

MINUTES¹

USG Senate Meeting

Thursday, September 23rd, 2010

Meeting called to order at 7:08 pm. Meeting held in SAC Ballroom B.

Agenda item 1.0: Attendance

The roll was called:

Senator Allen Abraham	Present
Senator Tahir Ahmad	Present
Senator Ory Baum	Present
Senator Samuel Cushner	Absent
Senator Spenser Cushing	Present
Senator Frank Fanizza	Present
Senator Christian Giraldo	Late (7:10 pm)
Senator Sidrah Khan	Present
Senator Mahyar Kashan	Present
Senator Thomas Kirnbauer	Present
Senator Yan Leyfman	Present
Senator Deborah Machalow	Present
Senator Kirin Mahmud	Present
Senator Shivani Rampersad	Present
Senator Masood Rustemi	Present
Senator Najee Simmons	Present

¹ Typically, minutes should only contain the essentials of a meeting. This includes the meeting time and location, a list of those who attended, as well as a record of all motions made and their outcome. Debate or even a summary of debate is usually not included. I include it here at the request of the Chair. Mistakes and omissions are likely, so Senators are encouraged to e-mail the Secretary with corrections prior to the next Senate meeting, so that the record reflects what was actually said at the meeting and so corrections can be made efficiently.

Senator Harminder Singh	Late
Senator Michael Spinelli	Present
Senator Priya Sohi	Present
Senator Peter Stratoudakis	Present
Senator Russell Williams	Late (7:19 pm)

President Matthew Graham	Late
Executive Vice President Alexander Dimitriyadi (Chair)	Present
Vice President of Clubs and Organizations Jennifer Chan	Present
Vice President of Communications David Mazza	Present
Vice President of Student Life Peter Molloy	Absent
Senior Class Representative Dexter Daniel	Absent
Junior Class Representative Emilissa Trotman	Absent
Sophomore Class Representative Neville Hall Jr.	Late (7:25 pm)

Quorum established.

Agenda item 2.0: Announcements

The Chair announced that under the Senate’s By-laws, committees must meet at least once per month. Committees that have not met yet should therefore do so.

Agenda item 3.0: Approval of the Minutes (of 9/3/10 meeting)

- Senator Kashan moved to amend (item 4.0 – third bullet point – striking “Krishan” and replacing with “Kashan”.) The amendment was approved without objection.
- Senator Machalow moved to amend (Page 3 of the minutes, inserting “Undergraduate” before “Student Government.”) The amendment was approved without objection.
- Senator Machalow moved to amend the minutes, replacing all instances of “Chen” to “Chan” in reference to the spelling of the name of the Vice President of Clubs and Organizations. The amendment was approved without objection.
- Senator Machalow moved to amend the minutes (Item 8.0 – striking “act” in line 1 and replacing with “resolution” as well as striking “Lectures” and replacing with “Lecturers” in the title.) The amendment was approved without objection.

- Senator Cushing moved to amend the minutes (Item 8.0 – striking “Senator Machalow moved to adopt...” and replacing with “Senator Cushing moved to adopt...” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Senator Ahmad moved to approve the minutes as amended.
 - The minutes were approved without objection.

Agenda item 4.0: Presentation about Online Teacher Evaluations

- Dr. Graham Glynn presented a 10-15 minute PowerPoint slideshow, outlining proposed changes in the process of teacher evaluations.
- Current System:
 - 20-30% of forms do not contribute to teacher evaluations due to errors/incomplete responses.
 - Very long delay between students completing evaluations and the instructor taking a look at student responses.
 - Evaluations in the current system contain “pedagogically” outdated questions, which are not given much weight by faculty and relevant committees.
 - A majority of graduate students and faculty are in favor of changing the current system, according to a survey.
- Changing the Process:
 - Browser based (out of the classroom) evaluations through an external company, so students have faith that the data is not identifiable to individual students who made the evaluation.
 - Responses can be turned around quickly (days to a week), but withheld until after final exams are taken.
 - Feedback to faculty is done by rank, discipline, etc.
 - Possible public access (to students) of teacher rankings, which is not done in the current system.
- Gathering input:
 - Undergraduate and Graduate Councils of the Faculty Senate.
 - USG / GSO.
 - Numerous other university committees.
- Timeline:
 - Pilot scheme of the new evaluations: Fall 2010.
 - Full roll out planned for Spring 2011.
- VP Mazza (Questions/Comments):
 - Encourages that “full and equal” access be given to students as is given to faculty, in terms of inspecting the evaluations of instructors.
 - At some point data was made available, but the current policy is that rating data is not public. The proposed changes may (or may not) open up ratings to students.
 - Dr. Glynn suggested that if undergraduates were in favor of student access to the evaluations in the new system, that they could indicate their stance via resolution.

- Senator Kashan moved that an informal vote be taken, encouraging that the evaluations in the new system are made accessible to the student body.
 - The informal vote indicated unanimous backing of the Senate to the view that evaluations in the reformed system be made accessible to students.
 - VP Mazza suggested that a formal resolution could be written and presented to the Senate at its next meeting, to register the Senate's advocacy for an online ratings system, with the results available for inspection by students.
 - Sen. Spinelli: Will the results affect the faculty in anyway?
 - Dr. Glynn: Promotion and Tenure committee looks at the history and trend of the results, in the quality and content of course delivery. Department chairs also have access and consider this type of data.
 - Senator Leyfman: How do faculty benefit (from favorable ratings?):
 - Dr. Glynn: Promotion of professors is at least partially dependent on these types of ratings.
 - Dr. Glynn: It is not likely that disincentives would be put in place (e.g. not allowing student to see final course grade until after evaluations are made.) Filling out evaluation forms would be promoted through incentives and/or the ease of use of the process.
 - Senator Ahmad: What types of questions would be surveyed?
 - Dr. Glynn: 10-15 core questions as well as optional questions and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are traditionally given the most weight.

Agenda item 5.0: 2010-2011 Undergraduate Student Government Legal Counsel Contract Act

- Senator Cushing (Chair of the Budget Committee) presented the act.
 - Encouraged that the Senate approve the act in order to allow important business and contracts to proceed.
- Senator Machalow moved to approve the 2010-2011 Undergraduate Student Government Legal Counsel Act.
 - No debate.
 - The act was approved by a vote of 19-0-0².

Agenda item 6.0: Election Integrity Act

- Senator Ahmad (Chair of the Legislative Review Committee) presented the act:
 - Current Election Bylaws are contradictory. Proposed bylaws present rules in clear and concise manner.

² The format used in these minutes is to first indicate the number of votes in favor, followed by the number of votes against, and then indicating the number of abstentions. For example, 10-5-3 would indicate that the motion received ten votes in favor, five against, and three members were present but abstained from voting.

- USG should hold funded organizations accountable for their internal elections processes.
- Senator Machalow (moves that the Senate stand at ease for five minutes). The motion was approved without objection.
 - Senate returned to order at: 7:52 pm.
- The Chair announced:
 - Correction: The Chair incorrectly posted the meeting time of the Legislative Review Committee on the USG website.
- Sen. Machalow moved to appeal from the decision of the Chair. (The decision was that legislation cannot be read and amended line by line.) The appeal did not receive a second. Motion fails.
- Sen. Machalow moved that the “Election Integrity Act” be referred to the Rules Committee
 - Senator Ahmad: The legislative review committee has extensively reviewed the legislation. It would be a waste of time to send the matter to the Rules Committee.
 - On the motion to refer: Fails: 0-19-0
- Sen. Machalow moved to approve the “Election Integrity Act”
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 1 of the “Election Integrity Act,” Section 2, Subsection 2, striking “one” and replacing with “some”. The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 1 of the “Election Integrity Act,” Section 2, Subsection 3, striking “has” and replacing with “have”. The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 1 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 1, Subsection 1, striking “less” and replacing with “fewer”. The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 1 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 2, striking the text of Section 2 and replacing with: “Members of the Elections Board shall be undergraduate students and must maintain a 2.5 GPA for the entirety of their terms.” The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 1 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 4, striking the text of Section 4 and replacing with: “Elections Board members remain in Office while they are undergraduates of Stony Brook University or until they resign, are incapacitated, fail to maintain the minimum grade point average, run for Office, or graduate.” The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 2 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 6, Subsection 1, Item 5, by inserting a “,” (comma) after “Elections Board”. The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 2 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 6, Subsection 2, Item 4, by striking “tasks” and replacing with “task”. The amendment was approved without objection.

- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 3 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 6, Subsection 4, by striking “shall have” and replacing with “has”. The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 3 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article II, Section 6, Subsection 4, Item 5, by striking the period at the end of the sentence and inserting “or the USG Supreme Court.”
 - Debate: The USG Judicial Council is not yet constituted. It would therefore be a good idea to refer these matters to the Supreme Court in the meantime.
 - The amendment was approved by unanimous consent.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 3 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article IV, by striking Article IV.
 - There was no second and the motion was defeated.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 3 of the “Elections Board Bylaws,” Article III, by striking “right peaceably assemble...” and replacing with “right to peaceably assemble...” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 2 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 5, Subsection 1, Item 1, by striking “shall be pushed to the next full business day” and replacing with “shall be pushed to the end of the next full business day.” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 2 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 5, Subsection 2, by striking “switch the position” and replacing with “change positions.” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 2 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 5, Subsection 3, Item 1, by striking “Legal Name” and replacing with “legal name”. The amendment was approved without objection.
 - Senator Machalow moved that the Senate stand at ease, pending the call of the Chair. The motion was approved without objection.
 - The Senate returned to order at 8:14 pm.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 3 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 5, Subsection 6, by striking “and if currently elected to a USG position will automatically resign their previous position” and inserting “If during the fall election a current USG member is elected to a new position, they will automatically resign their previous position.” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Abraham moved to amend: Page 4 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 6, Subsection 3, Item 1, by striking the text of item 1 and replacing with “Calling five percent of the phone numbers of signatories for Senate candidates and 10% of signatories for Executive Council candidates, with a successful validation shall be defined as calling a petitioner and asking them—”.
 - The amendment was approved by a vote of 20-0-0.
- Senator Giraldo moved to end debate.

- The motion to end debate was rejected by a vote of 4-15-1.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 3 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 6, Subsection 2, Item 1, by striking “five class days” and replacing with “ten class days.”
 - Increasing the number of signatures required for petitioning requires more time to collect signatures.
 - The motion to amend was approved by a vote of 20-0-0.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 4 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 6, Subsection 3, Item 4, by striking the text of the item and replacing with “All fields must be filled out or the line shall not be counted towards the required amount of signatures.” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 5 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 7, Subsection 3, Item 1, by striking “following the election” and replacing with “following the end of the election.” The amendment was approved without objection.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 5 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 7, Subsection 3, by striking Item 2 and striking Item 3.
 - The motion was defeated by a vote of 5-15-0.
- Sen. Machalow moved to amend: Page 5 of the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act,” Section 7, Subsection 3, by striking the text of Subsection 3 and inserting “Failure to comply with this subsection may make any candidate ineligible, at the discretion of the Elections Board—”.
 - The motion was approved by a vote of 20-0-0.
- Sen. Cushing moved to appeal from the decision of the Chair. (The decision was that “omnibus” motions to amend cannot be proposed collectively and that instead each individual amendment be made and considered independently.)
 - The Senate successfully appealed from the decision of the Chair, by a vote of 19-1-0.
- Senator Cushing moved to postpone further consideration of item 6.0 (Elections Integrity Act) until it reappeared as item 8.1 on the agenda.
 - The motion to postpone was approved without objection.

Agenda item 7.0: Confirmation of the Presidential Appointment of USG Advocate General

- President Graham presented his candidate for USG Advocate General, and discussed his qualifications for that office.
 - Senator Ahmad moved to confirm Adam Kent as USG Advocate General.
 - Senator Machalow believes it is too hasty to confirm the candidate without a written report from the vetting committee.

- Senator Ahmad stated that while no written record was present, members of the vetting committee are present and questions can be asked of them.
- Senator Machalow stated that the proper procedure should be followed.
- Point of Inquiry: The USG Advocate General is Head of Department of Justice. The USG Advocate General also represents the student government in the USG Supreme Court.
- Senator Stratoudakis moved to end debate.
 - With a vote of 18-2-0, the motion to end debate (which requires a 2/3 majority) was approved.
- On the main motion (to confirm Adam Kent as USG Advocate General):
 - The candidate was confirmed by a vote of 17-3-0.

Agenda item 8.0: Confirmation of the Presidential Appointment of USG SPA Director

- President Graham presented his candidate for the USG SPA, discussing the significance of the SPA and the qualifications of his candidate (right person for the job; most extensive knowledge.)
 - Sen. Abraham – The Committee vetted the candidate.
 - Sen. Cushing – Spoke highly in favor of the candidate.
 - Senator Ahmad moved to confirm the candidate (Moiz Khan) as USG SPA Director.
 - Senator Abraham: Would the Candidate be in charge of Brookfest and Campus wide events. Chair: Yes, his responsibilities would include all USG Sponsored event programming for the student body.
 - By a vote of 19-0-1, Moiz Khan was confirmed as USG SPA Director.

Agenda item 8.1: Election Integrity Act (continued)

- Senator Machalow moved to amend the “Undergraduate Student Government Election Campaign Laws Act”, as follows:
 - Section 8.5: Strike “its” and insert “their.”
 - Section 9.2: Strike “noon” and insert “four.”
 - Section 9.2: Strike “a” and insert “the following.”
 - Section 12.2.1: Insert “shall” after “Election Board.”
 - Section 12.4.1: Strike “is” and insert “as.”
 - Section 12.3.1: Strike “to notify” and insert “as notification.”
 - Section 12.3.1.1: Insert “number” after “telephone.”
 - Section 12.4.1: Strike “The” and insert “the.”
 - Section 12.3.1.1: Strike “provide” and insert “provided.”
 - The combined amendments were considered collectively, and were approved without objection.

Agenda item 9.0: Open Agenda

- Senator Cushing brought a resolution to the floor, entitled: “RESOLUTION DEMANDING COMPUTERS BE RETURNED TO THE SENATE OFFICE.”
 - Senator Machalow moved to adopt the resolution.
 - The resolution was adopted by a vote of 20-0-0.
- Senator Abraham made a point of inquiry, asking who was in charge of updating the USG Website.
 - Chair: EVP, Director, and VP of Communications are in charge of updating the website.
 - Sen. Abraham made a statement that the website should be updated.
- Senator Machalow: As chair of rules committee, please give me your availabilities over the next two weeks, and please e-mail anyone on the rules committee regarding proposed by-laws.
- Senator Stratoudakis: “Do we always focus more on the grammar?” If legislation is written well enough to be understood, we are just wasting time on improving grammar.
 - Senator Machalow: I agree that a lot of time is wasted. All of our resolutions and laws are on the webpage. It reflects poorly on the Senate if laws are improperly written.
 - Senator Stratoudakis: I do not feel that students are logging on the website and are primarily concerned with the grammar of legislation.
 - Senator Simmons: I understand the point made, but if something is not exactly correct or clear, the law can be misinterpreted in the future.
 - Senator Abraham: Some of the amendments do make a big difference.
 - Senator Ahmad: I applaud amendments that change, clarify, or debate the substance of the act, but too much time is spent on cosmetic or grammar changes. Purely grammar/spelling corrections should be made and presented in advance.
 - Senator Machalow: I am a perfectionist. It looks poor on our part. The legitimacy of the USG would be challenged by poor grammar/spelling.
 - Senator Cushing: Legislation should be proofread.
- Chair: Procedure exists to submit legislation ahead of time. Non-substantive changes can be made then.
 - The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:00 pm.