

Steering Meeting *Minutes*

May 1, 2020

4:30 PM

Attendance: Giacomo Bianchino, Elizabeth Che, Ming Chen, Sharanya Dutta, Sonja Gandert, Michael Greer, Roderick Hurley, Adam Kocurek, Raj Korpan, Mary Jean McNamara

Absent: Jane Guskin

Meeting called to order at 4:39 pm

I. Approval of Agenda

SD moves to approve the agenda

AK seconds the motion

Vote: Unanimously approved

II. Approval of Minutes of April 3, 2020

SG moves to approve the minutes

MC seconds.

Vote: Unanimously approved

III. Executive Committee Reports

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

Reminder to vote: <https://eballot4.votenet.com/dsc/login.cfm>

- Please help spread the word! The current participation rate is 4.31%

Emails to candidates will be sent out today for optional bio:

- Submission form: <https://forms.gle/megHgEp8Pe2eZt347>
- View results here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ITzIYuKuqft-8Q9CM48U_2VXnLjppH4xZCNB-b6vAB8/edit?usp=sharing

Emails to Chartered Orgs will be sent out today regarding active status deadline extension.

- Chartered Orgs have until the end of Fall 2020 (December 20, 2020) to submit: 20 Signatures on the roster for Fall 2020, Fall 2019 semesterly report, and Spring 2020 semesterly report to qualify for BOTH Spring and Fall 2020 active status.

Discussion:

AK: Rosters are signed online through the works page. But for other issues coming up, like programs wanting to petition to open up a representative seat, that is a physical paper, are we going to be accepting eSignatures since we can't get physical signatures?

EC: I think we should open it up for eSignatures, that would be the best option. In terms of how to get eSignatures, we would need a form, perhaps a Google Form. The online form should have all the same fields.

B. Co-Chair for Communications (Rod Hurley)

Updates

- April 16 - DSC EC met with Interim President Muyskens, Associate Provost David Olan, and Senior VP Brian Peterson. This was a response to a letter sent by the DSC objecting to being left out of the loop about emergency measures that were being taken.
 - CUNY/GC has the same flat funding as last year, which does not cover contract wage increases. Colleges have been asked to prepare a budget with a 7% cut in expenditure.
 - With NY projecting a large tax shortfall, CUNY's budget will likely see significant cuts when the state budget is reviewed. In addition, GC is still currently trying to close last year's \$5M budget deficit. There has also been a loss of revenue from space rentals because the building is closed. Current situation might be an incentive for some faculty to retire, even without a formal incentive package.
 - When we asked about their decision to shorten the deadline for admissions offers, they said they plan to admit fewer doctoral students and increase master's student enrollment in the fall semester.
 - We asked if current students on fellowship would be required to do more work. They said that fellowships will stay the same in terms of structure and hours, but WAC may include tasks other than writing, depending on what colleges need (research, mentoring, digital pedagogy, etc.)
 - The move to distance learning has been a lot of work and doing it with large classes will be even more difficult. They also said they don't know if class sizes will be reduced to accommodate this.
 - Regarding emergency funding for students, they said that it would be impossible given the current budget, but that they were raising money for emergency grants to individual students. \$175k raised so far - goal is \$500k.
 - Negotiations ongoing to extend health insurance coverage to tuition fellowships.
 - Regarding the CUNY-wide food service, the agreement is still being worked on and might be in place by the end of this fiscal year. Other contracts have come up but nothing has been stopped.
 - We also asked what is being done to position the GC as a center for research on the pandemic? They said that they are responding to requests for research and there will be some funding coming out of that. Some work is being done at the ASRC and they are open to ideas; talking about GC's contribution to research.
 - Essential staff is at work and maintaining the building - engineering, mailroom, public safety, and facilities. Persons should only come to the GC if absolutely necessary. They have smaller shifts that can manage what needs to be done so persons are not coming in as often.
- April 17 - Co-Chairs meeting with OSA
 - Student Technology Fee - Refund was approved by the BoT but has not been implemented. The policy is being relooked.

- Commencement - There will be no in-person ceremony. They are looking into having a virtual acknowledgment of degrees. Refunds for commencement fees have been forwarded to students and diplomas will be mailed out.
- All summer classes at CUNY will be online. The fall semester hasn't been confirmed yet.
- Satisfactory progress forms still have to be completed. According to OSA, they are being lenient and everything is being approved.
- Counselling center (remote counseling, webinars, etc) and Child care center (storytelling and check-ins) are also operating remotely.
- Accessibility Services - Updated accessibility software, working with the TLC looking to Fall online classes. Staff has been creating accessible material, attending classes to do captioning, etc.
- Fitness class refunds are being processed
- Reappointment letters for GCFs going out, but so far not for adjunct appointments
- NYSHIP - Telehealth services available free with NYSHIP, \$59 without insurance.
 - Summer prepayment for students who receive NYSHIP through adjunct appointments - For students who will be covered in the Fall, prepayments are taken out of the final 4 Spring paychecks to cover summer. If there is no Fall appointment, coverage terminates 28 days after the Spring semester ends.
- Technology Device Distribution: Laptops, ipads - Received 25 devices from CUNY and distributed all. They expect to receive more GC received 40 requests.
 - Zoom accounts - coming soon
- Dorms - students who were living at the Towers have been moved to the Summit at QC, or have gone home, one student with special needs was moved to GC housing.
 - GC building is open. The gym and common room are closed, and they are doing ongoing sanitizing.
 - Lease renewals - some students have been responding; Admin is being flexible about deadlines
- CUNY2020 on hold, since no nonessential construction can take place
- April 21 - Attended a meeting with GC admin and students managing the petition for emergency funding.
 - The position put forward was that all students need emergency funding, not just those who already have funding packages. In addition, international students are uniquely affected by the current situation.
 - Interim President Muyskens said that they were aware of the problems, but could not support the petition in light of the current budget. He said they were working hard to raise funds to support students through emergency grants. He said he felt that the Chancellor would be willing to listen to the concerns and that he would be willing to try to arrange a meeting with the chancellor if it took the form of a discussion, without demands.
- April 23 - EC was invited to a meeting with senior GC administrators regarding a memo sent by CUNY instituting a CUNY-wide freeze on personnel changes and discretionary salary increases. Also no contracts can be signed or purchases made without approval from CUNY central. When the possibility of reducing or advocating for reduction in tuition or not collecting excellence fees and it was said that this was up to the Board of Trustees. We asked if there was a plan in place for the possibility that the budget is cut by the governor and were told that they ran a few models but don't have a concrete plan.

Upcoming

- The election ballot opened on April 1 and remains open until May 15. Please vote and remind students in your programs to vote. This is an extension of the regular voting period. This means that we have to reschedule the May plenary meeting for incoming reps
- Next Plenary meeting - May 15 (Outgoing Representatives)

Discussion:

SD: When would we run for steering positions for next year?

RH: This would be at the new representatives plenary meeting after the election results are verified.

RK: Regarding the meeting about the petition, do the organizers of the petition have a plan going forward?

RH: After the meeting the interim president had agreed to try to set up a meeting between the petition organizers and the chancellor. What he said was that he didn't think the chancellor would be opposed to discussing it. Rather than framing it as a petition with demands, he thought that it should be a discussion instead. A few days later there was a response from the interim president saying the Chancellor is unavailable to meet.

GB: I'm also in that email chain. The most recent message was that the interim president also could not support the petition. There are two letters that will be coming out with regards to the petition.

RH: I haven't seen emails from students not being able to access NYSHIP, so hopefully that is a good thing

MG: At the plenary we set up a task force to focus on five issues, one of which is for the petition. I was hoping that at this meeting we can discuss and make sure there isn't redundant work happening.

RH: I just facilitated the meeting, but I'm not involved directly. I will reach out to the people who signed up to work on that task force.

C. Co-Chair for Business (Raj Korpan)

- Revised Budget approved by plenary to reallocate \$60,000 towards the Student Emergency Grants
 - Still waiting to actually transfer the funds from our account - I can't move the money until we have confirmed whether the BoT Resolution to waive 50% of the spring SAF goes through or not. If it goes through then we won't have the money to put towards the grants, if it doesn't then we will. I have sent a follow up email twice to Matt Schoengood, still waiting for an answer.
 - As a reminder, all requests must be submitted by May 31st to be included in this year's budget.
- Check request situation
 - I had a number of folks submit their bank account information so they could be wired their funds instead of a check being issued and mailed. Now that the first round of wires went through, everyone was charged a \$15 domestic wire transfer fee. This is unacceptable and very frustrating. I have emailed with the Business Office several times to figure out what we can do about this. Unfortunately, they cannot do an ACH Deposit to our bank accounts. See the information below. I plan to reimburse the \$15 fee to those who were charged.
 - As an alternative to wire transfers, they have offered to issue checks, but the person who issues them will only be going into the GC 1-2 times a month.
 - *We opted out from ACH because of security concerns. But when DSC goes live in CUNYfirst on July 1 it will have that option, but for now our management would not want to switch. It's only for the next 2 months... If DSC board decides to reimburse students for \$15 service fee I will process those checks, but business office can not make such payment: 1. We are custodians of DSC money, 2. Business office does not have operating fund of its own.*

- *Meanwhile, I know DSC is supposed to have a new election soon. When you select new board members can you please ask them to fill out attached forms? These are needed to set up their profiles in CUNYfirst for stipend payments. Those who will not receive stipends, don't need to fill them out. Also, non-stipend student requestors will only be able to receive payments via check. That is just how CUNYfirst works for now. Only stipend recipients will have an option to opt for ACH or check. If we can receive these vendor forms prior to going live we will be able to issue their stipends in July uninterrupted. (The forms that are attached are the direct deposit form and a W9 form - this essentially will make you a NYS vendor)*

Discussion:

RH: We need to think about whether to do the \$15 reimbursement for the wire transfer fee. Also, it might not make sense to do wire transfers for small reimbursements. Waiting for a month to get a check is not ideal but it might better to do checks for smaller amounts and transfers for larger amounts.

SD: It might make sense to reimburse it now since people didn't know, and it's only a few. But hereafter folks should be made aware and then they can decide whether to take the fee. I can change my address any time?

MJM: What is the basis for ACH being insecure when we have been using them all along and will be using that when we are on CUNYFirst? Submitting W9 forms can put a flag on your IRS tax return. What is the difference between a student working at the DSC versus teaching a course?

RH: It is slightly different because as a vendor you are not on staff as you are when teaching. As a vendor you are responsible for a specific task or product.

MJM: What changed between getting wire transfer and direct deposit? Fellowship is directly deposited but I received the stipend through wire transfer.

RK: Starting July 1, we will be in CUNYFirst and then stipends be sent by direct deposit. But until then, someone in the business office is physically logging into a Citibank account and putting in the information. The fee that is charged is by the recipient bank. Our Citibank account doesn't charge the fee for sending. In terms of the difference between a student working at the DSC and teaching a course: We are considered contractors. We didn't fill out the W2. When we are teaching a course, we fill out the W2, are part of the union, and considered an official CUNY employee. How we are classified differently.

SD: If you go into CUNYFirst and put in the direct deposit there, is that the same as vendor? Shouldn't they be able to use that.

RK: Unfortunately, no because they are in separate modules. The business office can't access student information.

SD: Will it still be considered 1099 income if we fill out the W9?

RK: Yes

MJM: They have now lowered the amount for 1099 to file taxes, if you get at least \$600 in 1099 income then you have to file on it.

D. USS Delegate (Jane Guskin)

- Smitha (USS legislative director) asked me to draft something about how students and workers have been left out of CUNY crisis decision making. This is the draft (in progress with USS members). Let me know if you have thoughts.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nj4UAqWBXvB9r1OMA8BxgrQCOasIHrry7kaaYwg1OIk/edit>

- Here is the proposed USS bylaw change for adding a third alternate delegate, presented at the end of this form: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FPLtx79J2tFSkBor-wpDeuFXFEaexYmrlEtBcJFxBVI/edit>

E. UFS Liaison (Mary Jean McNamara)

- Update: University Faculty Senate will meet online on May 12th. There was no meeting in April, which was not a consequence of COVID-19.
- Faculty Senate concerns during NYS "Pause" effective March 12th, 2020
 - Clarity regarding the status of classes in the fall: will faculty and students be online in the fall?
 - Evaluation of faculty in online format
 - Training and resources to assist faculty adapt to online technology
 - Communication to non-tenured faculty regarding appointments and non-reappointments: The number of non-reappointments is significantly larger than the number of reappointments of non-tenured faculty.
 - Parameters of the COVID-19 Virus State of Emergency retroactive to March 12, 2020
- *The following is a message sent to the Faculty Senators from Matthew Cotter, Executive Director of UFS, 4/29/20:*
 - Appointment/Non-Reappointment Notices: During this period of telecommuting, any notices required to be provided to faculty and staff, including those pursuant to Article 10 of the PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement regarding notification of appointment/non-reappointment for faculty and staff and Article 13 regarding HEOs, (Higher Education Officers), should be sent, at a minimum, to an employee's CUNY email address. If there is no CUNY email address on file, whatever email address is on file should be used. If possible, especially in cases of non-reappointment, we suggest that multiple methods of communication be used. These may include CUNY email address, personal email address, and text to cell phone number. It is important to use our best efforts to get notification to faculty and staff. We understand that this is an extra burden, but the number of non-reappointments pales in comparison to the number of reappointments, and the colleges must demonstrate strong best efforts to ensure that notice of non-reappointment was effectuated.
 - Supplemental Agreement for the COVID-19 Virus State of Emergency: The Professional Staff Congress and The City University of New York entered into the following Supplemental Agreement for the COVID-19 Virus State of Emergency ("Emergency Agreement"). The Emergency Agreement is retroactive to March 12, 2020, and will continue until the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, unless an extension is agreed to by the parties. Additional provisions may be added by agreement of the parties. The provisions of the Emergency Agreement shall supersede any other agreement concerning the subject matter herein made by the parties prior to March 12, 2020.
 - Office Hours during COVID-19 Virus: Both full-time faculty and adjuncts who are responsible for holding office hours will hold office hours through distance technology and will notify their students and their department chair regarding how they plan to hold the hours.

- Classroom teaching observations that had not been conducted prior to March 20, 2020, for the spring 2020 semester will be conducted only if requested by the employee to be observed. If a teaching observation is requested, the department will use the new contractual provision for classroom teaching observations of online classes set forth in Article 18.2(b)3, recognizing that courses being taught through distance technology are not necessarily online courses.

Discussion:

MG: Do you know what percent of professors at the GC have tenure?

MJM: I don't know exactly, but many do, and are dual appointed.

MG: Most of the faculty in my department are tenured, so I'm curious how this will affect the GC

MJM: It won't affect us directly, but it does affect the faculty and that could put pressure on us indirectly.

RK: Was there any discussion on online learning and getting more support for that?

MJM: There is concern about their own health. And they want more information on how they will be evaluated and on curriculum requirements since they were not hired for online learning and they want clarity on how things will be going ... right now there is criteria for it to be a hybrid course which means you have to meet a certain amount of times in person -- that's the way they can charge normal tuition. Things are getting ugly -- faculty are concerned about the fees that students are paying when they do not have access to services such as the Wellness Center, the Library, the Digital Humanities Center.

MG: Two professors in our department who have been with us for many years and advised many students, have not been reappointed because they are "visiting". Was that talked about at the faculty senate and do other departments have similar issues.

MJM: I believe that all EOs have been told that there will be no approvals for one-time appointments or anyone who is nonessential. EOs are being encouraged to cut costs. A lot of the faculty you are talking about are also appointed at another private university but like being in NY. But this is something that I can ask about at the Faculty Senate.

IV. Steering Officer Reports

A. Officer for Funding (Sonja Gandert)

1. No updates on new grants (start-up)
2. I have been corresponding with spring grantees only insofar as they have reached out to me about the status of their grants. In preparation for the end of the semester I will compile a full list of grants that would still be eligible for funds in the fall if they were to reschedule or go virtual. I will share this list with my successor.
3. After revising their budget after transitioning their event to an online one, one organizing committee wanted to donate the remaining funds to nonprofits. We told them they could not do this, but that donating to the GC Emergency Fund was an option. Is this something to propose to other groups?

Discussion:

MG: I think that we do have needs as students, just those needs have changed because of COVID. I think we can reevaluate those needs and change the process based on that. Things like technology or books.

SG: I think the ideas brought up during like buying books is a great idea. I think there are needs that are more immediate than virtual seminars.

RK: Yes, I think every dollar helps in terms of donating to the emergency fund

MG: Might be good to put together a survey to evaluate the process and what student needs are (books, IT, etc.)

SG: Yes, I could do something like that. I think it is good to take a broader look at the role the grants committee will play.

MC: I think some departments might need Zoom accounts, that could be a way to use the funds

RH: Matt Schoengood mentioned that we would be getting Zoom accounts but it has been a few weeks and haven't heard anything.

MG: Last I heard from Elaine Montilla is that Zoom is not happening because of security issues

SG: Can we use grant funding for Zoom accounts?

RK: Yes if it is being used for their event and you approve it.

B. Officer for Governance & Membership (Adam Kocurek)

1. Still have not heard back from the Data Science program coordinator - I am assuming, moving forward, that the program representative seat will be vacant until the new academic year, when we can resume efforts to re-fill the seat.
2. There are still 2 open At-Large representative seats, but I think they too will likely stay vacant until the new academic year; given the extenuating circumstances, I find it hard to blame anyone for not wanting to add to their responsibilities right now.

Discussion:

RK: Reach out the EO of the Data Science program she emailed me about it since she is the EO for my program too

AK: Already tried, I can try again

RK: I can also put you in touch too

C. Officer for Health & Wellness (Ming Chen)

1. Updating the student-recommended NYSHIP providers on DSC Health & Wellness OpenCUNY website
 - a) Link: <https://opencuny.org/healthdsc/student-recommended-nyship-providers/>
 - b) Haven't heard from students about this
 - c) Maybe I can send out an email through DSGC listserv to ask for inputs?
2. Workshops provided by the Wellness Center
 - a) Self Care For Graduate Students
 - (1) May 1, Friday, 12 PM to 1:30 PM
 - b) Mindfulness Meditation/Stress Reduction Class
 - (1) May 9, Saturday, 11 AM
 - (2) Registration link: <https://bit.ly/2x5fHAY>

Discussion:

RH: Regarding the website with the NYSHIP providers, the couple emails I've gotten were about two providers that were now out of network. But I have not gotten many other emails. I can share those with you, and we can take those off the website. I don't know if we have a way to cross reference that list with Scott or CUNY.

MC: I can put a message on the page so that people are aware that the list is out of date.

D. Officer for Outreach (Sharanya Dutta)

- I'm emailing back and forth with Bursar+international students. Have a few responses from the google form I created. Apparently if international students are "Resident" for tax purposes, they get the money in direct deposit, but it looks like there's no other way around mailing physical checks at this time. Still going to put together the responses though, think it's worth having that information.
- I'm also going to remind international students that they can apply for the emergency grants. BUT the way the money is paid is strange and convoluted. So there's an emergency wire transfer for the amount (this is seen as a "loan"). This will obviously incur the incoming wire fee we've been talking about. Then a month later they'll physically mail a check to the CUNYfirst address on record and you have to repay above "loan". Also this money has to be declared in taxes and is presumably taxable, although there will be no 1099 generated.

Discussion:

RK: Can you explain further about the grant, seems more like a loan?

SD: You get 2 payments for the grant, first is a wire, second is a check. You have to pay back the wire. I think this is an international student thing.

RH: Students may spend both amounts, we need to make it clear that the first one is a loan.

SD: Yes, they don't make it clear up front. On CUNYFirst you have to do an eCheck to pay it back, but there could be another fee with that.

RH: Yes, I believe there is a fee with the eCheck. So now you are also losing that money as well.

MJM: I want to clarify taxable income. The loan that is given to you, cannot be charged tax on that loan. But when you pay back the loan, you acknowledge the grant and now have to pay tax on it?

SD: They are saying that the grant money is going to be taxed

MJM: If you get a loan and then another check and spend that check so then you will be in a huge problem situation

MC: I totally agree with MJM. This is very troubling for international students. They have to specify the whole procedure when a student gets the funds. This will also cause a huge problem for the office because they will get a lot of questions about this.

RK: Are they considered financial aid or a scholarship? That could have other repercussions.

SD: I don't know. I have been in touch with Phyllis Schulz in the financial aid office. But they need to make this very clear on the grants page.

RK: It should be Phyllis and Matt Schoengood since they are the ones managing the emergency grant fund.

SD: OK I will get on this now and run it by you but needs to be done as soon as possible. Also IT has created a dropbox link for people to upload their documents with SSN

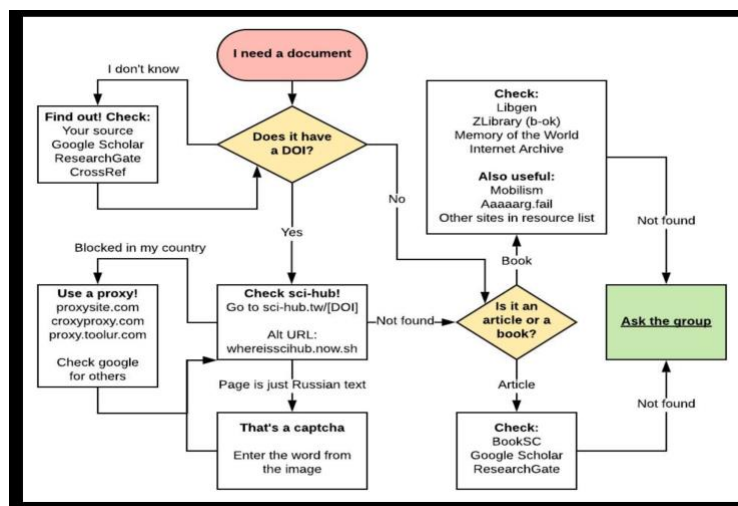
E. Officer for Student Life & Services (Giacomo Bianchino)

- The email chain for the petition for emergency funding, comprising PSC EC members and students, are in the midst of figuring out next steps. The last update is that Luke Elliott-Negri has sent out an email

about Health Cover, along with a [petition](#) demanding that Chancellor Matos-Rodriguez extend insurance to all students (funded or otherwise). One possible course of action that has been proposed is to use the \$700 000 yearly budget secured in the last contract to bring unfunded students on as NTA appointees, guaranteeing them coverage under NYSHIP.

F. Officer for Technology & Library (Michael Greer)

- Nothing has changed since last week except I will be looking into audiobooks prompted by (Yuliya Cheuskaya, At Large), created this coronavirus "[taskforce document](#)" (I floated the idea of Co-Chairs sending this out to the program representatives ASAP so that momentum isn't lost, but I don't think it has been done yet. Jane made a comment about last Friday being too soon), and will be sending round an email letting people know that NYPL has better access to journals than we do/sending round the following [sheet](#) and below graphic (and sources like it).



Discussion:

RH: I'll look at the document and then we can discuss over email and I'll send it out tomorrow

MG: Sounds great

V. New Business

A. Steering Discretionary (Voting)

RK: Moves to allocate \$500 for gifts to representatives (amended to \$1000)

EC Seconds

Discussion:

MG: Who and what would these gifts be for?

RK: The outgoing representatives. We usually give a gift each year -- a DSC mug or tote bag. I don't know what we'll do this time but I want to do something for them.

RH: How much is in there?

RK: Around \$7500. The reason there is so much in there is because there is a minimum amount of money that we are mandated to have.

MG: I'd like to amend the proposal so that it's \$1000 so that we can allocate \$20 for gift cards to outgoing DSC representatives, excluding Steering Committee members.

RK: accepts the amendment

Motion passes unanimously

B. Date for Incoming Plenary Meeting

EC: After the election, we have to compile the results and then send it to SERC and to the Office of Student Affairs to determine if those candidates are eligible to serve and certify the results. Once we have approval, we can announce the results.

RH: After we announce, we also give the elected reps a chance to decline. A minimum of two weeks would probably be needed but that might put us into June

RK: I think we need at least two to three weeks. Maybe we could get away with 2 weeks but it will be tough.

MG: Let's not make things more difficult for ourselves, if it has to push into June it is ok.

RH: Just to give more context, we need to elect steering and have time to do transition meetings with them so they can start their terms on July 1st.

RK: I suggest we have the plenary for newly elected reps on June 5th and that way we give ourselves three weeks to have the two meetings.

SD: That was what I had in mind. How much work does the transition actually take?

RH: The work is individual and contextual. That's something people should begin doing now – working on a transition memo. All you do is you take the transition memo you received from your predecessor and update it with information or takeaways from your year in office.

RK: We don't have access to the GC shared drive, so make sure you hold onto all your documents for now. We should be uploading documents to the Sdrive

RK moves to make the incoming plenary meeting Friday June 5th at 4:30 pm.

AK seconds the motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

VI. Announcements

A. Reminders about Transition: Meeting with Successor and Memo

RH is going to the GC and can download things from the shared drive if people want.

RK: Instead of lunch being paid for transition meetings, I can reimburse folks for takeout when they meet virtually with their successor

MJM: Can we ask the admin to make the emergency grants more visible on the website?

RH: They sent it out in an all student email, we also sent it. Students are finding and using it. But we can ask them to make it more apparent on the website.

SD: If you google it then you can find it pretty easily.

MJM: How are we getting information out and how the DSC is represented?

RH: We've spoken about this before and agreed on that if it is on behalf of the DSC or as a steering member, it should be seen by one of the Co-Chairs first. But of you can always send emails in your personal capacity.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:09 pm