

Steering Committee
Minutes
February 7, 2020
4:30 PM

Attendance

Elizabeth Che (EC) – Chair; Raj Korpan (RK); Rod Hurley (RH); Ming Chen (MC); Michael Greer (MG); Jane Guskin (JG); Giacomo Bianchino (GB); Adam Kocurek (AK); Mary Jean McNamara (MJM); Sharanya Dutta (SD); Sonja Gandert (SG)

Plenary

Executive Committee

EC calls meeting to order at 4:41 pm

Steering Committee

Constitution and Bylaws

I. Approval of Agenda

RH moves to approve the agenda with emendations.
 GB seconds the motion.
 Motion approved unanimously

Grants

Health & Wellness

II. Approval of Minutes of October 4, 2019

AK moves to approve the minutes.
 RH seconds the motion.
 Motion approved unanimously

Outreach

Student Services

III. Executive Committee Reports

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

USS Advisory Committee

Advocate Advisory Board

OpenCUNY Board

Governance Task Force

- Nominations Ballot Open: February 3 (12AM) - March 2, 2020 (11:59PM).
 Access link: <https://eballot4.votenet.com/dsc>
 Email notifications have been sent out to students with the help of CCC. Notification also posted on Twitter, Facebook, and DSC Website: <http://cunydisc.org/2020/02/dsc-2020-2021-nominations-ballot-open/>
- Chartered Organization nodes for Spring 2020 updated: Help chartered organizations achieve active status by signing up on their rosters during your office hours: <http://cunydisc.org/works/chartered-organizations/list>. Let me know if you catch any errors (e.g., blocking roster registration or linked to Fall 2019 rather than Spring 2020).
- Room exception log: You can use this updated log to note which chartered organization or program has used their room exception or their eligibility to use a room exception. Chartered organizations & programs can only use one room exception per academic year. They must be active during the previous year to use their exception. (e.g., to use a room exception in Spring 2020, they must be active during Fall 2019). If you encounter emails in the dsc.steering.committee regarding chartered orgs or programs requesting the use of their exception, you can either try to process it, or forward it to me to follow up with it.
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MzBVWc5ugpi8Opmg5UOXil4tLsAG5Dc_9pMJT52ngyw/edit?usp=sharing

B. Co-Chair for Communications (Rod Hurley)

- Social Media - I have been working with Social Media Correspondent to formulate an announcement about social media services, which will be sent out soon. Next, we plan to produce written guidelines for the Social Media Correspondent role.
- Graduate Center Housing - Feedback I received from students who live in GC housing is that students are generally satisfied with the facility and staff there. The complaints they have are: policy that requires lease renewal 6 months in advance; unreliable wifi in some rooms; lack of ergonomic furniture; the lounge doesn't feel "homely" or welcoming; limited/no counter space in kitchens. I visited the building on 2/7 and brought up these issues with one of the Resident Assistants. He said the wifi issue was being addressed and that he would raise the other issues. The problem with mail forwarding for former tenants seems to have been resolved.

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Upcoming Meetings

- DSC Steering Retreat on 2/12
- Co-Chairs meeting with OSA on 2/19
- EC meeting with Interim President Muyskens on 2/20
- Next DSC Plenary Meeting scheduled for 2/21.

C. Co-Chair for Business (Raj Korpan)

- Participatory Budgeting: Announced on January 31st (thanks to Michael and Adam for your help!)
 - Have gotten two emails expressing interest
 - Also have received email from GC Communications team asking if we want their help announcing the call on the GC website and also announcing the winners after they are picked, is this something we should do?
- Budget: Revised budget will be voted on in February plenary
- DSC Website: We are working on transitioning to a new version of the website this semester- more to come.
- Office Hours: Please resume normal office hours schedule (5 hours for EC, 3 hours for steering)
- 1099s have been sent out, let me know if you haven't gotten yours or it doesn't have the correct amount on it
- Movie Ticket Desk Key: I will follow up with facilities to see if we can get an update
- Graduate Council Curriculum Committee: Announced at the end of the meeting that they are looking into admitting students directly into Certificate programs

D. USS Delegate (Jane Guskin)

- USS LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS: USS is working hard on legislative stuff this spring in collaboration with CUNY Rising Alliance and PSC. I'm on the legislative committee (participating in what seem to be monthly committee meetings via phone). USS passed three resolutions at the last plenary: one advocating a tuition freeze at current rates, one protesting the \$120/year wellness fee included in the CUNY budget request to the state, and one calling for CUNY to divest from fossil fuels. There was debate about the process for drafting resolutions, and about the weakness of the tuition freeze demand versus demanding free tuition; the tuition freeze initially did not pass, as many delegates seemed to feel it should be sent back for redrafting, but after a speech by plenary guest Senator Andrew Gounardes about the urgency of the legislative budget cycle, and comments from USS chair Timothy Hunter suggesting that USS legislative efforts would be damaged if we did not approve the tuition freeze resolution, it was brought back for a second vote (based on a motion of a delegate who voted against) and passed with two no votes (including mine) and two abstentions. I also circulated to delegates some ideas for a more accountable and inclusive committee process for resolutions and other business. There's a lot going on and not very clear channels of communication so I will suggest that an email go out at the end of each week announcing actions and events for the next week, so that I can easily forward that to the DSC list.

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- **TUITION/FEE PROTESTS:** The student-led Free CUNY movement creatively disrupted the Board of Trustees December 16 meeting in an effort to block vote on the tuition hike and wellness fee. BoT chair Bill Thompson gave Public Safety an order to “clear the room” of all present, whether disrupting or not, in what I believe is a violation of the Open Meetings Law. As those ejected from the meeting gathered in the hallway--USS delegates, other student government reps, PSC members, as well as Free CUNY organizers and supporters--Public Safety officers from the special team assigned to BoT meetings escalated tensions by pushing people. For no apparent reason Public Safety detained a Free CUNY organizer who is a GC student and employee, holding her in a Public Safety office adjacent to the hallway. She was held for about half an hour while everyone refused to leave the hallway, chanting “let her go.” USS chair Tim Hunter left the BoT meeting to try to negotiate her release, and then returned to vote against the budget that included the tuition hike and fee. CUNY Rising Alliance coordinator Jamell Henderson also spoke out at the scene against the assault on students. USS executive director Cyrille Njikeng (paid staff) also attempted to intervene to deescalate. Public Safety threatened the detained student with a summons but because we refused to leave, in the end they released her without a summons. The detained student left the room chanting FREE CUNY.

- **HUNTER STARBUCKS PROTESTS:** Hunter College students with the Free CUNY movement and other groups are fighting Hunter’s plan to lease campus ground floor space to Starbucks instead of making it available for student projects. The lease provides Starbucks with 20 months of free rent for the space and gives them the entire basement level (1,000 square feet) at no cost. Students protested and disrupted at the Jan. 13 BoT committee meeting where the lease was voted on, at the Jan. 27 BoT hearing (inexplicably held twice in a row at Lehman in the Bronx), and at the Feb. 3 meeting where the BoT approved the lease. After discussions with Free CUNY members, USS vice chair for disability affairs Leonard Blades voted against the lease at the committee meeting and USS chair Tim Hunter voted against it at the BoT meeting after first submitting a motion to table it, which failed. At the BoT meeting, it was clear that Public Safety had been ordered not to escalate this time. While the BoT again ejected everyone from the room, this happened at the end of the meeting and officers did not touch anyone or behave aggressively. Hunter students continue to fight the Starbucks deal in other ways. Because students had argued that the space should instead be used as a food pantry, Hunter president Jennifer Raab suddenly established a food pantry on the main campus for the first time, something students had been demanding for years.

E. UFS Liaison (Mary Jean McNamara)

- Henderson Rules - UFS Committee on Academic Freedom urged the Office of Legal Affairs to retract their proposed revision to the Code of Conduct that prohibits public demonstrations on and off campus, as this would be a violation of free speech.

IV. Steering Officer Reports

A. Officer for Funding (Sonia Gandert)

2. The Grants committee met on February 5, 2020 to discuss applications submitted for the January 17 deadline. We received five applications and approved all five of them; one was contingent on a minor budget modification.
3. A total amount of \$3,500 was approved; average amount approved was \$700.
4. With this cycle’s awards, there is now \$5,700 available for two more grant cycles
5. Approved grants include:
 - 10th Annual History Graduate Student Conference, "Challenging Historical Narratives: New Approaches for the New Decade"
 - Afro-Brazilian Art and Global Contemporaneity (required minor budget adjustment – resubmitted as of 2/6)

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- Support for CART accessibility service at the 2020 ESC conference (Grants Committee voted unanimously to fund this project for up to \$800 rather than \$700)
 - Ethnography of the Ephemeral in a Transnational Context
 - Touch, Taste, Turn: Unleashing the Senses in the Art of the Americas
6. Additionally, we received a grant that was mistakenly submitted as a start up rather than a regular grant. Its ask was \$600 (well over the \$200 maximum) and in other ways appears to have been intended to be submitted as a regular grant. The application itself raised a number of questions that the Grants Committee would have liked to discuss before approval, but it is impossible to change a grant's status from start up to regular on DSC Works. Since it had fallen within the deadline, the Officer for Funding reached out to the submitter for clarification and gave him the option to have the start up grant "denied" in order to then resubmit it as a regular grant. He never responded, so the grant remains active but will be officially declined now that the committee has met.

B. Officer for Governance & Membership (Adam Kocurek)

7. Need to replace some At-Large Representatives and some Program Representatives. There are currently four open At-Large Representative Seats. Due to failure to attend, Sarah Rantz (Psychology) and Raven Gomez (Digital Humanities) have been removed. Dominique Nisperos (Sociology) resigned, and we have one other open seat.
8. We can nominate people for At-Large Representative Seats - if you have any potential candidates, PLEASE let me know so I can reach out to them. I have a few people in mind, but they are the individuals I commonly call upon to proxy for people who will be absent at Plenary meetings, and losing them would essentially mean that my ability to find proxies would be far more limited.
9. There are three Program Representative Seats that need to be replaced. Due to failure to attend, Rachael Jaokim (Biology), Fuxian Li (Data Science), and Angie Alvarado (MALS) need to be replaced. I will be reaching out to the departments to inform them that they either need to find willing candidates or the seats will close.
10. The Economics Department and the Biography and Memoir Program have both expressed desire to reopen their seats. I sent them the forms for signatures, and am waiting to hear back from them.

C. Officer for Health & Wellness (Ming Chen)

- Puppy Therapy for Fall 2019 – 53 people signed up for the event. Around 20 people showed up. Students said they want to have puppy therapy again. New York Therapy Animals got their fee for the event. Will contact New York Therapy Animals again to schedule another Puppy Therapy this May.
- Massage Event for Fall 2019 – First day: all the time slots were signed up. Second day: maybe due to the weather and train delay, about 3 slots were not filled. Therapist Juli got her fee and 1099 Form
- The Wellness Festival for Spring 2020 – Health Education Coordinator, Michelle, contacted me concerning the Wellness Festival for this semester (April 23). Have confirmed with Juli about doing massage event during the Wellness Festival. Will set up a DSC table to distribute materials of DSC Health and Wellness. Still need to coordinate the time of the massage event with Michelle. The NYSHIP Seminars for Spring 2020. Have contacted Scott to discuss the day and time to do the NYSHIP Seminars.

D. Officer for Outreach (Sharanya Dutta)

- Transfer Credits: Seeking advice on the best way to proceed with respect to transfer credit situation. Possibilities are: drafting a letter to the Interim President (maybe also Registrar/Provost), passing a resolution in plenary, asking to meet with the President in person (multiple people) or a combination of these.

- Allocating funds for tax help, move to Sprintax, and FICA exemption for international students: Perhaps the DSC could request the administration to/could ourselves pay for a tax consultant to visit the GC/remotely answer questions about the minutiae of filling out the tax forms (such as the 1s and 0s and what they mean, because HR is not allowed to legally say), understanding what the different forms are, and navigating the very messy move from Glacier to Sprintax TDS, and the continued lack of clarity vis a vis the special FICA exemption process for international students. Also speak to the HR and the Bursar's office and see if we can get some clarity as DSC, so that we can disseminate information to the students through listservs.
- International Student Day: Organizing and facilitating an international student day where representatives from all major offices are present and take questions from the students about their concerns.

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

- SS Committee: I am organising a date for the committee to meet and determine how many board game nights/what other activities we will do this semester.
- Bringing "All We've Got" to CUNY: I am in the process of organising a showing of a film about queer solidarity and the defence of LGBTQ spaces in the US today (<http://www.allwevegot.org/>). I'm currently gathering info about what the costs are etc and what the logistics are. I'd like to put it on in March/April.
- Budget Cuts: On January 9th, Muyskens sent out an email about the impending budgetary measures intended to rebalance the GC's expenses and costs. The measures proposed included a freeze on new hires and a pause on reappointments. On the 27th of January (last Monday), he spoke to a group of concerned PSC members and laid out precisely what he meant by his budgetary measures. In the process of this meeting, he contradicted himself explicitly, traded in terminological ambiguities (they're not "cuts"; they're "working together towards the same goal") and also went against claims he made in a town-hall meeting Michael and I attended last semester. I want to know what other DSC folk might have heard in meetings with the president last semester. I also propose the DSC do what it can to ensure transparency in the coming months around this sensitive issue.
- Sexual Misconduct Services: Picking up from where we left off with the title IX audit a couple of years ago, I would like to suggest building student resources for dealing with problems of gender and sexual misconduct. I have compiled a list of possible initiatives already implemented in other colleges within NYC. I want to convene a forum to garner opinions about how we might make the GC a safer/more transparent campus.

F. Officer for Technology & Library (Michael Greer)

- CUNY2020: Meeting with Matt Gold on Monday.
- Student Technology Fee: Meeting is on Monday, March 9th from 12:30pm to 2pm. I cannot make this because I teach from 12.50pm to 2pm on Mondays, so will need to designate a proxy. (Raj volunteers). A few notes:
 - Quorum is essential to the meeting. If a faculty member is unable to attend, they may designate a proxy, and they can cast a vote on your behalf.
 - Funding proposals will be shared before the meeting for review along with a list of contractual obligations and the available budget. Proposals can be submitted to stf@gc.cuny.edu. Proposals can be made from the floor by members in attendance.
- Marlene recommended we go in there with a plan of things we want in case they are being generous. Apparently last year the committee had too much money, but we weren't prepared for that, so didn't have any ideas for it. Ideas of things to propose:
 - Color printers are crucial for MALS, Digital Humanities, Sciences, and Data Vis.

- More laptops! Marlene says that the library officially has no mac laptops (or at least that's what a librarian told her!)
- Funding for an IT desk?
- Adobe subsidized contract (license for personal devices)
- Emails to Columbia, NYU, Wrigley/Muyskens. I haven't sent them yet, because there was some disagreement on the draft with the way they were worded. Some people wanted us to direct Muyskens and Wrigley in more tangible ways? Need clarification from the team on this.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oGqcQG-xpHi8IySMZ4BEdcM2hf4lhOjIHvQe3Xus_CY/edit
- Our reference librarian will not have her job filled because of budget cuts. This seems like a serious imposition for a graduate institution to be without a reference librarian at all. Have reached out to Polly and let her know that the DSC could pass a resolution if it would help.

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V. New Business

A. Constitutional Amendments (Voting)

Constitution and Bylaws

1. Update the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council Acronym from DSC to DGSC

Current Language:

The name of this organization shall be the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Organization (hereafter, "DSO"). The name of the elected body that represents the DSO shall be the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council (hereafter, "DSC").

Proposed Language:

The name of this organization shall be the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Organization (hereafter, "DSO DGSO"). The name of the elected body that represents the DSO DGSO shall be the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council (hereafter, "DSC DGSC").

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RH moves to approve the proposed language

AK seconds the motion.

Discussion:

MG: Why not change it to Doctoral and Master's Students' Council?

RH: We are only changing the acronym we use, not the name itself. To do that it would involve a lot more because we would be changing the legal name of the organization.

Vote: Motion passes unanimously

2. Follow up on DSC ballot for constitutional amendment III.3.2 from 12/18/17.

Proposed Language:

Article III.3.2. The Co-Chair for Communications

The duties of the Co-Chair for Communications shall include but not be limited to:

- a. acting as official spokesperson of the DSC;
- b. reporting to the DSC relevant activities of the CUNY Board of Trustees, Graduate Council, Council of Executive Officers, President's Cabinet, and all other entities that affect Graduate Center students;

JG moves to approve the proposed language.

MG seconds the motion.

Vote: Motion passes unanimously

B. Petition for New Program Representative - Philosophy (Voting)

MG moves to open a program representative seat for Philosophy.

JG seconds the motion.

Vote: Motion passes unanimously

JG moves to nominate Shannon Brick (Philosophy) to fill the new Philosophy seat, pending confirmation that she is a GC student in good standing.

MG seconds the motion.

Vote: Motion passes unanimously

C. DSC Spring Party Planning

RH: The party will take place on March 20th after the plenary. The steering should come up with a theme for the party. Please sign up for tasks on the spreadsheet: both tasks for beforehand and during the party. We can hire the DJ again, and 1 bartender this time, since we're not going to serve hard liquor. We can also have snacks in the party room.

JG: We should have the pizza in the same room as the drinks?

RH: There may not be enough space to have the pizza in the same space. It is already congested in the drinks room

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D. Review of Office Hours Tasks

RK gives reminders about tasks and introduces a weekly task list. Checks expire after 180 days and should be brought to CCB's attention. CCB will bring the expired check to the business office and have it reissued. Also, send check-related emails from the DSC steering email and cc' the CCB. Weekly sign up starts next week.

MG: I think we should expand the budget - we need more money to spend on groceries.

RK: We have about \$550 left for the year. When you buy supplies, you should update the inventory. On DSC works, go to Reports -> Expenditures, and you can see the total spent for each budget line.

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E. DSC Listserv Review

RH: Listserv is set as a community for students to share information about various things, from events to research, fellowships, things for sale, roommate search, etc. It has been our policy not to moderate the list, which is the only way for the average student to have contact with the community at large. I think it is important to have that.

MC: In terms of the housing thing, that seems to be a very prevalent use for the listserv. Perhaps we can have a separate list for just housing issues. Also, is there a mechanism or algorithm that can detect sensitive information in the email that it can flag it? Selective moderation would be great.

RK: There is a way using gmail keywords. Potentially it is possible with listserv too.

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F. Outreach - what the DSC can do

MJM: What are the DSC's responsibilities and obligations?

RK: In my time at the DSC, we handle all sorts of issues. I don't think it is right to have a blanket obligation for everything that comes before us but then where do we draw the line? Each of us have our own priorities so it also depends on the members of steering. It is hard to balance this.

AK: There is an X amount of hours we are paid for. And as issues arrive, it goes beyond the hours. Especially for people who are new on steering, this is overwhelming. Overtime as we are acquainted with our roles, we learn to balance it. One way could be to push issues to the appropriate steering officer instead of trying to handle it yourself.

G. CUNY Issues

1. Student Code of Conduct –
 Draft a resolution for adoption at the plenary meeting.

2. CUNY-wide Food Vendor

JG: CFO of CUNY came to talk about it. They are currently negotiating it. My concern is whether current workers will be offered jobs with the new vendor, Culinart? There is also concern over workers' rights. They have agreed that individual food needs of each campus will be taken into account.

MG: I think this is an example of something that is outside the scope of us as a steering committee.

RK: In relation to the GC, when we had the auxiliary board meeting, the Co-Chairs are members of. Restaurant Associates was threatening to back out of the contract because of revenue loss. The cafe is not open and the cafeteria is on limited hours. This will probably continue with new vendors and they will not take account of student needs. DSC was opposed to Restaurant Associates because they don't offer discounts to students. Ask if they will work with students, offer discounts, ... etc.

H. Plenary Attendance Incentives

For the plenary attendance raffle, we can offer either 2 movie tickets or \$16.50 (6-ride) metrocard.

I. Request for Endorsement from the Ad-Hoc Accessibility Committee

MG: I am on the ad-hoc committee on accessibility. The committee has proposed language on accessibility and accommodations for inclusion in all course syllabi at the GC. I will share it with you, please review it.

VI. Announcements

None

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

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