

GSO Senate – Minutes – October 16, 2007

The meeting begins with 30 Senators and 5 Executives.

1) Welcoming Remarks

Ryan Soule, GSO President, congratulated the senators and thanked them for coming. The agenda is packed today, so we will move right to it.

2) Approval of the Agenda

Andrei Antonenko, GSO Speaker, asked if there are any items to add to the agenda. There were none. Dave Roelfs (Sociology) motioned to approve the agenda. It was approved unanimously.

3) Approval of September Meeting Minutes

Dylan Selterman (Psychology) motioned to approve the minutes. Dave Roelfs (Sociology) seconded. The motion passed (18 in favor, 4 abstained).

4) Nature Conservancy

Sarah Newkirk, a representative from the Nature Conservancy, gave a presentation on a project that her organization is advancing, called The Brookhaven Community Preservation Fund (CPF). This is an open space protection measure, aimed at preserving the environment and protecting open space in the area of Brookhaven. There is a need to stop overdevelopment in Brookhaven and protect the water quality, in the face of massive pressures from contractors. Overdevelopment is also increasing the load of taxes in Brookhaven.

The initiative aims at instituting a special tax, which will be paid by new residents now moving to Brookhaven (not by the older population of Brookhaven). This will be a progressive tax, so that residents with low income will be exempt. The tax will be used to protect natural habitat, preserve historical structures, parks, and water sources. The only organized opposition to the initiative comes from contractors, but those have a lot of funds to fight it with. The initiative is on the ballot these days, and it is critical that it gets approved, as this may be the last serious shot at it. Without the initiative, open space in Brookhaven is bound to disappear.

Sarah asked that the GSO stands behind the initiative, and encouraged residents to go and vote for it. Also, she asked that senators pass the word to their departments and stress the immediacy and importance of all this.

Jose Colmenares (Material Sciences) made a motion that the GSO should support the efforts of the Nature Conservancy for the CPF. Kat Hankinson (English) seconded. The motion passed unanimously

5) Internal and University Committee Nominations

President Soule and Speaker Antonenko presented the positions and committees which still need to be filled:

- * **Arts and Sciences Committee** – James Pearson (Art History), Fabian Batista (Marine Sciences) and Rebekah Schiller (Physics) will be the representatives.
- * **University Senate** – Onte Johnson (Political Science) and Devin Camenares (Biochemistry) will serve as additional representatives to the senate.
- * **Housing Committee** – Brendan Stanton (Political Science), Alan Rodricks, and Alfredo Valarezo (Materials Science) will serve on this one.
- * **Student Health Advisory** – no volunteers to serve on that.
- * **Bus Advisory Committee** – no one volunteered to serve on this committee.
- * **Library services** (a standing committee of the university senate) – no volunteers.
- * **Undergraduate Council** – Gregory Sabino (Biochemistry) will serve on this one.
- * **Board of Appeals** – Juliet Kinney (Marine Sciences) and Ari Grossman (Anthropology) will be the GSO representatives.
- * **West Campus and Dining Committee** – Dave Roelfs (Sociology) and Dante Dilanni (Music) will serve on this one.
- * **Graduate Council Grievances and Appeals** – Andrei Antonenko (Linguistics), Brendan Stanton (Political Science, alt.).
- * **Rules and Constitution committee** – Devin Camenares (Biochemistry).
- * **National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS)** – Ryan Soule (MBA), Andrei Antonenko (Linguistics) and Luigi Longobardi (Physics).
- * **SPD Council** – Erin Berg (School of Professional Development).
- * **Academic Standing & Appeals** – Kate Klein (Genetics).
- * **CAPRA** – Devin Camenares (Biochemistry).
- * **University Affairs** – Brendan Stanton (Political Science).
- * **Exclusive Beverage Bid Committee** – Anita Halasz.

Kat Hankinson (English) made a motion to approve the list. Jose Colmenares (Material Sciences) seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

6) Committee Reports

a) Rules and Constitution Committee

Speaker Antonenko explained on the internal control document. This comprehensive document will only be ready in a few months. In the meanwhile, the committee was working on a supplement to the *financial bylaws*. Speaker Antonenko presented the following suggested changes:

- (I) Changes in funding for Chapin and Schaumberg associations (CARA and SARA).
- (II) Funding for the interuniversity doctoral consortium (reimbursement for tickets for traveling to SB Manhattan),
- (III) Funding for recreation programs (such as fitness or soccer programs) that undergrads are currently not paying for, but grad students are.
- (IV) Grants to organizations that are not directly associated to the GSO, such as the Women Center, Independent, and other groups. These are not graduate student groups, but we may want to support them, so after the change these groups will be able to apply for funding.

(V) Having the Meet and Greet twice a semester.

(VI) Reimbursement for traveling to various GSO businesses such as SUNY governments meetings and the National Associate for Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS).

(VII) Committee expenses.

(IIX) Minor changes in the funding to the Survival Guide and the new student orientation.

Speaker Antonenko expects the document to be ready by the end of November.

Dave Roelfs (Sociology) motioned to approve the supplement to the financial bylaws.

Jose Colmenares (Materials Science) seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

b) Budget Committee

Treasurer Longobardi presented two requests for funding:

1) Marie-Elena Ortiz (Theatre Arts) asked the GSO support for Cabaret performances, which take place in the basement of the Staller Center. They need a Truss – a structure that allows hanging curtains and lights. It costs \$1,620. Onte Johnson (Political Science) made a motion to approve the support. Rebekah Schiller (Physics) seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2) A request for support of \$300 for a speaker series on art after terrorist attacks. Dylan Selterman (Psychology) motioned to approve. Kat Hankinson (English) seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Ron Willa (GSO C & D agent) presented the audit report of the GSO. The GSO has about \$100,000 in net assets, which is an increase of about \$27,000 from last year (last year ended with a surplus of about \$28,000 in GSO activities). In Ron's opinion, the net assets should not continue to increase. In other words, the money should be spent gradually and there should not continue to be such a large surplus every year.

Treasurer Longobardi presented the state of the GSO expenses for this year (so far). He commented that the report is still preliminary, partial, and should be taken with a grain of salt. Some expenses that were already approved are still pending and should be claimed soon (e.g. reimbursement for the Chinese and Indian Associations approved in last month's meeting). RAP funding should also catch up soon.

c) Social Concerns Committee

VP Gersch presented the issue of the GradMag. The committee has convened a couple of times, and came up with a disclaimer for the executive board, as well as a mission statement for the GradMag. The SCC and the RCC both stand behind the mission statement. The executive board needs the mission statement to be approved in order to interview and hire new writers to the GradMag.

Onte Johnson (Political Science) commented that the GradMag should not have articles that may be offending to students, such as "Jesus Died So We Can Have a Dunkin Donut." Dave Roelfs (Sociology) suggested that the wording in the mission statement be changed to "publication" instead of "newsletter". Onte Johnson challenged

the mission. He thinks that the GradMag should focus more on issues that pertain to the grad students. Eileen Chanza (English), GradMag editor answered that the articles actually do talk about issues that pertain to grad students. Treasurer Longobardi reminded that the mission statement is directed at how the publication should look like in the future, not how it looks right now. Kat Hankinson (English) motioned that the senate should only discuss the mission statement and not the articles which are now on the website. Onte Johnson seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Jose Colmenares (Materials Science) asked that VP Gersch speak more about the process that led to the mission statement. VP Gersch explained that for this year the goal of the publication is twofold: making announcements and giving outlet for opinions and experiences of graduate students. Onte Johnson made a motion to discuss the content of articles which now appear online. No one seconded this motion. Jose Colmenares motioned to approve the original mission statement (with no changes to the wording). The motion was seconded by Juliet Kinney (Marine Sciences). Dave Roelfs asked that the change of wording be added to the motion, but this was not accepted by Jose Colmenares, so the voting was on the original statement. The statement was approved (14 supported, 8 objected, 1 abstained).

This is the mission statement approved by the senate:

SBGradMag.org Mission Statement

The SBGradMag.org is the official newsletter of the Graduate Student Organization and its purpose is two-fold. Its primary role is to promote graduate student participation in university affairs by providing information on upcoming events and programs sponsored by the Graduate Student Organization. As a secondary focus, through graduate student contribution and editorial balance, this publication strives to advance the interests and opinions of the graduate student body by providing a forum for public debate and interdepartmental communication. SBGradMag.org is committed to affirmative action/equal employment laws and to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or veteran status.

VP Gersch added that the SCC will be working in the future on the parking issue.

e) GSEU Liaison

Victor Rosado, GSEU Liaison, reported that several TAs were not paid on time (a significant delay in payments). The GSEU is trying to put pressure on Stony Brook Admin to have some kind of plan that will allow cash advances when there are departmental or administrative issues that delay it. Kira Schuman (History) made a motion for the Exec Board to send a letter to President Kenny (CCing the Director of Human Resources and Director of Labor Relations) protesting the delays in late pay checks to TAs, GAs, and RAs. Rebekah Schiller (Physics) seconded. The motion passed unanimously. the senate authorized the GSO executive board to make edits to the letter before sending it out.

The GSEU also tries to promote an RA campaign, so that RAs will come together and join the union.

Grievances:

- Students in some of the departments (Mathematics for example) are underpaid.
- Presidential fellowships were cut down.

The GSEU is working on these issues. Victor feels quite certain that these will work out eventually, as there is good progress on that.

Finally, there is a campaign to ban Coca Cola products. Victor asked the senate to support the campaign. Kat Hankinson (English) asked victor to give some more details on the campaign. Victor explained that Coca Cola was involved in human rights infringements in Colombia. Nanda Golden (Philosophy) motioned to support the ban on Coca Cola. Xiaomeng Xu (Psychology) seconded. The motion carried (13 in favor, 7 against, 4 abstained).

7) New Business

a) New Contract for Campus Food Service

Treasurer Longobardi explained that the contract for the campus food services is about to be renewed. He asked that two senators be on the committee that decides on the new services. Dave Roelfs (Sociology) and Dante Dilanni (Music) will serve as the GSO representatives on the committee.

b) Listserve Posting: Weekly Announcements

Dan Woulfin (History) asked that the announcements will also appear in the body of the weekly emails (in addition to the Word attachment). This will be done from now on.

Dave Roelfs (Sociology) motioned for adjourning the meeting. Rebekah Schiller (physics) seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Eran Shor