

Steering Committee
Minutes
December 6, 2019
4:30 PM

Attendance

Present: Raj Korpan (RK) - Chair; Rod Hurley (RH); Ming Chen (MC); Michael Greer (MG); Jane Guskin (JG); Giacomo Bianchino (GB); Adam Kocurek (AK); Mary Jean McNamara (MJM).
Absent: Sharanya Dutta; Isatou Bitaye-Jobe; Elizabeth Che.

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I. Approval of Agenda

RH calls meeting to order at 4:49pm.

GB moves to approve the agenda

MG seconds the motion.

Motion passes unanimously

II. Approval of Minutes

A. Approval of the Meeting of October 4, 2019

AK: moves to approve the minutes.

GB: seconds the motion.

Motion passes unanimously

B. Approval of the Minutes of November 8, 2019

GB moves to approve the minutes.

AK seconds the motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

III. Executive Committee Reports

A. Co-Chair for Student Affairs (Elizabeth Che)

Help Chartered Organizations obtain active status by signing up on their rosters!! They need Fall 2019 active status in order to be reimbursed for expenditures this semester!!

You just need to enter your name. No responsibilities attached to signing the rosters. You can join multiple organizations!

Directions to the join roster: DSC Works → [Chartered Org Rosters](#) → Click on each chartered org and click "join this organization."

B. Co-Chair for Communications (Rod Hurley)

- 11/19 - Website Redesign Interviews - The Office of Communications and Marketing is in the initial stages of a project to redesign the GC website. The external consultants met with groups of students to get feedback on the website's functionality.
 - How do students interact with the website?
 - What resources do new and continuing students go to the website to find information on - courses, funding, housing, etc.
 - A Website Advisory Council has been formed to oversee and inform the project. The DSC will be represented on the council by DSC Social Media Correspondent, Gwen Shaw.

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- 11/20 - Co-Chairs met with OSA
 - Graduate Center housing - A former tenant brought it to our attention that the building management had not been helpful in forwarding mail to their new address after they moved out. This is compounded by the fact that individual tenants cannot set up mail forwarding with USPS on their own because the building is registered as a commercial property, not a residence.
 - When we met with OSA they said they were aware that the building management was not forwarding mail as they said they would and that the policy was not always clearly communicated to students.
 - OSA is working to get an updated written policy within the next couple weeks that includes a commitment from management to fwd mail for 2 months after tenants move out, and outlines exactly what steps tenants need to take.
 - I'm also setting up a visit to the building, and a meeting with the 2 residence assistants to get an overall better idea of how things happen. I've also already started reaching to let tenants know that we are interested in hearing from them about their experiences.
 - I think this is a good opportunity to take a general approach to looking into conditions at GC housing. I
 - I had asked about the building's non-residence status previous, and asked them again about this. They will inquire about whether it was possible to get the designation changed.
 - NYSHIP
 - Scott Voorhies reported that the NYSHIP workshops have been very productive, and he would be happy to facilitate more workshops.
 - Students have had their coverage terminated for non-payment without any notification. This resulted from random admin errors in some cases, but also students submitting timesheets or other paperwork late.
 - Course Change fees
 - Echoed what the president had said re: working on fees for Doctoral students only/first. They said they will ask about masters students again
 - Transfer Credits
 - GC has a paid subscription to "Edge" for checking transcripts, which tells what the equivalent of the degree is in US terms. They do not look at the schools. If they can match the degree, credit is granted. If there's a discrepancy it is sent back to the department.
 - Credits are assessed after about a year. Internal program decision. Mismatches between masters and program.
 - There is consistency within programs, but they don't know how the individual programs decide
- 12/6 - Met with Social Media Correspondent to discuss the issues raised at our October steering meeting, do a review of the role, discuss goals for the coming semester.
 - They want to work with steering to make social media more useful for students, more impactful, and in alignment with the vision of current steering committee.
 - There have been lots of requests from departments for social media promotion.
 - Issue with Instagram - doesn't have a personal account, IG requires phone, would appreciate if someone else to take the lead on that
 - Plenaries - They appreciated the work that our designated task person (Sharanya) has been doing with plenaries.
 - Steering is unclear about what work is being done
 - Need to establish clear guidelines, goals and expectations for social media.

- CCC and SMC will meet during the break to finalize plans for next semester. In the meantime we will work on [a document](#) together that lists general guidelines for SMC, as well as priorities, and any changes we want to make. Points to consider:
 - who is the social there to promote
 - guidelines for what we post
 - Look into changing social media form from Google forms to Gravity
 - Update information on SM form - maybe a checkbox indicating type of post - whether it is a funding opportunity, conference, etc.
- Confirmed access to social media platforms and email.
- SMC will meet with Affiliates in January to see how SMC can assist
- CCC will send messages to inform chartered orgs and students that they can get SM promotion for their events.

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Upcoming Meetings

- Co-Chairs meeting with OSA on 12/11
- Next DSC Plenary Meeting scheduled for 12/13.

Discussion:

GB: In terms of student housing, I was wondering if the difference is a matter of zoning? How do we go about changing a business from commercial to residential? Will that change it so that students can be tenants? How are they classed? Like hotel customers?

JG: We shouldn't get into a whole long thing about this. Let's compile a list of questions that the co-chairs can find the answers to. Mail forwarding can be resolved by forcing the GC force the building management to. Other questions are opening up a whole can of worms that don't need to be opened here and now.

RK: We need to find out who actually owns the building - there's the dormitory authority of NY - are we renting it? It could be the case that the GC doesn't have authority over this issue.

AK: Building off of what Raj says - there's a ton of other dorms across the city - let's learn from them and see what resources they have to deal with these issues. There is someone I can put you in contact with that might know more about this.

MC: Before I came here, I received a brochure specifying all the different kinds of resident resources, one that is especially for international students - we should figure out how that figures into what we're thinking about? Also, concerning GC housing, it's not transparent how they put people on the waitlist. It seems really random and unfair how they pick people.

JG: This seems like stuff for a longer project -- we could even implement something like a survey, not just of people who did end up staying in this housing, but also people who applied and didn't get in. But this is a long process.

MG: Why don't we want students from departments posting on the DSC SocMed accounts?

RH: I meant department administration was reaching out to our SocMed accounts. That's not what we want. It's fine if students reach out to us because we serve students.

C. Co-Chair for Business (Raj Korpan)

- We have renewed our contract with VoteNet for another 4 years for \$10,215. They agreed to all the contract changes recommended by our lawyer.
- Lockers are still not assigned as the page on works is not working. I am trying to get it to work. Hope to get an update soon.
- Movie tickets should be replaced soon. Will come in on Monday - they're probably there. Will replace them into the box.
- Still have not organized Participatory Budgeting, need help please!

Discussion:

MG: Raj, what would it look like to get PB up and running?

RK: Organize meeting of the committee. Three people have emailed me with interest in meeting. We can discuss the schedule for the meeting. Proposals, election, timeline. First step is having the meeting!

MG: if I organize the meeting, will you come for it? I can organize something in January.

RK: That will be fine.

AK: I'd be willing to help as well, especially after the holidays, even though I'm drowning in work!

RK: Okay, let's figure out something in January: Raj, Adam, and Michael.

JG: Is there anything in the contract that would limit what we were talking about in terms of what we were talking about with the candidates? Like having each candidate stay some short, character-limited explanation of their aims.

RK: No, there should be no problem.

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D. USS Delegate (Jane Guskin)

- USS elections: At a 5-hour USS plenary on Nov. 24, in the runoff election for Vice Chair of Fiscal Affairs, Fay Yanofsky (BK) won 24 votes against 14 for John Mondal (Baruch, Unity team) with a few (4? 5?) abstentions. Since 29 votes were needed for a candidate to win, an additional round of voting was held; in that round Fay secured the seat with 29 votes against 11 for John.
- CUNY Board of Trustees (BoT) just released a budget request to the state that would impose another \$200/year tuition increase AND a \$120/year backdoor tuition hike disguised as a "wellness" fee on students at all senior and community colleges. It appears that the new \$120/year fee would apply to all graduate students as well, including GC students. Emergency actions to shut down the tuition and fee hikes:
 - Monday, Dec 9, 4:30pm @ Lehman: BoT hearing. Sign up to testify. Anyone can testify, but you must email hearings@cuny.edu by 4:30pm on Friday, Dec. 6, with your name, your affiliation and campus (if any), and say that you will testify on agenda item #7 (the budget request). Location: Music Building, Room 306, Lehman College, 250 Bedford Park Blvd West, Bronx, NY 10468. The hearing will likely go late so if you can't come until 5 or 6pm, you still have time to get there!
 - Monday, Dec 16, 4:30pm @ Baruch: BoT meeting when the hikes will be voted upon. Location: Baruch College Vertical Campus, Room 14-220, 55 Lexington Avenue (corner of 24th Street), New York, NY 10010.
 - Facebook event invite for both actions: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2186058841697098/>

Discussion:

RH: There's nothing in the BoT guidelines about this - this means that they can technically do whatever they want with this money. There are guidelines for the student activity fee and technology fee.

JG: We could create a document with all the questions from students concerning this issue.

MG: What do you think about sending round an email to GC students - asking them to tell their CUNY students - "class raps"??

RH: Maybe this is an opportunity to use the all student listserv? We don't want to bombard people with emails, but this seems really important.

MG: Do you think we should try and get a resolution passed at plenary against the \$120 wellness fee?

JG: Might as well! What about the thing you've already worked on?

RK: We can model on this on resolutions we've passed before.

RK: The description of the fee is so vague, it doesn't even differentiate between full-time and part-time students, how will it be administered (at CUNY central or each college), can we use student aid for fees?

JG: Also, some financial aid does not cover fees. So some students will have to pay this out of pocket.

GB: I brought it up with my students today in class - none of them knew about it and some of them were terrified about it. I think we should highlight the irony of enforcing austerity to pay for mental health.

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E. UFS Liaison (Mary Jean McNamara)

Attended the December 2nd meeting of the University Faculty Senate where newly installed Vice-Chancellor, Jose Luis Cruz, introduced himself to the Faculty and held a Q and A session afterwards. Cruz emphasized CUNY's role as a conduit of upward mobility, citing the statistics on students who come from immigrant families and their higher earning power after graduation. Cruz is an electrical engineer and is interested in promoting programs that lead to jobs in the sciences. Cruz also touted the inclusion of a proposed budget line in the 2021-22 budget which requests the hiring of 500 professors over a four-year period, with 125 line items being added each year beginning in FY2021. Cruz fielded questions from Faculty regarding the inclusion of Adjunct Faculty in the voting body of the UFS. Cruz demurred, saying that the decision was a matter for the BoT. Cruz was also asked about funding programs through the ASRC, (Advanced Science Research Center). Cruz indicated that he was still gathering information and has not reached a decision yet.

Discussion:

JG: When did the budget get sent to you?

MJM: This is just what Jose Luis Cruz said. We didn't actually get a budget in hand.

MG: What's the significance of the older/younger adjunct divide?

MJM: Adjuncts who attend the Faculty Senate are not paid for their time, unlike Faculty Senators who are compensated through their contracts.

GB: I'm interested in the new proposal for hiring adjuncts - tell me more.

JG: They propose hiring 125 new adjuncts per year for four years.

GB: So these aren't really conversion lines. They will be advertised to everyone?

JG: My reading is that the creation of the new positions is something to sweeten the deal so that the PSC won't fight the budget.

IV. Steering Officer Reports

A. Officer for Funding (Isatou Bittaye-Jobe)

The grants committee met on Thursday, Dec. 5 and reviewed the grant applications for November.

- 8 applications were received and the committee approved 7, and 1 was denied.
- The total amount approved for the 7 grants is \$4,800.
- The approved grants are:
 - 13th Annual Classics Graduate Student Conference: Honor and Shame in Classical Antiquity
 - Women in the Archive: An Interdisciplinary Workshop
 - Performing Knowledge: What Does Learning Feel Like?
 - 23rd Annual CUNY Graduate Philosophy Conference: Analytic/Continental What? Dissolving the Philosophical Divide
 - XXV LAILAC Annual Graduate Student Conference
 - Comparative Literature Conference 2020
 - Sessions in Art and Practice: Writing in Tempo
- The Critical Theory Certificate Program Conference: Disciplines Clash! application was denied because the grant application was submitted after the event has already taken place in November and the requester wanted to use this money for next year's conference. They were advised to reapply for next year's event in Spring 2020.
- The total approved grants for this semester is \$10,800 (16 grant applications).
- The next grant deadline is January 17, 2020.

Discussion: None

B. Officer for Governance & Membership (Adam Kocurek)

- The Constitution and Bylaws meeting will be held on 12/13/2019, before the plenary meeting.
- If you have any ideas for things to add to the Constitution and Bylaws agenda please let us know.
- For the upcoming plenary we should put the voting measures towards the beginning of the meeting to catch all the reps before they leave.

Discussion:

RH: We haven't sent out the Plenary agenda yet - we will modify it according to your suggestion and send it out tomorrow.

MG: How do you propose something for the agenda of the 12/13 meeting?

AK: People who have volunteered to be part of the committee must submit proposals.

RK: You can send us things you want to be on the agenda for C&B meetings.

RH: When suggesting changes, it's always good to suggest precise language - this shortens meeting time.

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C. Officer for Health & Wellness (Ming Chen)

- **Puppy Therapy**
 - The New York Therapy Animals (<https://www.therapydogs.com/>) can provide 4 dogs on Sunday afternoon (December 15) from 4 PM to 5 PM.
 - The event will be held in Room 5414, and the weekend room request has been approved by Matt. Also, the security personnel has been notified of this event as well.
 - The New York Therapy Animals asked for \$300 donation and the transportation fee of all their personnel. The budget for Wellness and Health should be able to cover that. All the committee members agreed on this expenditure.
 - The New York Therapy Animals will give all the invoice after the event.
 - The event will be posted on Twitter, Facebook, and sent through DSC listserv, so the students can sign up for the event soon. Question: how many students can we hold for this event?
 - Debrief: need to secure the event date and confirm with puppy therapy organizations early.
- **Massage Event**
 - The dates and time for the massage event for this semester have been confirmed: December 16 (Monday) from 11:30 PM to 6:00 PM, & December 17 (Tuesday) from 10:00 AM to 4:30 PM.
 - The space for the event has been reserved, and the facilities for this event has been requested as well (all confirmed).
 - Juli will contact me when she is back to NY to discuss more about the sign-up sheets, etc.
 - The event will be posted on Twitter, Facebook, and sent through DSC listserv soon.

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Discussion:

MJM: With the dogs - people pet dogs for like two minutes. I think that four dogs will be plenty. The only thing I'm concerned about is that the dog doesn't get overwhelmed.

MC: They expressed their concern about this issue too.

AK: Especially on a Sunday.

JG: Don't worry too much about it or stress about scheduling it. It will work out.

MC: So there's no need for people to sign up?

JG: I think that's making it less likely for people to come.

RK: My suggestion was going to be to restrict it to 15 minutes per person in the room, but I don't think it'll be needed.

RH: I will help you send the posters to the digital sign people and advertising.

D. Officer for Outreach (Sharanya Dutta)

No report

Discussion: None

E. Officer for Student Life & Services (Giacomo Bianchino)

- I'm taking up the task of addressing Title IX issues. Students have been expressing concerns to me.

Discussion:

MG: What is the precise issue at hand with title IX stuff? i.e. We need mediation? The GC need more clear rules? Faculty/Student? Student/Student? Student/NonStudent? Fostering a generally safe environment? Sexual harassment or sexual assault?

GB: This is the level of abstraction that we're dealing with. Nothing has been done to foster a sense of safety across the CUNY campuses. The examples that have been brought up with me are only anecdotal although Elaine did do a survey that held really bleak results. The problem is that students don't know where to go – one student was yelling at me.

AK: If something like this happens again in the future - the response should be: "we're student govt this is something we want to deal with, but we don't have anything immediate in place to help with you". This also calls into question institutional neglect. Aren't we mandated reporters?

RK: No we're not mandated reporters.

AK: In any case, this seems like a larger project to do with the whole institution.

GB: We need to take a first step, I'm sorry I don't know what it looks like exactly. We need to open up the conversation so that we can begin to dedicate resources to this. International students' rights are pertinent here because getting involved in legal issues might jeopardize them.

RK: They can contact us for legal consultation. We can have a side budget to help with this as well (mental health help).

MJM: I have one suggestion about this, which is: the composition of the student body historically is one of vulnerability, whether international or not, those of us who find ourselves here are people who don't have access to resources like other people have - so you wind up adopting a mentality where you think there's no help. Putting up posters that show how much we care and that we think this is an issue "see something, say something"

GB: Of course, an informational campaign is needed but we need something to put on the poster - but that's why we need to do something before it so that we can put something material in the informational campaign.

MG: Also, there will be fear of reporting when it comes to sexual harassment/assault charges because faculty have the power to undermine students' progress and therefore their additional difficulty for international students. They face the threat of losing their job and funding, and got kicked out of the country.

JG: I think we should get people from the transformative justice group to come to a meeting where they explain the methodology and people bringing their concrete stories and seeing if we can brainstorm about where to go from here.

MC: I agree that international students are a really vulnerable population - especially issues to do with language, culture, and power differentials. Also: confidentiality must be maintained!

RH: Title IX is supposed to have those kinds of considerations built in, but it doesn't work.

MJM: Maybe we could get a speaker series in about sexual violence from operations around the city?

JG: There's different kinds of solutions, transformative justice is just one option.

GB: Each representative needs to be bringing together a roadmap for their department - which professors are creepy/which professors are difficult to work with/how power works in the department/etc.

RK: Faculty are not held accountable. They remain in their positions despite complaints. We can pressure admin to hold them accountable.

GB: Anyone who wants to work on this stuff, send me an email.

MJM: We're now coming into the Spring semester - where are we on the game board with students get their disbursements on time? Can we do something to put the admin online? We don't want to go through what we went through in September?

RK: Last Spring there were fewer issues. My sense is the problem always happens in the Fall.

RH: There were issues last spring and the loan issued happened then as well.

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MG: We should email the Bursar's.

MJM: I don't think an email will propel the administration to change. I think part of our job is not just to email people. Our job is to cultivate an awareness in the student body! That's what they're scared of.

AK: At plenary we could ask reps to remind students who had issues in the Fall to reach out requesting timely disbursement for Spring

RK: Maybe we can have an open document where ppl can input the time and date they get their money?

MJ: At the plenary, resolution that admins have to give us a deadline for the disbursement.

RH: We already have resolutions - we can just point to those. I don't know if we need to pass another one.

AK: FICA payments have to be opted out of again - we should remind people.

RK: In my department 4 int'l students had FICA deducted and don't know how to get it back. The opt-out system is problematic

AK: I heard that we will get this money back via taxes.

MG: There is different information online.

JG: Who can take lead on this?

AK: Over the winter break I will reach out to bursar and financial aid and start the process about FICA. Regarding getting the money on time we should reach out students

MJM: I think we should go to Wrigley. I will deal with that piece

JG: We should send an email to admin asking for confirmation on a date and who students should contact if there are issues; then send students an email giving them information about what they should expect.

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F. Officer for Technology & Library (Michael Greer)

- Sent out summary of IT meeting with highlights
- Object Library?
- CUNY2020
- What to do with info from Montilla re: Laptops?
- CUNYFirst upheaval?
- Ask Provost to send round email?
- Push Montilla for budget?
- Work order notice draft - need approval from you guys. Link [here](#).
- List of public spaces

Discussion:

AK: Regarding stapling things in lounges, you can ask people at plenary to put it up in their lounges at plenary.

MJM: Laptops? How many should a library have? Can you ask Polly?

JG: I have never had the experience of going to the library and not being able to have a laptop.

MJM: You should definitely push IT for the budget.

RK: We should also push the president and Brian Peterson for budget transparency.

RH: We have a meeting with Student Affairs next week. We'll loop you in with more info after.

MC: Will that CUNYFirst migration influence how we select courses?

JG: Can this all be done after final grades are due in on the 28th of December?

RH: I will follow up about this!

V. New Business

A. Steering Discretionary (Voting)

No motions made.

Discussion:

Plenary

MG: I want us to brainstorm how we can make our jobs more sustainable - I know that I am thinking about not coming back next year, and I think other people share the same concerns. My mental health is really affected by the constant state of panic.

JG: We need to look at how DSC is structured

AK: It's important to delegate work and pick our battles

MC: Committee members aren't paid so it's hard to get help and get responses

RK: I have a couple of thoughts that might help although I know we can't address it now. One idea is to count meetings toward office hours or have less office hours. We can pay committee members/give gift cards. Other ideas are to hire someone whose job it is to deal with things like room reservations (e.g., office manager)

Executive Committee

AK: I have almost an inverse of Raj's idea - that we could have someone whose job is to be there for the crisis moments.

JG: I've found the ergonomics of the office are really bad, so I'd prefer if we didn't have to be here for office hours.

Steering Committee

MG: I definitely don't think you should be doing something that is bad for your body just for the sake of selling movie tickets.

Constitution and Bylaws

MC: I think this idea of having an office manager is really a great idea.

Grants

RH: I agree with that too - we can bring it up in the retreat.

Health & Wellness

GB: We need to be wary of overcommitting ourselves and also bringing things up in the chat! People feel guilty. We need to take care of each other.

Outreach

RH: The WhatsApp chat has really contributed to this stuff.

RK: There is precedent at CUNY with other student governments hiring an office manager.

Student Services

VI. Announcements

No announcements.

USS Advisory Committee

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:25 pm.

Advocate Advisory Board

OpenCUNY Board

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