



Steering Meeting *Minutes* September 4, 2020

Attendance:

Present: Silvia Rivera Alfaro (SRA), Katherine Anderson (KA), Edward Charnley (EC), Sharanya Dutta (SD), Roderick Hurley (RH), Adam Kocurek (AK), Christian Martinez (CM), Sara Ortiz (SO), Cristina Pardo Porto (CPP), B. Natacha L. N. E. Pawa (NP).

Absent: Carolyn McDonough (CMD)

Meeting called to order at 4:46 PM

I. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve: AK

Seconded: SO

Vote: Passes unanimously

II. Approval of Minutes of the June 15, 2020 Meeting

Motion to approve: AK

Seconded: SRA

Vote: Passes unanimously

III. Executive Committee Reports

A. Co-Chair for Student Affairs (Sharanya Dutta)

Activities:

- Fall 2020 nodes for Chartered Organizations have been created and set to pending. To achieve active status, chartered orgs need to submit their Fall 2019 AND Spring 2020 semester activity reports and have 20 registered members. We extended the deadline for Spring, so now the combined deadline is Dec 20, 2020.
 - Some orgs may need to be de-chartered. I will follow up with them and give them a chance to announce on the listserv because often the issue is that they can't find new leaders. I'll probably bring up dechartering if I still haven't heard from them, at the next steering meeting.
- We're going to vote today on convening the Adjunct Project Co-Coordinator Hiring Committee. Once the hiring committee is convened, the call (that is already ready) will be sent out, and we will start the process of receiving applications, shortlisting, interview, and so forth.
- I will begin the process for appointing the second Philosophy DGSC Representative. They already have one but the second one needs a special election. I've sent emails asking the other candidates from the previous ballot if they are still interested, waiting to hear back.
- MIT's Graduate Student Council and CMU's Graduate Student Assembly questionnaire—are we all okay with signing on? If so, I'll email them.

Announcements:

- You will likely receive/have already received an email from Eric Brown asking you to complete your SPARC training. It used to be that you would be prompted to do it automatically in CUNYfirst but now apparently he has to individually sign you up for it and then you can take it. More tedious, but still necessary. You cannot be in this office/get a stipend without having completed that and I believe, emailing the certificate of completion to Eric Brown. So please make that a priority when it hits your inbox.
- Chartered orgs need 20 signatures on their roster, and if we all sign it, they can get 11. Takes the pressure off of them. I will share my screen and show you how to sign the rosters, please use your office hours to do it. Ideally all of us sign every roster, to do our part in supporting our chartered orgs. It takes a few seconds, literally, it's just a bit of grunt work. If each of you distribute it over a couple of days, it can be done VERY quickly, and would be most appreciated.

B. Co-Chair for Communications (Rod Hurley)

Activities/Recent Meetings:

- 8/7 - Meeting with Martin Ruck, Diversity Equity, and Inclusion - They are asking for our input in evaluating GC policies and creating safe spaces. They want to encourage all programs to put together a DEI committee in the Fall semester with the Urban Education program as a model. They also want to push for compensating students for their work on these committees.
- 8/20 - GC Reopening Committee Meeting: I raised several student concerns regarding reopening and distance learning including stipend/fellowship payments, direct deposits for non-resident students, extensions for deadlines to deposit dissertations, access to library materials, access to student services and administrative offices, Graduate Assistant and guidance on the format for synchronous and asynchronous classes at the GC
- 8/24 - Followed up with emails to Deputy Interim Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, Ken Tirino about the administrative and financial issues, and to Provost Julia Wrigley regarding the grad assistantships and class format
- 8/29 - Co-chairs/OSA Meeting - We asked for updates on several issues. They said they would meet with the various offices and get back to us with updates. They are looking at ways to have phone service in all student service offices and chat service where needed. They will ask financial aid to join their next meeting with us. Want to work with us on having some zoom calls to reach campus based students. Enrollment is up for MA Programs but down for phds. We also asked them about legal consultations for international students and they are supposed to be looking into it. Doesn't look like SAF will be refunded. New interim director of childcare center - still operating remotely, doing zoom sessions for now. Wifi at GC residences is problematic, and has become a big concern. Several students have moved out, so there is space available.

Updates:

- Social Media Correspondent: Gwen Shaw has stepped down as SMC. Gwen is also a longstanding program representative, and is focusing on completing their dissertation this year. Thanks for your service to students, Gwen! I sent out an announcement to start the hiring process for a new SMC and we already have a few applications.
- DGSC Website Upgrade - We finished reviewing the content types on Works and will move forward with the next phase which is actually building the new site on a staging platform where we can all go

and test the features. I disabled the Room reservations and Locker requests on works since these services are unavailable.

- I (un)officially launched our new logo in a website post and the response has been really good.
- Provost's office sent out guidance about class format and workload reporting which I plan to share with students again. Important that students are not overworked or put at a disadvantage.
- We have had a large number of students signing up for the listservs!
- Open House was a success!

Upcoming Meetings:

- DGSC Plenary 9/25
- IT Services/DGSC Meeting Fall 20 meeting - A date in Sept. or early Oct. TBD
- OSA/Co-Chairs monthly meeting - usually the Wednesday before plenary.
- President Garell/DGSC EC - Email sent, awaiting response from the president's office

Announcements:

- If you have any input or questions pertaining to any of the updates or anything you would like to have raised at an upcoming meeting, please email and let me know.
- Let's think of a way to celebrate the 50th anniversary this month

C. Co-Chair for Business (Adam Kocurek)

Budget Status:

- The budget for the 2020-2021 year is still uncertain, though considerably less so than we were anticipating. Due to its uncertainty, however, we broke with precedent and did not present a budget at the May Plenary meeting. Instead, we have been operating on an interim basis with the 2019-2020 budget model until a new budget is approved in the Fall. The reason for this decision is that our budget was projected to change significantly depending on the status of reopening the building, and on the enrollment of students. Also it was mentioned at the April College Association meeting that the BoT may issue a 50% refund of the SAF for the fall semester, which would put a significant strain on our budget. However, Raj and I calculated that we secured a carryover of \$55,322.08 from last year's revenues that went unspent, which carried over to this year and will help us make up for a shortfall.
- The good news is that in a recent meeting with the OSA, we were tentatively informed that enrollment numbers look pretty good - there are fewer PhD students, but more Master's students, and while we will likely get less money from the SAF this year, the decrease will not be as catastrophic as we anticipated.
- In the meantime, I created with my predecessor a tentative budget that accounts for a partial decrease in funding, although until we get the final enrollment numbers in the middle of September, the numbers are speculative at best and will need to be recalculated. The new budget accounts for a projected revenue of \$557,803, which is \$44,049 less than our 2019-2020 budget of \$601,852.

Check Requests:

- As many of you are aware, the transition to CUNYFirst for The Graduate Center's finances has been an abject disaster, resulting in delayed payments, bureaucratic and administrative errors and disagreements, and haphazardly-orchestrated guidelines from CUNY Central Office. Some of the most recent updates: any non-elected student worker under our payroll (so the workers for OpenCUNY, The Advocate, and The Adjunct Project) must get paid through the same process that NRA elected student government workers deal with - namely, that we transfer money from the Business Office to the Bursar Office and it gets processed by Payroll. I am aware that some of you still have not gotten your

payments, and I am working with the Business Office, Bursar Office, Financial Aid, and CUNY Central Office to see what is holding up the processing of payments; if you still have not gotten paid yet and haven't told me, please email or call me and let me know. If there is a silver lining, it is that this should not happen again during the Spring semester.

- If your tuition remission has not yet been processed, note that your payments coming through the Bursar would have counted against that - I reached out to Allan Tsang and provided a list of everyone on our payroll, asking that he not process the payments until tuition remission was processed. If he fails to do that and your stipend was used to pay tuition, please let me know.
- Please remember to submit your check requests monthly, preferably a week or two before the month they are due.
- We will continue to fight the directives of CUNY Central Office regarding NRA and affiliate worker payments - it is unfair to them, undermines our authority as a body, and sets precedents we do not appreciate.

Updates:

- I have reached out to members of the Adjunct Project - we are setting a date to meet for a progress report and update.
- I have met with the members of The Advocate and talked about what their budget tentatively looks like, got a sense of their goals for the semester, etc.
- I am waiting to hear from some members of OpenCUNY to schedule a meeting.
- Remember to complete your SPARC/E-SPARC training on Blackboard!
- Rod, Sharanya, Raj, and I have nearly finished our work with our website manager regarding the new Drupal site. It should hopefully be up and running before the end of Fall semester.

D. USS Delegate (Sara Ortiz)

Activities:

- USS transition consultations with Jane Guskin (former USS Delegate), Smitha Varghese (Legislative Director, USS)
- Kicked off the Fall 2020 semester with USS Co-Sponsoring CUNY YDSA on Tuesday, August 25th Defend CUNY Students and Adjuncts UNITE Rally @ the Graduate Center
- **"Moving CUNY Forward:"** Initiating conversations with the preliminary campaign team to run for USS leadership this upcoming year. We all share similar concerns regarding the pervasive and perpetual issues of USS and CUNY and we are mutually hoping to construct a strong democratic and progressive agenda that really represents the students and what we stand for.
- **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT INITIATIVE:** Liaising with the Executive Committee of the International Migration Studies M.A. Program and outreach to Nicole Agu (USS Vice-Chair, International Student Affairs) and Cristina Pardo Porto (DGSC, Officer for Outreach, and hopefully LAILAC Program), as well as CUNY Citizenship Now! to initiate a robust infrastructure of support for international students across ALL GC programs: Securing an ESOL / English for Speakers of Other Languages program to help Graduate and Doctoral Students keep up with the demands of coursework and papers, in addition to expanding resources such as legal assistance, scholarship/funding/educational resources, housing resources, employment assistance, tax help, mental and physical health and support in accessing other city-based social services.

Updates:

- **USS Scholarships:** Due to the impact of COVID-19 and the overwhelming number of applications received, the scholarship review process has been extended. Recipients will be announced sometime in September. Please note that recipients will receive the award AFTER THE WITHDRAW deadline for classes. You can refer to your campus academic calendar for this information. We ask that applicants plan their finances accordingly.

Announcements:

- USS will be hosting a virtual retreat in the coming weeks for all delegates and alternates
- First official USS meeting: September 27th.
- **Center for Migration Studies (CMS):** Call for (paid) Research Assistants (fluent in Arabic, Caribbean Creole, South Asian languages, Korean) and Volunteers for Pilot (fluent in English, Spanish, French) Study on **Immigrants' Use of New York City Programs, Services and Benefits at a Time of Draconian Federal Policies.** Your participation in this interview will help us better understand the needs and concerns of immigrants. The data we collect from interviews will be used in a report that will help New York City service providers and community-based organizations better serve immigrant communities.

E. UFS Liaison (Natacha Pawa)

Activities:

- I attended the Informal meeting of the UFS Plenary on Tuesday, July 21st 2020.
- I initiated several meetings to have a transition meeting with Mary Jane Mac Namara in the month of August and early in September. None of them took place.
- On August 21st, I communicated with the Graduate Center Teaching Fellows and CUNY Adjuncts on the new CUNY wide zoom package for Faculty.
- Communication on August 31st, 2020 on CUNY Chancellor, Felix Matos Rodriguez' interview on the Brian Lehrer Show on measures CUNY is taking for the health and safety of our community in times of distance learning.
- Met with Teresa Ober (UFS Liaison 2017-2018) for a transition meeting on September 13, 2020.

Announcements:

- The UFS Plenary meeting is to be held on September 22nd, 2020.
- Waiting to be introduced to Martin Burke by the Co-chair of communication.

IV. Steering Officer Reports

A. Officer for Funding (Christian Martinez)

Activities:

- Setting up the Grants Committee's first meeting, in which we will discuss topics such as meeting times for the rest of the semester, go over the Grants Committee bylaws, etc.

Updates:

- I received an email from Sonja, the past Officer for Funding, who sent me the email she received about the first Grants Committee meeting from last fall
- I have updated the DGSC website with the 2020-2021 grants deadlines

B. Officer for Governance & Membership (Katie Anderson)

Activities:

- continuing to work with Econ, EES, and WGS to establish representation.
- will review programs list and send out more emails asking for students to step forward and become representatives. hoping to have more petitions completed in time for October's meetings.

Updates:

- theater, BAM, Econ - have completed petitions, awaiting steering vote.
- I will begin to implement my efforts to establish pipelines for maintaining representation within programs in the spring semester (classes and teaching are very time consuming)

C. Officer for Health & Wellness (Interim) (Silvia Rivera Alfaro)

Activities:

- Currently participating in the search committee for the NYSHIP Manager.
- Improving the website to provide students with information about health insurance and options for medical care in New York City, which is out of date according to the transition memo.

Updates:

- Waiting for updates from Student Affairs for the participation at the committee.
- I contacted the Wellness Center to find out if they have a list on the subject, but they responded that they usually recommend the DGSC website to the students.

Announcements:

- No announcements.

D. Officer for Outreach (Cristina Pardo Porto)

Activities:

- From Allan Tsang: the fellowship checks will be sent to International Students in the mail from the NY State Payroll. The checks will be sent to the mailing address type they have listed in their CUNYfirst account. The refund process can begin only after each voucher is finished in processing. A student that is on voucher 1, will get their refund processed before a student that is on voucher 2. There are vouchers that must be processed with the NYS Payroll to have the money to fund the fellowship payments. The first check date is 9/10/2020. I will ask for updates after this date
- I have sent two emails reminding International Students to update and upload their forms into Sprintax TDS site by clicking on Document Exchange. If this is not done on time, payments might be put on hold.
- I have sent an email reminding students to request the FICA Tax Exemption on CUNYfirst. If this is not done on time, they might lose an amount of money from their payments.
- I emailed ISO, Linda Asaro, requesting clarification from admin about the IS situation. No response.
- The SSC of Philosophy Department sent an email requesting clarification from admin (Financial Aid, Students Affairs, ISO) about the IS situation. I followed up to check if they got answers from them. No response.
- I have been actively sharing the listservs. Since last week, I have received around 40 new subscriptions to the International Students Listserv.

Updates:

- I'm researching platforms to develop a channel/forum for International Students with a live chat, how-to documents, resources, links, pdfs, travel restrictions updates, reminders, etc. The platform that I like the most is SLACK. For example, the channel CUNY CONTINUITY in Slack is pretty active and lots of colleagues, students, faculty are sharing resources, discussing a variety of topics there: <https://app.slack.com/client/TV599R1U5/CUV67P9LZ> - I'm open to advice, volunteers, etc. (Problem: adding another platform to the online-world-dynamic might be overwhelming.)
- I'm planning to send out a Google survey to collect worries and questions from International Students in times of COVID / online education in order to advocate for their specific needs.
- I'm planning to send all Outreach emails in Spanish too (bilingual I mean). I volunteer to translate any plenary minutes to share them as well.
- I've been researching the International Students situation in other cities, campuses. A colleague that is starting first year at UC Davis (he is from Perú and he is completing the semester from abroad) told me that UC is paying them their whole fellowship even in a direct deposit form... They didn't need to have a SSN to get paid from the School and they are getting the deposits through the app TransferWise (it allows you to open a bank account without a SSN or residency address). (The school even offered deposits to foreign bank accounts or mailing checks...). What he told me is that they are even going to be able to work/teach from their countries. There is something we can do/demand? Do we know why that specific school is doing that and the GC can't do something similar?

E. Officer for Student Life & Services (Edward Charnley)

Activites:

- Continuing to work on student life guide.
- Looking at bringing website up to date (unsure of how this relates to new website).
- Researching for NYC Life email for socially safe NYC activities for students.
- Game night Sept 15th.

Updates:

- Have spoken to students and staff from my own department about how they hope to see library and other services evolve over the course of lockdown period.

Announcements:

- Question: establishing committee.
- I've prepared a Library statement that I will share with everyone.

F. Officer for Technology & Library (Carolyn McDonough)

Activites:

- I met with Michael Greer multiple times, Emily Drabinski (GC Library) twice and Elaine Montilla (GC IT) once between mid-July and Aug. 24, 2020 to introduce myself and gather info re Library + Tech.
- I emailed the student body on Monday, August 31, 2020 with the info I gathered + important Library + Tech resources with "live" links/URL's to these resources. ILL is the BEST way to research at the current time. I ADVOCATED for PRINTING SUPPORT from IT for ALL STUDENTS to assist us with OFFLINE READING. IT has noted and is CONSIDERING this request. I will follow up again soon.
- I emailed the student body a separate email with the latest info on NYPL "Grab-n-Go" services and "How-to-obtain a NYPL library card" with "live" links/URL's to these.
- I have a standing weekly meeting on Mondays with Emily b/c the library services are dynamic and changing rapidly.
- I'm designating Monday Sept. 7 Labor Day for my next Listserv email to the student body which will include 1) additional Tech info + services 2) VOTING info 3) CFP for CUNY IT CONFERENCE DUE Sept. 15 (I presented on the GC's ITP Certificate Program at this AMAZING conference in Nov. 2018 and I attended in 2019. I highly recommend putting in a proposal as a presenter AND attending as an attendee!).

- I will be attending IT's Department meeting -- I have received an email invitation from Dmitri and awaiting IT's Doodle Poll Invite.

V. New Business

A. Changes to 2019-2020 Budget

AK discussed possible changes to the DGSC budget

B. Additions to DGSC Standing Committees (Voting)

1. **Outreach** – Oriana Mejias, Katherine River Gomez, Luis Alvarez
2. **Health & Wellness** – Deborah Leter, Pamela Stenberg

Motion to Approve: AK

Second: NP

Vote: Passes unanimously

C. Approval of New Program Representatives (Voting)

1. **Biography and Memoir - Sierra Holt**
2. **Theatre and Performance - Dohyun Gracia Shin**
3. **Economics - Chuxin Liu and Meltem Topaloglu**

Motion to approve: SRA

Seconded: CM

Vote: Passes unanimously

D. Reconvening the Adjunct Project Hiring Committee (Voting)

Lynne Turner who held the position of Coordinator for Labor Relations has resigned.

CCSA (Non-voting): Sharanya Dutta

1 At-Large Steering Officer (Voting): Sara S. Ortiz

1 DGSC Representative (Voting): Pamela Stenberg

1 DGSO Representative (Voting): Rafael Mutis

1 Senior Employee (Voting): Jamila Hammami

1 Ex-Officio Adviser (Non-voting): Michelle Gaspari

Motion to approve: Adam , Seconded: Christian

Vote: Passes unanimously

E. Social Media Correspondent

RH: We will convene a steering sub-committee to review applications
SO and AK volunteered.

F. Affiliates Review

AK: I'm waiting for the reports from the affiliates. I met with the Advocate and will meet with the others soon.

H. Steering and Plenary Meeting Logistics

1. Meeting Duties

RH explains the various steering officer tasks for steering and plenary meetings.

2. Plenary Attendance Incentives

In the past this has worked well to encourage representatives to attend meetings and stay until the end.

I. Office Hours and Officer Responsibilities

We want to change our availability to the virtual setting. Will discuss it further. How do we make ourselves accountable to students? How do we keep ourselves accountable?

J. NSO Orientation/Open House Debrief & Ideas

RH: Thank you so much for contributing your videos! The students really liked it. The response from new students has been overwhelmingly positive.

VI. Announcements

A. Reconstitution of Ad-hoc Committees

We can discuss whether there is a need to reconstitute these committees or not but the decision has to be made by the plenary.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting is adjourned at 7:36PM by unanimous consent.