

## **GSO Senate – Minutes – April 8, 2008**

**The meeting begins with 30 Senators and 5 Executives.**

### **1) Welcoming Remarks**

President Naydan congratulated the senators and thanked them for coming.

### **2) Approval of the Agenda**

William Lahti (Computer Science) moved to approve the agenda. It was approved unanimously.

### **3) Approval of March Meeting Minutes**

Helen Jolly (Anthropology) motioned to approve the minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **4) Supplementary Instructional Budget Funding**

President Naydan explained on the issue of Supplementary Instructional Budget funding. It's still not clear what is going to happen with that and if any TA/GA positions are going to be cut next year.

### **5) Campus Life Awards**

Speaker Antonenko explained about the campus life awards and asked that grad students nominate those who they think deserve an award.

### **6) Smoking Committee**

VP Esparza described the discussion of the issue at the University Senate and updated the senators on the current status of the smoking policy. The final vote over the new policy is going to take place during the upcoming University Senate meeting, on May 5.

### **7) Internal Committee Reports**

#### **a) Budget Committee**

Treasurer Longobardi presented the GSO expenditures during the month and the amounts still available on the different lines. RAP expenditures are still going very slowly. It seems that less people are applying this year.

Requests for funding:

I. A representative from the Functional Morphology Group asked for funding for an Invited Speaker Seminar. The representative asked for \$700 from the GSO (out of \$1069). Mark Rice (History) motioned to approve the full amount. It was approved unanimously.

Ron Willa, the GSO External Auditor, explained on the state of the GSO budget. There were no questions to Ron.

Finally, Treasurer Longobardi presented the draft of the budget for next year and explained on the reasoning behind the different items and the changes that the Budget

committee and the Executive Council wish to make. This year the GSO has a few thousand dollars less to spend on the different programs. But considering the large surplus we have from previous years, the Budget Committee and Executive Committee recommend not cutting any funding for current programs (see **Attached Excel File** for the full proposed budget).

**Discussion of the proposed budget** (the final vote on the complete budget will be during the last senate meeting of the year):

There was a question about the higher level of deficit for this year. Treasurer Longobardi explained that it was consulted with and approved by both our external auditor and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Next, the senate discussed the suggestion to cut off the GradMag funding for next year (this year, the publication was allocated \$8,400). Different opinions on the subject were heard. Christian Walker (English) motioned to restore the \$8400 for the GradMag. The Motion did not pass (10 for, 11 objecting; 7 abstaining). Next, David Ruggiero (Ecology and Evolution) motioned that the line in the budget for the GradMag would be restored, but the Budget committee will again discuss the specific amount. This motion passed.

b) Housing Committee

Dan Woulfin (History) announced that this will be his last semester as Housing Committee Chair and went over some of the progress made over the last year. First, Chapin Apartment Residents Association and Schomburg Apartment Residents Association have had their annual rate review meetings with Campus Residences. These meetings determine the rent for the graduate student residents over the next year and how the rent will be allocated throughout the complex. Because the construction of Chapin will be paid off this year, Campus Residences has decided to use the savings to make structural improvements to the complexes, including improved service in mailrooms, refurbishing the laundry areas and foundation work, and increase Chapin's rent by 0%. Schomburg has a 5% increase for the 2008-2009 academic year.

During the rate review meetings, both SARA and CARA approved increased funding for upgrading the work order system. Since maintenance in the past has been an issue, especially with unfilled work orders this is a welcome improvement and will solve a lot of the accountability issues that have arisen in the past when it came to the Schomburg and Chapin maintenance workers.

Over the past year the Housing Committee has successfully found a fair compromise for consolidation of residents, when Chapin residents have to move into a new apartment in the middle of the semester because they are paying for a double while living without a roommate or Campus Residences needs to do maintenance work in the apartment. Now, in addition to being able to request help from Chapin staff, residents will have access to both apartments for ten days in order to ease the move.

Finally, this semester we had our first Landlord Tenant Seminar with Phil Solages, the GSO Legal Clinic Lawyer. We had a good turnout and hopefully this will become a tradition in the future.

If anyone is interested in taking over the Housing Committee, please speak to Dan.

### c) Election Committee

Dan Woulfin (History) replaced Eran Shor as the Chairperson of the Elections Committee, because Eran chose to run for office. Due to an incomplete slate of candidates, the Elections Committee unanimously decided to extend the deadline to Thursday, April 10 at 5 PM. The committee has also contacted the Department of Information Technology, which runs the online elections, and the chair has held a meeting with NYPIRG about getting out the Vote efforts. Both have been extremely cooperative.

Voting for the upcoming elections will begin at 9 AM on April 21 and end at 5 PM on April 25.

Dan also presented the mandatory/voluntary student activity fee **referendum** to the Senate. This referendum is mandated every two years by SUNY Chancellor's Guidelines in order to keep the student activity fee mandatory. The referendum reads as follows:

#### **Mandatory/Voluntary Student Activity Fee Referendum**

The mandatory student activity fee funds graduate clubs and department allocations, cultural and social events, talks and conferences, child care, Legal Clinic, Tax Clinic, Resource Allocation Program (RAP), and other programs.

At present, the student activity fee is mandatory and all graduate students are billed according to the following Schedule

\* Full-time graduate students are billed a student activity fee of \$22.00 per semester

\* Part-time graduate students are billed a student activity fee of \$7.00 per semester

A vote on whether the student activity fee should be mandatory or voluntary is required every two years under the SUNY Chancellor's Guidelines.

The referendum was approved unanimously by the Senate and placed on the ballot.

The candidates who had handed in nomination forms presented themselves shortly to the Senate:

**Lila Naydan** (English) – running for President

**Dylan Selterman** (Psychology) – running for VP

**Eran Shor** (Sociology) – running for VP

**Jose Colmenares** (Materials Science & Engineering) – running for Secretary

**Chris Young** (Materials Science & Engineering) – running for Treasurer

Speaker Antonenko also spoke about the referendum, asking graduate students to vote for a mandatory fee. He explained that if the fee is not mandatory, it basically means that the GSO can no longer exist in its current state, and will no longer be able to provide the

different services it now provides. Speaker Antonenko therefore pleaded the senators to vote for a mandatory fee and to persuade other graduate students in their departments to vote in the same way.

d) NYPIRG Report

Jacque Lee, NYPIRG representative, gave an update on Spring Student Empowerment Conference and how NYPIRG will be helping with the upcoming elections and Student Activity Fee Referendum. She also gave an update on the Higher Education Graduate Student campaign: Testimony was given this winter and spring at several state bodies including SUNY Board of Trustees and NYS Commission on Higher Education.

NYPIRG is fighting for increased Grad TAP to cover fees; increasing Graduate student stipends; and increasing SUNY operating budgets to hire more full-time faculty. Current grassroots advocacy includes local delegation visits, media events and phone call and letter writing drives to key elected officials.

**8) Dean Martin Addressed the Senate**

Dean Lawrence Martin, Dean of the Graduate School expressed his worry of the general feeling he picked up when last talking to the senate and at the rally. He wanted to come and talk to the senate again about the \$2,000 supplement for first year students. The Dean explained the harsh cuts to the University budgets by the State, and in addition the reallocation by President Kenny of funds which formerly went to the School of Arts and Sciences and are now going to the Medical School.

All that said, Dean Martin brought forward a few possibilities for ways to compensate the continuing graduate student population, which is not going to enjoy the supplement \$2,000.

David Roelfs (Sociology) suggested that the grad school should defend more vehemently the supplementary Instruction Budget and extra TA and GA lines, mostly used for advanced students. The dean replied that so far no such cuts are planned.

There were a couple of more specific suggestions for how to help graduate students, and Dean Martin wrote them down and promised to look into them and see what can be done. He asked students to write to him or to the GSO Executive committee with more suggestions.

\* Kate Klein (Genetics) motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

\* President Naydan and Treasurer Longobardi invited the senators for a beer at the University Cafe.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Eran Shor