from social security and Medicare if you are a CUNY student working at CUNY and:*

*\* You are at least a half-time undergraduate, graduate, or professional student*

*\* You are at least a half-time undergraduate, graduate, or professional student enrolled in the number of credit or unit hours to complete the requirements of obtaining a degree offered by CUNY.*

*The FICA exemption does not apply if you are not enrolled in classes during breaks of five weeks or more, including summer.*

*Less than half-time students of CUNY who are employed at CUNY and CUNY students working for the City but not at CUNY are subject to social security and Medicare taxes.*

DT reiterates there was legal action in HHC around this and RF repeats students should not be charged FICA. DT asked then what happens to the money already given up? GD states it is unclear. JB states students don't know they are eligible for the pension plans. RF asks JB if she is willing to take this on and communicate to the student body. JB says sure. RF: plan of action is to inform the student body.

## **B. Cost of Living**

PK submits for review and discusses document "Cost of Attendance Figures for CUNY and Surrounding Universities" he compiled for discussion and potential action. The central issue is whether the data used by GC, which is based on undergraduate cost of living and assumes the student lives at home, is equitable and fair for use by the GC in presenting to the Federal Government for aid purposes what it costs us to attend GC. PK's investigation revealed that cost of living amounts are not federally dictated, GC figures are based on 9 months not 12 (and notes leases are not given for 9 mos), other universities use the Consumer Price Index and student surveys to inform their COL standards, and that this is handicapping students' ability to obtain and maintain aid. RF stated students should demand that standards applied should be based on a more accurate assessment when they meet with Financial Aid. DT clarifies that this is an issue the Executive Committee should take to the President. GD states this is a

CUNY wide problem that needs to go to the Central Office (i.e., 80<sup>th</sup> Street). CS states that we need to source this to ensure students are informed and place on our site. RF states PK should write this up and send to EC for the following actions: 1) put on agenda for the Plenary; 2) Put up on Web; and 3) Memo to President and Student Affairs. JB states that if we are to put this up that PK should hyperlink to sites where data were gleaned so that people understand where the numbers come from. PK agrees to do so. Some further discussion is had regarding presentation. As well, a related issue regarding the Chancellor's Fellowships and Enhanced Chancellor's Fellowships is explored as an area of potential investigation and follow-up. The understanding regarding whether or not some students are actually "working" is problematic as they are denied or receive very little supplemental aid. JB clarifies some of the concerns.

### **C. Office Status**

CS requests feedback regarding office needs, concerns, and purchasing. In particular, the question of whether or not we should offer \$7.50 movie tickets that allow students to see recently released films immediately was raised. ST stated feedback gotten from her constituency indicated interest in this. RF suggested the question is whether or not the additional cost is really necessary, as AMC does not typically charge a surcharge. AM states he was charged and questioned whether or not there could be more theaters. GD stated SC should be asking purchasers whether or not they would want \$7.50 tickets. DT suggests we should put on survey. GD states we want those who are purchasing tickets to give feedback. DT suggests that we need to reach those who are not purchasing because the new release exclusion may be the reason they don't buy tickets. CS states there could be a number of different answers on the survey regarding a question on movie tickets. JB asks aren't we trying to limit the number of questions and length of survey? GD states yes.

### **D. Certification Discussion**

RF states one student was not certified and has decided to appeal. There are two candidates for At Large: Shawn Rice and Erica Chutuape. GD motions to elect the candidates; AF 2<sup>nd</sup> and the motion passes by unanimous consent. CP had some questions that pertained to her department and received clarification.

### **E. Fall Party**

GD states there is a sign up sheet available and underscores that everyone should stay for break down since last year he was often left doing it alone at least at the Spring party. DT stated that was an unfair statement as consistently 6 Of 9 of the SC stayed on afterwards.

GD restated that it would be more effective and quicker if everyone understood they should assist unless they could not. As well, he stated not to sign the sheet going around but to sign up on the Google docs form revised for this purpose. JB asked if she purchased things for the party would she have to carry them in to the office RF stated that many of the responsibilities could be shared or done in ways that did not require the SC member to be present on the day of the party. As well, RF stated that delivery services were often available. GD asked if anyone had a car. DT stated she did but given use last year was not making that available but we could, as some did last semester, rent a car if necessary. GD stated that this would be cheaper oftentimes.

#### **F. Adjunct Project Reimbursements**

RF states services were rendered for lobbying in Albany that had been approved by the plenary last semester. Question of how to provide fair recompense given students incurred costs for which they remain unreimbursed was discussed with implications of various approaches explored. DT motioned to authorize the CCBM to reimburse for services on behalf of the DSC; AM 2<sup>nd</sup> and it was passed by unanimous consent.

#### **G. Past Co-Chair Recognition**

RF states retiring CCs receive recognition from the DSC for their service. GD motioned to recognize DT as past CCBM; CP 2<sup>nd</sup> and the motion passed by unanimous consent. DT thanked the body for its recognition.

### **V. Student Affairs Report**

#### **A. Chartered Organizations**

GD followed up from previous activities stating that Elaine Montilla and he had examined each room and discussed which needed new computers or telephone systems. There are 18 rooms with 24 groups active. Given the space and activity it is fair to say that all COs active for at least 3 semesters will be eligible and are currently on a waiting list. Chartered Org roster list is moving to [opencuny.org](http://opencuny.org) which will make the attainment of the roster requisite easier for COs especially those not located at GC.

#### **B. OpenCUNY.org**

GD stated the centralization of information has begun which will allow RSS Feeds to circulate across various activities and groups. CS offered that this would be a good place to require grant recipients to advertise their funded events/activities. DT agreed.

## **VI. Communications Report**

RF stated he had attended the Farewell Reception for Julia Wrigley who will be moving to CUNY Central to act as the Assistant to Lexa Logue. The Media Board met and reported that circulation was not where the Editor in Chief, James Hoff, would like it but he expects it to increase. Jack Jacobs, the Assistant Acting Provost, and the EC met to discuss the Health Insurance and Professional Development issues on 9/18. The BOT met on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and it appears Hunter and City can grant PhD independent of the GC not as dual granting institutions. The documents asked of from the BOT in the spring by the EC of the Grad Council re dual degrees from the meeting of December "15" were never received. This continues to be an issue of concern and discussion at Grad Council. The Health Care provisions the DSC constitutionally transfers to the GC is set to expire. RF noted the logo items have dwindled and the SC needs to consider what marketing tools would increase the visibility of the body to students. CS stated we could use discretionary funds to purchase these. DT asked if we would want to use Special Allocations funds. CS stated that would require action by the plenary. AM motioned to allocate 750 dollars from the discretionary fund for purchasing; DT 2<sup>nd</sup> and the motion passed by unanimous consent.

## **VII. Business Report**

### **A. Budget Modifications**

CS stated that on Tuesday the College Association will be meeting and he would be submitting modifications to the budget based on a greater than anticipated student enrollment even given the loss of Engineering and based on regulatory changes that require us to have no more than two funds. He noted that Tina Lee had created the Scholarly Awards Funds, which was consistent with regs at the time, but are no longer aligned. CS took the SC through the additions and changes within the budget. CS noted he increased grants and awards, medical test subsidy, department allocations (especially given this has been increasingly utilized), office expenses, social expenses, and web hosting while reducing movie ticket sales. DT asked re the removal of the in-kind revenues considered by the auditors, in particular the cost of space. CS offered that this was not a real transfer and should not be included for purposes of the budget given the implications around income. DT reiterated that the auditor's costs are based on our assets, revenues, expenditures and that these would be included in their analyses hence they are real in-kind transfers occurring between administration and us. As well, DT noted the pressure for space is great and if it is not recognized officially that

we are “renting” space this could be more easily taken away from us. *ACTION ITEM: CS will revise Revised Budget and submit to the College Association for approval.*

#### **B. Room Reservations**

CS asked SC for feedback on room reservations this semester, especially groups that submit multiple requests at once. CP stated some groups submit up to a dozen requests at a time. RF noted that for the first time, we are booking rooms for the spring already because of space crunch issues. Bookings and priority of rooms were discussed. GD stated that we want students using rooms, rather than them sitting empty. CS suggested posting a sign reminding students that DSC rooms are common spaces and to respect the wishes and priority of those who have reserved them. RF noted that open meeting laws require some groups to allow guests. CS also raised issues of GC charging students excessive rates for room use and A/V services on weekends. GD notes that DSC rooms are free of charge. RF adds that Security must be informed in order to patrol properly *ACTION ITEM: CS will draft language for a sign and circulate to SC members for feedback. CS will suggest use of GC rooms to grant applicants.*

#### **C. DSC Submit System**

CS stated that the Submit system is in the test phase and should be tested and used by SC members so that we can work assure a smooth transition to this process. CS took us through the system using the actual website which was projected on the screen. Concrete questions were posed regarding the actual use and implementation of the system and multiple members offered suggestions that would facilitate a clearer more immediate representation to users of where the checks are within the system. There was some concern expressed by various members as to whether this would address the underlying concerns of information flow. GD stated this would satisfy students’ need to know.

### **VIII. USS Report**

AF stated that a graduate student Rouzbeh Nazari is the acting Chair for USS and RF added that he is the only ex- officio student member on the BOT. AF stated that a vote will be had next weekend but she is unable to make the meeting. GD stated he is constitutionally an alternate for AF but can also not attend the meeting. RF underscored that this is a critical opportunity to have a Graduate Student voted in and representing the particular needs and concerns of GC students.

### **IX. Committee Reports**

CS states that Information Flow has drafted a mission statement and is currently pursuing a number of initiatives.

**X. Announcements**

None

**XI. Adjournment**

PK motioned for adjournment, ST seconded.

Meeting adjourns at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Denise Torres