



Steering Meeting *Minutes* November 5, 2021

Attendance

Present:

Adam Kocurek (AK), Sharanya Dutta (SD), Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic (PMO), Angela LaScala-Greunewald (ALG), Katherine Anderson (KA), Silvia Rivera-Alfaro (SRA), Christopher Campbell (CC), Carmin Quijano Seda (CQS), Adashima Oyo (AO), Jonathan Hanon (JH, Proxy for Edward Charnley)

Absent:

Debbie Leter

Meeting called to order at 4:13PM

I. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve: SD motions to amend the agenda to add a voting item to use two room exceptions for LAILAC for their conference in the spring (third item of New Business)

Seconded: SRA

KA motions to amend the agenda to add a petition for a Program Representative Seat for Linguistics (fourth item of New Business)

Seconded: SRA

Vote: Passes unanimously

II. Approval of Minutes of the October 1, 2021 Meeting

Motion to approve: SD

Seconded: SRA

Vote: Passes unanimously

III. Executive Committee Reports

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

■ Chartered Orgs:

- I'm in the process of updating chartered org leaders into my database DSCWorks (there were some issues with Works re: Chartered Org Chairs and it looks like those may have been resolved for the moment). For your part, if you

haven't done so already, IN YOUR OFFICE HOURS, please help sign chartered org rosters! You can find the list of chartered orgs here: [Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council – Chartered Organizations](#)

- Katie is starting a new Chartered Org - CUNYSciCom! Some people have reached out wanting to take over leadership for orgs which were about to be de-chartered which is very heartening to see.
- **SPARC:** PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR SPARC TRAININGS ASAP if you haven't done so already.
- **Check Requests:** Please fill out the check request forms for upcoming months so we can process your payments in time, and the fiasco with the pending amounts on CUNYfirst. Perhaps Adam could elaborate? We want to maybe skip actually processing any check requests in Jan+Feb (get those out early/late depending on your preference) so that we avoid that chaos in the Spring.
- **Room Reservations:**
 - Please watch the video and write to me with any questions. Please check room reservations during office hours. Note that exceptions are only one per year, not per semester. And MAKE SURE TO UPDATE THE EXCEPTION TRACKER AND INDIVIDUAL USE TRACKER.
 - Carmin requested that we, as Steering, approve a 2nd exception for LAILAC for their conference room. Would that be okay?
- **Website:** We're also FINALLY making some progress with the new website which will integrate the current Wordpress + DSCWorks. We literally have to go over it page by page, menu item by menu item, so it's time consuming but it is happening, which we're excited about!
- **Sprintax TDS:** AND, some good news. We are going to have a Sprintax TDS workshop for international students. Not the filing system, but the TDS version. The OSA has asked me for inputs and questions on what students might like covered in that workshop, so I've already sent out a Google Form soliciting input from the international student body on the WhatsApp chat and listserv. Could you please send it to your departments/constituents? If Ed/anyone else wants to work with me on this, I'd very much appreciate it. Here's the link to the form: <https://forms.gle/fLDxWpc3aGg3yGPL7>

B. Co-Chair for Communications (Deborah Leter)

Activites/Recent Meetings:

- **10/22: EC meeting with Provost Everett**
 - We brought up a number of issues to the Provost, including 1) lack of clear communication from the administration on issues of relevance to students, but also lack of reaction and change to students and DGSC bringing up issues to the administration (i.e. complaints about OIS have been repeated year after year, and changes have not been implemented). 2) Admin is very quick to be punitive with students rather than prioritize a humane and compassionate approach, especially given the pandemic. 3) Frustration and concern with the GC's two-tiered funding system. 4) Can we engage more aggressively with the NYC government?

- Provost Everett informed us he is also concerned with the level of bureaucracy at the GC and is trying to figure out the system as he is transitioning into this new role. Regarding the two-tiered funding system, the Provost will be meeting with EOs to talk about this with them, as he would also like us to abolish this unfair system. He has also talked to HR about creating some sort of system that would provide automatic updates to students if someone has not addressed their issue in a timely manner (note: this is something we could follow up with him on?)
- Important: CUNY Chancellor will be giving the GC extra funds for graduate education. President Garrell made a request for \$20 million to get rid of the two-tiered funding system. This request is going to state legislature. The President and Provost are hoping that we might have a window of opportunity with the new New York state governor to push this funding through. The hope would be to also use these funds to increase the graduate fellowships (which, at \$26,000, are lower than other universities in our peer group).
- **10/20: Graduate Council meeting**
 - 70% of our courses at the GC will be in person (or in person with hyflex) next semester.
 - Cleared4 process will be simplified soon -- stay tuned.
 - Two recent developments: 1) Formation of Graduate Education taskforce (created by the Chancellor -- Adam is on this!). 2) Update from recent BoT meeting: The Chancellor is proposing a \$450 million boost to CUNY's budget, supported by state and city (which would include the \$20 million boost to graduate education mentioned above from our meeting with the Provost)
 - President Garrell will be reaching out to GC students to get student stories so that we can bring these to elected officials, with the goal of highlighting the importance of graduate education in NYC

Upcoming Meetings:

- 11/12: Lunch with President and Provost (might get rescheduled)
 - Rescheduled to 12/10
- 11/17: Co-Chairs and OSA
- 11/19: Plenary meeting

Announcements:

- **Upcoming Plenary guest speakers:** Luke Waltzer from the Teaching and Learning Center (November) / Elaine Montilla from IT and Emily Drabinski from the Library (December)

C. Co-Chair for Business (Adam Kocurek)

Updates:

- Programs have been reaching out about making use of their allocations. I've been offering guidance and advice with some event planning, providing the necessary forms, etc. From conversations, some program reps are apparently looking to not use their funds this semester, electing to roll them over to the Spring semester in the hopes that the 70% in-person activity minimum goal will allow for in-person parties and events.

- Steering Officers - remember that some of you have committee budgets - don't forget to use those for food, events, etc. for when your committees meet.
- The Graduate Education Task Force met on 10/29/2021
 - We are going to be creating subcommittees to determine how we can improve as an institution. More on that to come.
 - I was asked by task force organizers to meet with them privately to better determine how to increase student engagement and input with questions/surveys/suggestions/polls/etc. I'm going to be meeting with them next week.
- Pay raise in December for our staff! Co-Chair new stipend amount is \$1199.63, for USS and UFS officers the new amount is \$599.82, and for steering officers, the new amount is \$399.88.

Discussion:

- AO: When we return to 70% in-person gatherings, I assume that needs to be with masking, even with people fully vaccinated? Do we know when we won't have to keep wearing masks?
- AK: Great question, President Garrell said that we are following state and city guidelines, and there is a hope that by the end of Spring, there might be revisions to these.
- PMO: I've been in touch with Molly, the new interim director of the Childcare Center. We are going to get data from the Childcare Center, regarding COVID vs pre-pandemic numbers. We do not have old data from 5+ years back, but we will run an analysis of how many doctoral students have children, and how many are deterred from coming because they will not get adequate childcare support. We can send out a survey for the childcare needs of our student body.

D. USS Delegate (Edward Charnley)

Activities:

- Met with Aharon Grama
- Attended Board of Trustees Budget proposal meeting
- Viewed Board of Trustees Meeting

Updates:

- USS continues to be unable to perform any real business, since they were unable to elect a chairperson.
 - At the end of the last 4/5 hour long meeting, there were too few delegates remaining to establish a sufficient quorum to break the balloting deadlock between the two leading candidates (delegates had been quietly slipping out of the meeting as they became bored or needed to leave to other commitments).
- In a meeting with Aharon Grama, a candidate for chair, he painted a fairly grim picture of the USS processes and tendencies. Vast amounts of power is tied up in the chairperson's seat - including a disturbing amount of power to hire and fire USS office staff, and control appointments to and the procedures of the Ethics and Rules Committee. Some of what he told me sounds virtually like patronage politics.
- Until USS elections are complete, there is no clear sense of what can be achieved there.

- Worryingly the newly elected Steering Committee met "unofficially" around a week ago. The meeting was scheduled as "official", and then during the meeting, when asked if other delegates can observe, it was decided it would be an "unofficial" meeting. This is a violation of NY Open Meetings Law. This fairly irregular proceeding is combined with a worrying lack of communication from the leading body of the USS - there was supposed to be a meeting this Sunday, for example, but it was postponed with no announcement.
- This perhaps lends credence to Mr. Grama's assertion that, owing to apathy principally caused by a lack of communication and willingness to involve plenary members in decision making, or open issues up to debate, the USS has systematically lost delegates since the last meeting to the point wherein it can no longer maintain a quorum. I am not clear on this however and am trying to get further information.
- Update from JH: There cannot be Elections until 28 November, because USS is requiring us to use a third party organisation (AAA Elections), who are not available until then, so we are being delayed yet again by USS bureaucracy
- The Board of Trustees meeting was largely positive for the GC.
 - Chancellor Rodriguez spoke about the Graduate Education Task Force (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onACJ7VvU70&ab_channel=TheCityUniversityofNewYork 16:15)
 - This will be a two year process to reimagine and, cosmos willing, enhance and improve graduate programs and graduate's living conditions and standards.
 - President Garrell and Executive Vice Chancellor Dan Lemons are co-chairing this task force.
 - Much of the budget proposal is an attempt to recoup losses suffered during COVID.
 - Enrolment rates, while still lower than normal, appear to be the result of COVID.
 - However this does not ring true with many of the budgetary requests made in the BoT Budget Proposal Meeting, in which many faculty complained of disgusting and decrepit buildings which are turning prospective students off CUNY, and rendering especially science students unable to acquire grants (grants are often predicated on the ability of the institution to support research. Several complaints from science faculty graphically illustrate how little the administration really cares about the specifics of their research and its requirements).

Discussion:

- SRA: We need students to fight for free tuition for graduate students at the CUNY colleges. We need a stronger student movement.
- JH: At the GC, we also have Master's programs, which are also not well-funded, if at all.
- ALG: I agree with what Silvia said, and it goes to the discussion of race and racism. What precedent exists with regards to DGSC doing more active organising? Can we build a more collective organising capacity?
- AK: The participatory budget encourages students to do things in the building. It has been used to support a gender neutral bathroom, refillable water station (lowering carbon footprint)... Last year, we did not use our participatory budget, since we did not have the ability to use it. When we are fully in-person, the Steering body will have \$10k to use on initiatives. The participatory budget does not roll over, but it's up to the discretion of the CCB.
- JH: Where does the participatory budget go at the end of the year?

- AK: It all gets put into a “carryover budget”, which was huge this year because last year, people just didn’t do anything due to the pandemic. Some departments used the money for books, but most went unused. We have our own Fidelity account that is supervised by the Business Office, but it is our money. The reason the budget rolls over at the end of June is because that is the end of our fiscal year, and we then need to present our new budget to the College Association. There cannot be carryover on individual lines, since we are being audited.
- PMO: What if some departments are historically good at using their lines, and others are not, and their budget keeps getting reabsorbed?
- AK: We are urging people to use their money, but we can’t force them to utilise their budget. The CCB can change allocations by 2%, but any more needs to be voted on by Plenary.
- SD: We cannot increase Student Activity Fee, so our operating revenue depends on enrollment. We can change the budget year by year, and we can move money between different lines if we want that.
- SRA: I propose we have something regarding student movements and history/diversity of CUNY for Graduate Center students, maybe some time in April.

E. UFS Liaison (Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic)

Activites:

- UFS Plenary 10/26/21
- 117 Participants
- Chancellor Daniel Lemons: “Students don’t know what’s best for them” “I think for lower level students in person is essential”
- Phil Pecorino (Queensborough Community College): What metrics/instruments were used to justify the 70/30 split? (None)
- Emily Tai (Queensborough Community College grad education task force) was concerned about visual and performing arts online. (They’re looking into what they can do)
- Mojubaolu Okome (Brooklyn College) - concerned that decisions are being made without understanding or respecting students needs. We know we are having enrollment issues, if strategies could be implemented to address these concerns on individual college basis, maybe we could affect this. (CC are most vulnerable financially and otherwise and directly impacted by pandemic; we have to figure out where the students are “what is driving long term decline in community colleges?”)
- Melissa Castillo Planas (Lehman) - agrees with administration bc online is not working for her discipline and concerned that students are not prepared to graduate. (We have to try to improve the quality of what we’re doing, making online and hybrid better and there are cases where that may not work)
- Peter Kolozi (Bronx Community College) - who has authority over choosing modality from a governance standpoint? (Deans, professors, multiple places have a say in how modalities are chosen. Working out what is the best mix for our students is how we get to the best place).
- Vita Rabinowitz (Hunter): CUNY’s motto is “start here, go anywhere” - the pipeline exists for a reason: for students to be able to move onward and upward. “Transfer Opportunity Program Faculty Survey” to get our views - transfer is vital to upward mobility. Email: facultysurveyonstudenttransfer@cuny.edu
- Ned Benton: The Faculty Gap: SUNY has less student enrollment percentage and higher faculty higher rate vs. cuny having 3 times as much enrollment than faculty hires. This report was taken beyond CUNY Central to state legislators and helped in the bid for 1075 new faculty lines.

- After excoriating CUNY Central for how they handled the pandemic, they made a resolution to amend the manual of the general policy so we have a rule for the university to consult with the faculty in the event of a crises

Discussion:

- JH: The Reactivation Committee is only meeting one more time this year. The November meeting was cancelled, and the December meeting was moved up to December 2nd. This is on top of the August and September meetings being cancelled, there will only have been two meetings in five months.
- PMO: CUNY doesn't hire its own graduates to new positions, and aren't moving their own adjunct faculty to permanent lines. They give us no job security.
- JH: We should oppose the new lines unless the GC benefits, because new professors don't end up at the GC for years. Our students will not benefit from this, and by the time those lines are filled, we won't have a chance to fill those lines.

IV. Steering Officer Reports

A. Officer for Funding (Angela LaScala-Gruenewald)

Activites:

- Assembled Grants Committee (Jonathan, Angela, Adam) and scheduled future meetings (first week of the month, next meeting Monday, December 6 at 3pm)
 - Thank you all so much for your swift approval of Jonathan!
- Approved first grant (\$600 pedagogy conference)
- Setting up social and email blasts to promote grant opportunities since applications are low

Updates:

- Received zero grant applications in October

Announcements:

- Next deadline to submit grant applications is Friday, November 19
- Grant committee meeting to review any applications Monday, December 6

Discussion:

- ALG: Other promotion ideas for DGSC grant opportunities? I am not sure if this makes much sense (or is in my purview) but wondering if there are any communal items worth purchasing for students (received an email about school supplies that prompted this question)?
- AK: If you look at our budget, we have a budget line for office expenses, which we typically use to refund ourselves for school supplies, sex supplies, etc, but programs can also use their allocation for these things, as well as to buy books or anything else.

B. Officer for Governance & Membership (Katie Anderson)

Activites:

- Constitution and Bylaws Committee meeting on October 27th.

- Review of Jonathan Hanon's major suggestion to the Bylaws
 - Section 1.9 exclusive reading of seats
 - currently worded to prioritize non-steering population of standing committees
 - Section 3 - Standing Committees, Boards, and Task Forces
 - currently worded to prioritize at-large and program rep population of committees over non-representative GC students (DGSO)
- Will present highlights to Plenary to gain community input before making an official decision to move forward with as a committee.

Updates:

- Alaa Sharif (Linguistics) has submitted a petition to become a Program Representative.
 - Will need to vote on this today and again at Plenary.

Announcements:

- I have submitted materials to start a STEM-oriented chartered organization (CUNYSciCom).

Discussion:

- JH: First off, yay, STEM chartered org! But to clarify, the current wording does not "prioritize non-steering", but rather, it forbids steering officers.
- AK: The intentionality is good, because it encourages community governance, and offers non-steering officers to have their voices heard, so we can bring this to Plenary and see how this goes. We can use the current wording to say it is important for non-steering officers to serve, and that steering officers cannot.

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

Activites:

- Meeting with the Health and Wellness Committee: Sara Ortiz joined the Committee. We started to work on the program for this academic year and reached Adam to check on our budget.
- One of our upcoming events will be meditation.
- I emailed Matthew Schoengood and he asked me to schedule the meeting to talk about the nurse practitioner, but I would like to know if any of you would like to participate in this meeting before scheduling it.
- Working to schedule events like Yoga and Zumba, but also Tai Chi or Eurythmy for those with disabilities (Sara will coordinate this).

Updates:

- Jonathan and Sara met with Clare Wilson, I was unable to attend due to incorrectly marking my calendar, but they kept me informed on what was discussed. We will work with Clare to schedule a Town Hall.

Announcements:

- I am looking into the history of the Nurse Practitioner

AK: I motion to move forward the two voting items (New Business V-C and V-D).

CQS seconds.

Motion passes unanimously

D. Officer for Outreach (Christopher Campbell)

Updates:

- (1) Hi! This is my first official meeting as the Officer for Outreach.
- (2) I met with Allison Douglass from the GC's Writing Center to discuss some upcoming writing events. We decided that we will hold an online writing-gathering event closer to the end of the semester (roughly the second week of December). We're hoping to use this event as a way for gaging interest in in-person writing events next semester. The writing events will be, tentatively, discipline related and also one writing event for international students and/or non-native English speakers/writers. This is all very preliminary, but in a more general sense it's indicative of the Writing Center looking to form a partnership of sorts with the DGSC.
- (3) Some international students from the Physics Department are receiving their scholarship funds from last year but are also completing RA/TA work that they are not being paid for. I reached out to a number of GC administrators regarding the issue and heard back from Elise Perram, who mentioned that she has spoken with the Dean of Sciences regarding the issue. He asked these students to reach out to him directly. I'm going to reach out to the Physics Program Rep on Monday to ask if this message has been relayed to these students, and be sure that this is followed up on.

E. Officer for Student Life & Services (Carmin Quijano Seda)

Activites:

- We celebrated to the Back to the 90's Board's Game Night on Oct 19, 2021 .
- A total of 12 students came to the games. The majority of students were PhD students from the Biology Program. One from Biochem, one from Physics, two from Urban Ed, and me from LAILaC. We stayed in room 5414.
- We offered Subway wraps, cookies, and water to participants.
- The day after, I sent out eleven GrubHub gift cards to all participants.
- The total cost of this event was \$312.78.
- Students mentioned that they had a great time, and they would like to join more game's night.
- I took some pictures, and I think that we could share them on our webpage or social media.

Updates:


- I have been in talks with Bri Alexander, and she told me that she is preparing for her second qualifying exam. So, she is unable to do the jewelry workshop for us this fall. But she also told me that she would like to do it in Spring.
- Thus, the Native American Jewelry Workshop is postponed for the Spring 2022.

Announcements:

- I am organizing the DGSC's Winter Talent Show. It's going to be on December 7 at 6:00 p.m. in room 5414.
- I have prepared the flyer and registration link (<https://forms.gle/SWTfhmnyV1JnDRMK7>). I will send it to Inma for distribution.
- If you are available on that day, please let me know. I will need some help to prepare the room, etc.
- Here is the promo:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gexKoscLA2LISwx-tfGfKtaTIHC9FxMo/view?usp=sharing>

F. Officer for Technology & Library (Adashima Oyo)

Activites:

- No Significant Tech Updates...
 - (Add notes from IT meeting) Note: this section will be updated before we approve the minutes at the December Steering meeting.
 -  DGSC IT Meeting Notes
- Met with Chief Librarian to discuss library updates on Oct 28th:
 - Library's extended hours: 9am to 9pm Monday-Friday and 12-5pm Saturday-Sunday.
 - Hours are still not back to pre-COVID hours!
 - Chief Librarian reports there is a huge uptick of people eating in the library; "not okay."
- Participating on the Search Committee for Head Reference Librarian
 - 12 individuals invited to interview, including Interim Head of Reference, Elvis Bakaitis
 - Interviews started on Oct 29th. SC wants to invite 4 people to Second Round Interview
 - 5 Questions for First Round Interviews:
 - What interests you about this position? - Mason
 - Tell us about your experience working with diverse student populations. - Jill
 - What is your experience working with graduate-level researchers? - Adashima
 - Tell us how you understand the role Open Educational Resources plays in graduate education? - Adriana
 - This position will coordinate our reference services operation. Tell us about a library service or project you have coordinated. – Steve

Discussion:

- JH: Updates from Graduate Council IT Committee: Faculty are inclined to focus on Hyflex only being used when necessary, when there is a student who is unable to attend.

V. New Business

A. Discussion of the GC's "diversity and inclusion" strategy

- SRA: I wonder if we can hold an event on diversity. The statistics on international students consider us non-resident for tax purposes, so certain identities are completely erased, as PMO mentioned.

- SD: We can reach out to whoever is responsible for the statistics, to discuss the issue of non-resident aliens being considered an ethnic group. Let's focus on actionable items and goals.

AK: So there is an action plan moving forwards, SRA can involve PMO and AO in this.

B. Agenda items for EC lunch with President and Provost (Rescheduled to Dec. 10)

AK: We can table this because there is another Steering meeting before then, it was just rescheduled today

C. Second room exception for LAILAC for their conference in the spring (Voting)

CQS: Dates are April 7th and 8th, we should have about 50 people, but post-pandemic, we don't know what will happen. It will be our 26th edition of LAILAC conferences.

SRA: This year in particular is important because of our internal situation of restructuring of the program, and it's a difficult time, we need a healing space for the members of our program.

AK motions to approve the second exception.

SRA seconds the motion.

Motion passes unanimously.

D. Addition of a Program Representative Seat for Linguistics (Voting)

KA: Alaa Sharif put forward a petition for a Program Representative seat.

AK motions to approve.

SRA seconds.

Motion passes unanimously.

VI. Announcements

VII. Adjournment

AK motions to adjourn the meeting.

SD seconds.

Meeting is adjourned at 6:50 PM by unanimous consent.