

## **GSO Senate – Minutes – May 20, 2008**

**The meeting begins with 16 Senators and 4 Executives.**

### **1) Welcoming Remarks**

President Naydan congratulated the senators and thanked them for coming and mentioned the importance of this emergency meeting.

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

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

### **3) GSO Position on Smoking Policy**

Vice President Esparza explained the different scenarios for smoking policy regulation in the university and suggested that the authoritarian nature of the proposed expansion of the smoking ban could be considered as an improper practice on behalf of our employer. President Naydan explained the different actions that could be taken by the senate, such as presenting a new smoking policy proposal. Victor Rosado (GSEU) clarified that lack of immediate action on the issue will facilitate a future complete smoking ban on campus. Kathryn Klein (Genetics) stated support for keeping the current smoking policy on campus while Dylan Selterman (Psychology) vowed for reaching a compromise between the parts.

Mark Rice (History) Proposed motioned for the senate to support keeping the current university policy on smoking

The motion passed with 11 in favor, 5 against and 2 abstaining

### **4) University Senate violations while handling the Smoking Policy issue**

Dave Roelfs (Sociology) outlined a resolution on regarding violations on the university procedure (See appendix 1)

President Naydan emphasized that several Robert Rules of Order were violated.

Dave Roelfs (Sociology) explained that different issues were at stake in the university senate, such as the public reprimand of the president given the aforementioned violations, clarification of senate membership policy and clarification of rules for impeachment or special meetings of the university senate.

Vice President Esparza and Treasurer Logonobardi indicated that the university senate bylaws should be reformed to include procedures on impeachment and special meetings outlined in the Robert Rules of Order.

Clint Young (Physics) motioned to approve the resolution and to communicate it to the University Senate. Motion passed unanimously

### **5) SUNY Budget allocations**

President Naydan explained that by May 16<sup>th</sup> 2—8 all the budget cuts proposed by the state government would be solidified. She outlined a resolution on the SUNY budget cuts (See appendix 2) and called the attention to the need of avoiding cuts to graduate student funding. Speaker Antonenko suggested mentioning the administration’s 5 year plan for Stony Brook University on the resolution.

William Lathi (Computer Science) motioned to approve the resolution with the addition of a reference to the 5 year plan. The resolution passed unanimously.

## **7) Requests for Funding**

Treasurer Longobardi presented the requests for funding. They will all be supported with the miscellaneous grants line:

### **A. Spring Fest funding**

Treasurer Longobardi explained that the expenses of the spring festival recently celebrated at the curry club restaurant exceeded the original budget by \$1100. William Lahti (Computer Science) motioned to approve the extra funding. It was approved unanimously.

### **B. Music and Motion Seminar**

Representatives from the Music department requested GSO money for the Music and Motion Seminar by Dianne Chapitis. The budget committee recommended giving the organization \$700. Treasurer Longobardi reminded the senate that the Internal Control Program allows for the approval of such expenditures well in advance of the event taking place. Kira Schuman (History) motioned to approve the funding. It was approved unanimously.

### **C. Earthquake in China**

Treasurer Longobardi reminded the senate of the long standing tradition of social awareness and responsibility with the victims of different tragedies. Representatives from the Stony Brook Chinese Student and Scholar Association explained their ongoing effort of collecting funds for the victims of the recent earthquake in the Sichuan province. The budget committee recommended the amount of \$1000 for the Hong Kong Red Cross. Kathryn Klein (genetics) motioned to approve the funds. . It was approved unanimously.

## **8) Announcement on Service Awards**

Vice President Esparza announced that The GSO service awards will be named “Andrei Antonenko Service awards” due to the enormous contribution of Andrei Antonenko for the GSO and the academic community of Stony Brook University.

## **9) Closing remarks**

President Naydan thanked everyone for coming and being such a great senator.

Mark Rice (History) motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

**APENDIX 1**  
**Resolution on Improper University Senate Procedure**  
**at the May 2008 University Senate Meeting**

In the May 5, 2008 meeting of the Stony Brook University Senate, a resolution was passed to create a partial smoking ban on campus. The measure adopted was a modification of a resolution developed over a period of two years under the auspices of the smoking policy subcommittee of the campus environment committee of the University Senate. A substantial minority of the senate is disappointed with the passing of this resolution. While this disappointment partially stems from the outcome of the vote itself, the more serious root of this disappointment stems from the process by which the debate and vote was conducted. If the outcome had been obtained through a fair and balanced process, there would be no grounds for its contestation. However, we contend that flaws in the process a prior favored the outcome that was obtained. The paragraphs that follow are an attempt to outline what we see as serious violations of said process.

There seem to have been at least three formal violations of *Robert's Rules of Order*: the improper use of a substitute motion, violations of the rules of debate, and violations of the rules for closing debate.

**Improper use of a substitute motion.** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, a substitute motion is a type of amending motion, the purpose of which is strictly to replace large sections of a motion (defined as one paragraph or more) with substantively different text. This type of motion is only to be considered upon finding that the text of the original motion requires numerous substantive changes and hence would be cumbersome to modify through the usual amendment procedures. The substitute motion offered to the University Senate replaced only two words in the original motion and thus did not constitute a proper substitute motion. The effort to amend the original motion should have been pursued through the usual amendment procedures (which require a more rigorous voting and debate process).

**Violations of the rules of debate.** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, members of an assembly are allowed to speak a maximum of two times to the same question and no member may be recognized to speak for their second time until all members of the assembly who wish to do so have been recognized to speak for their first time. Furthermore, deviations to these rules must be approved by a 2/3 vote. As the debate was conducted, members supporting the substitute motion were allowed to speak at will to any question that arose while members opposed to the substitute motion were infrequently recognized to speak. No vote was taken that approved these deviations from normal procedures.

**Violations of the rules for closing debate.** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, debate can be closed and a vote undertaken in two ways. The chair may, upon recognizing a pause in the debate, call the question herself/himself and proceed with taking the vote if no objections are raised. Alternatively, a member of the

assembly may make a motion to call the question and if this motion is seconded and approved by 2/3 vote, the chair is obligated to proceed with taking the vote. As the debate was conducted, a member of the assembly motioned to call the question and the motion was seconded. However, no vote was taken on this motion and, despite the fact that members opposed to the substitute motion wished to debate further, the chair closed debate and proceeded with the vote.

In addition to these formal violations of rules, there were two more intangible violations of the *spirit of Robert's Rules or Order*: there were unequal presumptions made by the chair as to who was and who was not likely to be a senator (and thus who was allowed to enter the debate) and there was an unequally rigorous application of the rules of order.

**Unequal presumption of Senate membership.** Members who appeared to be older were immediately presumed by the chair to be members of the senate unless proven otherwise and were thus recognized to speak. Members who appeared to be younger were immediately presumed by the chair to NOT be members of the senate unless proven otherwise and were thus not recognized to speak. As the younger members of the senate were much more likely to be in opposition to the substitute motion, this simple act biased the content of the debate towards one side.

**Unequally rigorous application of the rules of order.** That the rules of order were not always rigorously applied should be apparent by the preceding paragraphs. This in and of itself is a serious issue. However, it is made more serious by the observation that the rules of order *were* very rigorously applied whenever members opposed to the substitute motion tried to speak. During the debate, it was only these members who were quieted by the application of the rules.

Taken separately, no single violation would appear flagrant enough to pursue, but together they suggest the selective application of the rules in order to favor one side of the debate. While the chair and other members of the executive committee have a right to take sides in any debate as voting members, their primary responsibility in the role of executives is “to act for and to further the activities of the University Senate,” not to use the power inherent in their positions to promote only one side of a debate. The simple fact that members of the executive committee took it upon themselves to devise smoking policy independently of the campus environment committee, despite the fact that responsibility for developing said policy had been explicitly delegated to the smoking policy sub-committee of the campus environment committee by the University Senate itself, is a troubling interpretation of the role of an executive.

While executive sessions are closed and therefore cannot provide additional evidence to these claims, what has emerged suggests a preconceived plan by some members of the executive committee to conduct the debate over a contentious issue in such a way as to make one outcome more likely than the other; therefore be it

**Resolved** that the President of the University Senate and any other members of the executive committee known to have been complicit in the above matters be publically reprimanded by the University Senate; and be it

**Resolved** that the University Senate should undertake an effort to amend its constitution and by-laws in such a way as to discourage this behavior from happening in the future; and be it

**Resolved** that the University Senate should undertake an effort to amend its constitution and by-laws in such a way as to provide for a process to call special meetings of the senate and to provide for a process for the removal of executives from their posts.