Steering Meeting *Minutes*
April 1, 2022

Attendance:

Present: Sharanya Dutta, Adam Kocurek, Jonathan Hanon, Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic, Angela LaScala Gruenewald, Katherine Anderson, Christopher Campbell, Britt Munro, Silvia Rivera Alfaro (PROXY: Zhuo Yin)

Absent: Debbie Leter, Carmin Quijano Seda

Meeting called to order at 4:03 PM

I. **Approval of Agenda**
>   Motion to approve: Jonathan Hanon
>   Seconded: Zhuo Yin (proxy for Silvia Rivera Alfaro)
>   Vote: passed unanimously

II. **Approval of Minutes of the March 16, 2022 Meeting**
>   Motion to approve: Jonathan Hanon
>   Seconded: Sharanya Dutta
>   Vote: passed unanimously

III. **Executive Committee Reports**
>   A. **Co-Chair for Student Affairs (Sharanya Dutta)**

Updates:

-   Election ballots are now live (**APRIL 1, 2022, 12 AM EDT - MAY 2, 2022, 11:59 PM EDT.**).
    -   Ballot can be accessed:: https://eballot4.votenet.com/dsc
    -   Please help spread the word about elections, we really need to reach out to program reps and people specifically.
    -   Also we have received exactly one application for both AP co-organizer positions combined, please get the word out in your circles and ask people to apply?
    -   Help chartered organizations obtain active status by signing their rosters: http://cunydsc.org/works/chartered-organizations/list

>   B. **Co-Chair for Communications (Deborah Leter)**

Updates/Recent Meetings:

03/28: EC lunch with President and Provost

- We talked about the childcare center and how to make sure students, rather than faculty and staff, get priority access to the center. We plan to send a survey to students to get a better sense of student needs in terms of childcare services (Parisa and Adam can speak more about this).
- They seemed to agree with our request to have a meeting with the President, Provost, and various admin offices to discuss administrative issues.
- We talked about how to best get our needs across to CUNY Central, and not feel like our advocacy is a one-way street. President Garrell said she would make a point of consulting with CUNY Central and making sure to respond to our requests or suggestions, even if they can't promise to act on them. After the meeting, we got an email response from CUNY University Provost Dan Lemons and President Garrell to our recent resolution on the centralized payment system. It's the first time this year that we've received a written response from the administration to a resolution/statement we've issued, so hopefully this will continue.

Website
- Co-chairs now have editing access to the new DGSC website and we're starting to edit the pages' content. We are still meeting once a week with our website developer, and it seems like we're in the final stages. Once we've done a first round of editing, we will share with you and ask you for any suggestions/input you may have for the content of the website's pages!
- If anyone has any good high quality pictures of the GC or student life at the GC, please send them my way.

Upcoming Meetings:
- 4/27: Co-chairs and OSA monthly meeting
- 4/29: Plenary (guest speakers: Dave Hershinow from the Writing Center + Clare Wilson from Disability Services)

Announcements:
Adam, Parisa, Jonathan – anything you want to add about that lunch meeting with the President and Provost?

Discussion:

AK: As the person reading this, I'll also add that we followed up with a question about the funding request to Albany. We won't hear whether Albany will accept the request and we don't know how the money would be used. It is clear they want to increase GAB and chip away at the two tier funding system. We have asked to continue to be looped in.

ZY: Regarding our resolution, the president mentioned the centralized system has an issue and we don't want to create a new issue by creating a new system. Something I thought of during the last plenary is that our resolution applies to all different kinds of systems and flows. Even if we had a centralized system and this system provided the right payment/unified the teaching workload/payments, it seems like the late payment is just the symptom of the current payment system – the systems in other parts of CUNY that are outside GC control.

AK: This is something we spoke to at the EC meeting with the President/Provost. Patti Myatt has gotten to 90% of problems so far, which are within the GC, but the other 10% are outside of the GC, or even outside of CUNY, such as TIN. There are other factors outside of our direct sphere of control.

JH: If there's something else I can say: every single issue with the payment system has been unique. There's a big question about how much centralizing will help with the problem and how much it'll just create new problems.

C. Co-Chair for Business (Adam Kocurek)

Announcements:
- Budget:
  - So far, I've received no emails from people concerned about how my budget has been allocated - hoping for an easy voting of it during the April plenary.
  - Email from Brian Peterson: "The DGSC has a fund in the foundation called the "DGSC" fund (fund account number 212645). The fund was established by Colin Ashley and has a balance of $212.00. The fund is inactive. Given this status, we would like the DGSC to spend down the remaining balance so we can close the account. The fund is unrestricted to the DGCS. I am writing to ask that you work with the DGSC leadership to identify an appropriate use of these funds no later than the end of the current fiscal year."
  - I'm thinking of using it to go towards the student health emergency fee. Thoughts?
  - Students are starting to hold more events! I'm anticipating a rush of student spending in May.
- Graduate Center Education Task Force - "great ideas" survey I co-constructed is live now, and will be closing in mid-April. Please consider contributing to it, if you have not already! Really trying to solicit student feedback.
- Business Office - updates to CUNYFirst have caused a delay both in payments and in the processing of new vendor IDs. If you or other students haven't been reimbursed or paid yet, please don't be quiet about it - send me an email so that I can troubleshoot with the Business Office/Bursar/etc. to find out where the problem is. Due to changes in CUNY Central, new vendor forms cannot be processed until April 4th, at which point a new system will be piloted - in short, Central Office will be processing vendor IDs, not the Business Office. Still unclear how this will be implemented, but should have an update by plenary.

D. USS Delegate (Jonathan Hanon)

Updates:
- The corruption continues
  - Cory Provost has approved USS Co-Sponsorship for numerous events without consulting a single member of the body. Looking back, USS was signed on to a February 16th NYPIRG Higher Education Action Zoom event, a March 6th PSC New Deal for CUNY in-person march, and a future Legislative Conference in Albany on April 8th - 10th.
  - Additionally, Cory Provost has unilaterally appointed himself to the Search Committee for Vice-Chancellor for Information Technology (CUNY CIO). As the USS Vice-Chair for Technology, it is my responsibility to appoint a qualified candidate for that Search Committee who is aware of the nuances of the CUNY technological infrastructure. I would have appointed either Aharon Grama (my predecessor to VC for Tech) or myself to the position, but Cory put himself on. Due to this, we do not have a student representative who is aware of technology.
  - As such, I am being actively hindered from fulfilling my duties to the CUNY student body.
- Special Election Updates

- ○ The USS Plenary was unable to come to a consensus on procedures for Special Elections for Vice-Chair for Community Colleges and Vice-Chair for International Affairs at our March 27th meeting, so no candidates were nominated. It is unprecedented that special elections are delayed, but everything in USS this year has been unprecedented.
  - ○ The USS Bylaws Committee wrote a proposal for nominations procedures, which will be voted on at the April 24th USS Plenary (this is taking too long). Hopefully, we can have a more populated USS Steering by then.
- Discussion of Open Meetings Law
  - ○ There has been an active discussion of Open Meetings Law, what it applies to, and what is necessary for it, so we can properly enforce it when the time comes.
  - ○ The consensus across CUNY, contrary to what President Garrell was told, is that every meeting of any of our governing bodies qualifies under this law and must be open, whether that be Graduate Council, DGSC, or any other body.
  - ○ The idea we were given was that someone can count for quorum even if they are attending remotely. However, the meeting must, at least in theory, be assigned an in-person meeting space that must be advertised, and must allow members of the body and the public to attend at that location if they so desire, that the chair of the meeting must physically preside from. Although we know that most people would opt for the remote option, the in-person option must still be available, and the meeting would need to be hyflex.
- Technology Committee
  - ○ We are awaiting the CIO search committee to conclude to continue on our proposal for student representation on administrative technology committees with the "permanent" CIO rather than with the temporary CIO.
- USS Scholarship Committee
  - ○ My proposal to open applications early was successful. Applications have opened on Wednesday, March 30th, and will be open until Saturday, April 30th. This is much earlier than the usual May 15th to June 15th.
  - ○ I have sent an email to the DGSC Listserv regarding the application process.
  - ○ If anyone is interested in being a reviewer for the USS Scholarship, please contact me directly. Reviewing will begin on June 1st, a lot earlier than the July 19th it started last year, to allow for more time to process applications.

E. UFS Liaison (Parisa Montazaran Osmanovic)

Updates:
- We had a plenary meeting last Monday, mainly focused on Executive Committee Elections
- Two resolutions considered:
  - *Freedom to Teach* in light of all the other state legislation on what can be taught, what language can be used, etc.
    - Lots of discussion about verbiage, how it could be used
    - Passed at 94%

- *CUNY Central Consulting with Faculty before Passing Teaching Directives* (e.g., 70/30 return to school class ratio)
  - Faculty want more input regarding how they teach, what classes are in-person/hybrid/virtual, etc. They want to be able to say more as USF regarding these changes.
  - Passed at 98%
- I don't have voting privileges, so I did not comment much during this meeting
- I am working with Jonathan about how to get voting privileges, now that I am confirmed to have speaking/floor privileges (I have those through the end of the semester, I do not have voting power)
  - Angling to get voting power now
  - We want to emphasize it's different to have a GC faculty rep versus a GC PhD student repping PhD students teaching across CUNY

Discussion:

ZY: I heard about these resolutions. What do we think about the second resolution? I think we should support the second resolution.

PO: Absolutely, I think resolutions like this influence us the most. We have precarious funding and living situations. The option to be able to continue teaching virtually is something we should be represented on, if god forbid it happens again. Another example, faculty weren't required to vaccinate, however we, as students, are vaccinated, so we were co-teaching alongside unvaccinated faculty as vaccinated faculty/PhD students. I think we should have our interests represented at UFS.

ZY: In this case, could we co-sponsor the Freedom to Teach resolution as DGSC or is that a bad move? Is it okay for us to co-sponsor these types of resolutions?

PO: I am not sure about the DGSC governance aspects of this for us. Can we co-sponsor? Can we show our support? Even if we don't have voting power.

JH: I want to iterate what I told Parisa. Parisa asked me earlier in the week about how we could introduce it in the agenda, but we need to amend it on the agenda, so if the executive committee blocks your amendment, then you have to amend from the floor. I do have a slick way of getting it as a topic of discussion. First thing, we can bring up a conversation about lecturer lines. Conversation will focus on whether doctoral students are eligible for lecture lines. We can use this as a chance to emphasize that doctoral student adjuncts aren't being represented on the campus where they teach and then we add that these adjuncts don't have representation in their capacity. Parisa is here to represent the voices of the voiceless. She is not here to "be represented" by the faculty representative, but to "represent" doctoral student adjuncts.

IV.   **Steering Officer Reports**
  A.   **Officer for Funding (Angela LaScala-Gruenewald)**

Updates:
- **Grant updates:**
    - Reviewed four grant applications during March 2022 Grants Committee Meeting
    - Last deadline to submit grants was Friday, March 18 (received 5 applications)
    - Reviewing these applications during this Monday, April 4, Grants Committee Meeting
    - Crafted amendment to bylaws in collaboration with Katie's Constitution and Bylaws Committee ([drafted here](#)) in order to increase
        - Will present at April Plenary and then vote in May Plenary
        - Feedback welcome
- **Promotion of grant opportunities:**
    - Drafted grantee profiles to promote grant opportunities on social ([drafts here](#)); all three grantees approved and sent along fun materials to share on social!
        - Sent to social media manager
    - At plenary, not hearing much interest in presenting to student groups re: DGSC services. We can send an email (I should get on that). Other ideas for promoting these sessions? Is this something to leave until Fall 2022? Do a big round then?

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

Updates: No updates.

C. Officer for Technology & Library (Britt Munro)

Updates: Silvia and I are nearly done with our mental health campaign- design [here](#) and approved by the library. Sharanya and I have submitted our grant proposals for library collections.

Attended the STF committee meeting. Successful proposals included funding for library and new computers, as well as funding for programming assistance for Clare Wilson in disabilities, alongside more tech for student disabilities services, audio recorders for students in linguistics, and more.

Search for a chief librarian nearly done! Anticipating a result next month. Emily Drabinski asked if anyone wants to support her bid for chief librarian please email the provost on her behalf! Other librarians I have spoken to seem very supportive of Emily's bid. provost@gc.cuny.edu.

Announcements: I will be deferring next semester! So I will need to find someone to fill this position for the Fall :(

D. Officer for Governance & Membership (Katie Anderson)
Updates:
- Can we please discuss the duties of the Governance Task Force?

- TAKEN FROM BYLAWS

  3.7 Governance Task Force

  a. Purpose

  The Governance Task Force ==shall review governance documents and policies at the Graduate Center, investigate reported infractions of governance, report to the DGSC and the appropriate committees of Graduate Council, and provide mediation, intervention, and advocacy in furthering democracy and democratic processes at the Graduate Center and CUNY.==

  b. Membership

  The members of the Governance Task Force shall consist of the student members of the Graduate Council Committee on Structure, ex-officio, all members of the DGSC Executive Committee, ex-officio, and any and all interested members of the DSO, who will be ratified by the DGSC Steering Committee. When possible, a diversity of academic clusters and programs should be represented.

  c. Leadership

  The Governance Task Force shall elect at least two co-leaders from among its members at its first meeting, which shall be convened by the Co-Chair for Student Affairs. When possible, at least one co-leader should be a non-member of the DGSC Executive Committee.

  d. Duties of the Governance Task Force

  The duties of the Governance Task Force shall include but not be limited to:

  > i. Meeting once each semester to discuss relevant changes, proposals, and issues related to Graduate Center and program level governance; and
  > ii. ==Advocating for increased student representation on all committees throughout the Graduate Center==; and
  > iii. Investigating, reporting, and resolving infractions of governance reported by students.

Announcements:
- The Constitution and Bylaws Committee met earlier today to discuss changes to the Bylaws language surrounding summer spending of the Grants Committee Budget - Covered in Angela's report.

Discussion:

JH: It seems that the task force isn't a committee as defined by the Constitution, since it says two co-leaders and meeting once per semester, so is it classified as something else? But relating to the topic of the day, what are the task force's actual duties? It's not clear from the bylaws. What does this all mean?

SD: So we haven't been compelled to meet for something that we couldn't work out via email with the OSA, we've been able to solve things during Covid via email communication. But before, in the year before COVID, during a conversation around the budget issues, the structures committee met and there was a conversation about increasing student input and apparently 30%..... you can petition to get the program governance reviewed, but we cannot do anything if it has been violated. We should, to Katie's point, think of this as an opportunity to support other students doing this work in their own programs, as a kind of DGSC outreach attempt.

JH: I am not sure about the part about admissions committees, but I have a few thoughts based on my experiences in my own program. The Admissions Committee has never convened but they never told students things are happening. The Executive and Governance Committee, I'm the one revising governance to create DEI program, and got overruled to 1-to-3 students-to-faculty. Even if I am writing something, I get overridden because faculty have 2/3rds vote.

SD: So Jonathan, do you think the governance task force could help students and have their rules reviewed?

JH: That's what I'm thinking but at the same time we got to think about how to enforce them. I don't know how to enforce any of this; and at the same time, what do I do when there are two students and 34 faculty on the committee. How can we use the governance task force to do something productive? I'm struggling with what to say here. I keep getting overridden by my department on anything relating to transparency.

ZY: I want to respond to Jonathan. Some of the issues are the Bylaws of the Graduate Center. The CS department changed the EO, and the CS students cannot nominate an EO. When physics department changes the EO, students can nominate the EO.

ALG: We're going through something similar in our department, and we need to think creatively about what the task force can do in terms of "carrots and sticks" to help faculty in terms of shared / co-governance with students. We hear from our department that it's faculty-run with student perspective. Simultaneously, we do have a say on certain committees. All we can do as students is say "see bylaw xyz", and there's really nothing we can do about it. We can go to the provost, but the only thing I can see is if we can go over the EO's head, if the EO won't follow the bylaws.

SD: There has been a way for us to step in and attend meetings when student issues are involved, to liaise between departments and students, and we can only solve things when we're brought in.

JH: To clarify for ZY, we were able to nominate EO, but overall, it's not our decision. Here at the GC it's specifically stated at the CUNY bylaws, and this is something we debated at the last Graduate Council meeting, we debated for 20 mins about what the EO was and how they were elected. It turns out it's the President's final decision who the EO is; the program can recommend someone but cannot determine who the final selection is.

AK: Thanks for bringing up the Graduate Council. I was about to raise that. If you think your department is in violation of mandates as articulated by the Graduate Council, the proper thing is to write to HR or the Department of Student Affairs. A lot of students don't want to do this b/c of retribution. But as I understand it, our governance task force was intended to liaise and advocate, anonymously, and send such info to the corresponding admin, to help students work with admin if

they are afraid of retribution. We haven't gotten anything over the last two weeks that we haven't been able to solve. I think also

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

Updates:

- Yoga keeps going and we had our second session of meditation. I have not participated myself lately, but I am sure both events are going well.
  Yoga is scheduled Mondays at 9:00 a.m. and Thursdays at 6:00 p.m. until 5/26.
  Meditation is once a month on Monday at 6:00 p.m. on 4/11, 5/9, and 6/13
- Desk on the Cloud is going on with success. Attendance is low, but people who attend have become very interested and they find the method very useful to write. Ernesto Cuba, the student leader of the space, added a second day to respond to the interest of the group, so they are meeting on Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. to write. Participants are even meeting with each other on additional days to co-work.
- I followed up with OSA on the new proposals for a NYSHIP information session, but they have not replied yet.
- I am working with Britt in the campaign on mental health for the library (she will probably tell more about it).
- I have been doing improvements on the website that will be launched with the campaign:
  https://wellness.commons.gc.cuny.edu/
- I will collaborate with the Chartered Organization of GC Students with Disabilities on an event on mad studies and disability pedagogy at the GC. The organization already has two presenters for the event.

F. Officer for Outreach (Christopher Campbell)

Updates:

1) Chief Librarian search is underway. Students have now met with the three candidates. Please be in touch with me if you'd like to review each of their CVs in the case that you'd like to know more about the candidates upon the results.
2) Anyone who would be interested in working with me and Debbie on revamping the DGSC student welcome materials? We're thinking we'll work on these materials in June, once things have quieted down.
3) CUNY Digital History Archive (Oral History project).

V. New Business
A. Discussing / Evaluating DGSC Affiliates

AK: I'll start our conversation here by quickly summarizing what we need to discuss and then we can converse more over email. We have an issue with transparency and accountability in terms of how affiliates are using funds. It seems like they also take action without consulting us in advance. Particularly the Adjunct Project and OpenCUNY. We can loop you into these conversations, as we are in the process of hiring, we are in a moment to potentially rectify this in meaningful ways, before they are set in stone.

SD: The current model for change that we arrived at with the adjunct project is without being police-like, they need to give us an update report once or twice a semester and that they need pre-approval for some activities (e.g., hiring). This can be enforced and asked for because this is what chartered orgs do. And they all do it. If they want to spend the money, they follow these guidelines and restrictions. I think we can do this for the affiliates without being police-y. It's about being accountable without being top heavy.

VI.   Announcements

VII.   Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: AK
Second: JH
Vote: Unanimous

Meeting is adjourned at 6:44 pm.