

News and Blues

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Grad Student Protest Disrupts Trustees Meeting



News and Blues/Bidermann

Dominic Chan, Julia Miller, Sharon Delmendo, and Chris Vestuto speak to members of the press after taking over the trustees' meeting table.

By George Bidermann

Graduate students and supporters from all four university centers invaded the February 14 SUNY Board of Trustees meeting to protest the board's recent vote denying graduate student employees the right to a union certification election.

After initially trying to continue, the board adjourned the meeting while dozens of graduate students chanted pro-union slogans, called the trustees to account for their anti-union stance, and took over the meeting room. There were no arrests, and the meeting was reconvened approximately half an hour later, after the activists made statements to the press and left peacefully.

The action marked the second time in several months that graduate students had disrupted a trustees meeting. The first demonstration, which occurred at the November meeting, began after Judith Krebs, president of the Student Association of the State University and the sole student trustee, introduced a resolution calling on the trustees to instruct SUNY to drop its opposition to efforts to hold a

(Continued on Page 8)

SUNY Still Meddling in Statewide Student Government

Student Leader News Service

ALBANY-- The future of statewide student government was discussed recently at a series of meetings organized by SUNY Central administrators, as part of what student leaders say is an attempt to "divide and conquer" students.

Administrators are presenting plans that call for the possible removal of full representation for women, people of color, and the gay community from the statewide governance structure. In past weeks, administrators from SUNY Central have held six meetings with student government heads, attempting unsuccessfully to meet with every student president in the state.

The SUNY trustees could take action on the issue as soon as next month, though there is increasing pressure on SUNY Central, from both students and legislators, to avoid taking any action until students have had a chance to make up their own minds on what statewide student government should look like.

Leaders of the Student Association of the State University (SASU), which could be severely affected by any decision, have voiced serious opposition to administrators taking a direct hand in student government. And they object to students being forced to meet by administrators on the administration's terms, such as at a highly structured regional meeting. "It's important that students make these decisions themselves, and important that we form organizations where we can make all these decisions," said SASU President Judith Krebs.

The three meetings, held February 11, 12, and 13 at Brockport, Purchase, and Albany, respectively, were attended by student government leaders and administrators from campuses of those regions. The meetings focused on the relationship between SASU, the "unofficial" student government, and the Student Assembly, the

"official" student government created by SUNY in 1973. SASU, which has enjoyed strong support from SUNY campus delegates who make up the Assembly's general membership, has held control in the Assembly for years.

From the meetings came an agreement that the Student Assembly, in its current form, is ineffective. Dr. William Murabito, SUNY assistant vice chancellor for Student Affairs, claimed that for several years, SUNY Central has been asking the Assembly for changes and by-laws. Student Assembly representatives, at the Albany meeting, said that by-laws were put aside in order to address issues such as tuition, campus rape, day care, and other issues which students deemed to be more important.

The discussions at Brockport and Albany involved the structure of statewide student governance, and SASU's position in the Student Assembly. These meetings contained many open criticisms of SASU's control over the Assembly. The meeting at Purchase, with the exception of three students, was composed entirely of SASU members. When one Purchase student began to mention SASU without being able to elaborate on its context, he was cut off by Murabito, who said, "We are not here to talk about SASU," and became argumentative when the student pushed the point. SASU officials said it appeared that Murabito was trying to keep positive discussion about SASU's role in the Assembly to a minimum.

Tim Doherty, SA executive vice president from the College at New Paltz, attended both the Purchase and Albany meetings, and emphasized the need for a student governance system to be created by students, and not "shoved down our throats," as the Student Assembly was.

In recent years, SUNY Central administrators have been getting more and more involved in statewide student government. Last year, Chancellor D. Bruce Johnstone called an unprecedented statewide conference in Utica, at

a cost of approximately \$60,000, to address statewide student governance. Numerous officials say that Johnstone frequently expresses his disgust with SASU which, as a non-profit student advocacy group with no SUNY funding, falls outside administration control.

Ed Sullivan, chair of the State Assembly Higher Education Committee, criticized SUNY's "meddling" in student government. "I don't like it and I don't think SUNY Central should be mucking around in this," he said. "This is the business of students and not the administration."

In This Issue:

Editorials	2
Letters & Viewpoints	3
Meeting Disrupted	4-5
Profile: Albany GSO	7
Ads	7
Kwasny's Korner Cancelled Due to Budget Cuts	8

Selling *The News* Is Bad News for Workers

A remarkable addition has recently been made to the newspapers sold on campus: *The Daily News*. The Faculty Student Association recently contracted to serve as a vendor of the New York City-based newspaper.

Most people already know this, but perhaps some people need to be reminded that the owners and management of *The Daily News* are involved in a very acrimonious struggle with its unions. The management of *The News* has used all the classical union-busting strategies since most of its workers went on strike last October. It even rounded up homeless people in New York to sell the paper and keep up its circulation in the face of a boycott by vendors in the union city of New York.

Apparently, the Faculty Student Association (FSA) on the Stony Brook campus has become the newest ally of the management. Selling *The News* is not an apolitical statement; it provides direct support for its management at a time when it desperately needs support.

The Stony Brook campus is a union campus, with most faculty and staff members belonging to unions. The GSO and GSEU have been pushing to unionize graduate students for 12 years, over SUNY's continued opposition. Selling *The News* is a slap in the face to all union-minded workers on this campus. Sure, the argument goes, if you don't agree with the management, you don't have to buy the paper. But this is not the point. By providing *The News* with an extra outlet-- where there was none before the strike-- FSA is directly supporting management, whether papers are sold or not.

Clearly, *The News* is not sold for its content. Most of the paper's well-known journalists and commentators are still out on strike. *The News* is kept going by a conglomerate of

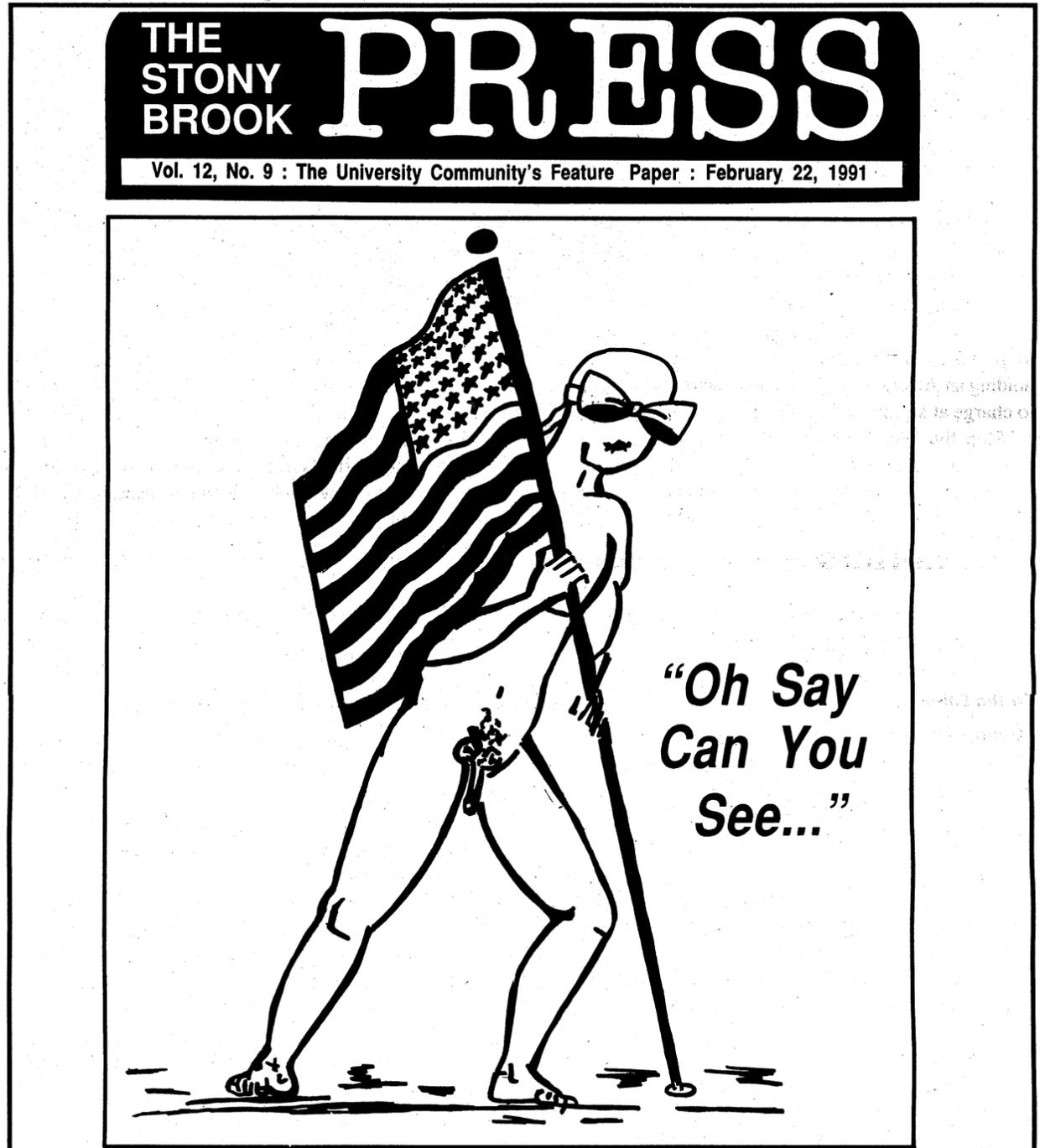
second-raters who act as a mouthpiece for the management, rather than as independent journalists. In many cases, these scabs have come in because of economic hardship; they are not as skilled as the workers they are replacing and know little about New York City politics and bureaucracy. So in addition to being a dubious product, the current *News* is also a bad paper.

Of course, the GSO believes in the right of

free speech and freedom of choice. But for those of us who have fought against fierce opposition to unionization for so long, the issue is one of protecting workers' rights to bargain collectively with management. By allowing *The Daily News* on campus during a strike, FSA is aiding and abetting management in its efforts to bust the union. FSA should stop selling *The News* until the conflict between management and workers is settled.

Guest Editorial

Censorship Lives at Stony Brook



The cover of the February 22 issue of *The Stony Brook Press*, which the Student Union management deemed unsuitable for your eyes.

By Jean Rousseau

On Friday, February 22, the management of the Student Union decided that the latest issue of *The Stony Brook Press* was obscene. The cover of the issue represents a naked man whose eyes are covered with a yellow headband. The man holds an American flag while the words "Oh Say Can You See..." are printed by his side. The manager confiscated all the copies that were delivered at the Union and prohibited any further distribution of the issue within the Union.

Following pressure from *The Stony Brook Press* staff to get the issues back, the manager announced that the display and distribution of the

issue would be permitted in the Union. For five hours *The Stony Brook Press* had been censored.

Even though the issue is back on the Union's stands, the principles of freedom of the press were violated. In a context of war, where we supposedly fight for freedom, the exercise of a fundamental right has been endangered on our campus.

The Press will not let such an action go unchallenged. The First Amendment, the university policy manual, and the student conduct code were violated. *The Press* intends to take the necessary steps to ensure that this does not happen again. (The writer is a member of *The Stony Brook Press* and a graduate student in the Chemistry Department.)

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Those Who Would Quell Dissent Dishonor Their Nation

By Elizabeth Chute

Last week, a rally to support the troops was held in the Fine Arts Pit. Billed as apolitical, the rally quickly disintegrated into an "America, love it or leave it" theme. Someone who refused to show his or her face sprayed a group of people holding a banner that read "Support the Troops, End the War" with a stream of water from a hose.

Another man was walking around extending his middle finger to anyone questioning our government's involvement in the Mideast. Yet another had the flag in one hand and extended his middle finger with the other. He kind of reminded me of George Bush-- isn't that what he's telling the United Nations and the rest of the civilized world with his invasion even as a peace treaty is being negotiated? It was the first time I have ever feared for my safety on this campus, and I've been around here over twenty years.

A young woman grabbed the microphone and started to yell "There's the door!" while pointing at the group which had also come to support the troops but nonetheless did not support the war. "They're over there defending your right to protest!" she screamed. A woman, holding an American flag on a pole, started to charge at a group of young people with a "Stop the War" banner. She stopped, short of hurting them, with a strange look on her face. The entire experience shook me to the bone, and my eyes filled up with

tears-- and fears for the future. Our country was split in two throughout my teenage years and it's not what I want for my children, who are that age now.

Our Constitution and Bill of Rights were not written to hang in a closet somewhere not to be used; they were written to show the world that people who live in the United States are allowed to have opinions and despite their opinions STAY in the United States. People do not have these

Sociologist Thorstein Veblen wrote, almost 100 years ago, that patriotism is used by those in power to manipulate the working class into fighting their wars. Is war more than that? Do you remember how many patriotic soldiers died in Vietnam while the peace negotiators were arguing over what shape table they should sit at? That is not what I raised my sons to do, to die in some country that has different beliefs or some natural resource we

families. Together, we can console those left behind. But together, we should also focus on the real enemy. While these young women and men are starting to fight a ground war, our government is giving us a new highway bill. This bill will make us more dependent on fossil fuels rather than providing a public transportation bill or a solar energy bill that would make us less dependent on the very thing this whole war started over. George Bush's background is in oil and now his true colors are starting to show.

The government is also unwilling to commit itself to the new casualties the war will bring. While the VA is training their staff to deal with Post Traumatic Stress, they are also clearing other vets out of their beds to make room for the new ones. It's not the VA's fault-- they don't have any money. They are planning on asking for an \$11 million supplement just to hire staff. With current fiscal difficulties the VA might have to choose between the new vets and the old. If this happens, a percentage even larger than the current 25% of the homeless will be veterans.

So while you're out there waving your flag this week, how about firing off a letter to your congressperson, senator, or president stating that you want a sound energy policy, so that our soldiers won't die in vain. And while you're at it, how about demanding that the veterans, ALL VETERANS, be treated with dignity. (The writer is Secretary of the GSO.)

"People do not have these same rights in Kuwait, the country we are supposedly defending in this war. Kuwait is not a democracy, it is a monarchy, and not a very nice one at that."

same rights in Kuwait, the country we are supposedly defending in this war. Kuwait is not a democracy, it is a monarchy, and not a very nice one at that. Very few people, all men, have any rights at all. Even worse, Kuwait is on the list of countries that the United States government has forbidden itself legislatively to give any aid to because of its human rights violations. So why are we there if it's not to keep the world safe for democracy? Oil? Hitler? Aggression? Patriotism?

need to live our decadent lives here in the United States. I did not teach them right from wrong with the footnote added that it's okay to kill if the government says so. Yet they have to make this decision on their own, just as they will have to live with their choices.

Those of us on different sides of this issue do not have to be enemies. Because I cannot in good conscience support a war does not mean that I am without compassion for the soldiers in the Gulf and their

Letters

Bush's Energy Plan Is Full of Holes

To the Editor:

George Bush's recently announced national energy policy shows that he is capable of steering America's energy policy only about as well as Captain Hazelwood steered the ill-fated Exxon Valdez. Despite the war in the Persian Gulf, global warming, unprecedented smog and air pollution levels in the United States, massive nuclear waste contamination at governmental weapons facilities (with clean-up costs totalling billions of dollars), Bush's plan is "emphasizing increased domestic oil production and fast-track construction of nuclear plants rather than conservation" (*Newsday*, 2/21/91). However, environmental groups and many legislators in Washington have begun organizing efforts to support an energy policy that would instead focus on conservation and the development of safe, non-polluting and renewable energy resources.

The New York Public Interest Research Group, Inc. (NYPIRG) has already started working to support federal legislation aimed at increasing auto fuel efficiency (a cornerstone of any conservation and pollution prevention policy) and to support the renewal of New York State's Home Insulation and Energy Conservation Act (HIECA). Estimates show that conservation measures alone could cut New York's energy need in half and still provide consumers with the same standard of living. HIECA has already cut New York's oil consumption by over 440 million gallons. Simultaneously, energy conservation

measures here on Long Island could help reduce our electricity rates, which are among the highest in the country, and save money for the university, off-campus and commuter students, and all Long Islanders.

Other items in Bush's plan call for opening up areas like the Arctic National Refuge and the Outer Continental Shelf to oil drilling and streamlining the process for the siting of nuclear power plants. Not only is this drilling unnecessary, but the oil-stained shores of Valdez, Alaska should have showed our president, as it did the rest of America, that we can't continue our reliance on domestic oil production without grave environmental consequences. And people here on Long Island, who have overwhelmingly and successfully opposed the Shoreham nuclear power plant, can feel the chilling effects of a process that could easily put more nuclear power plants into production and operation.

If anyone is interested in finding out more about energy issues and the work that NYPIRG is doing this semester on energy conservation and awareness, please contact the NYPIRG office in the basement of the Union, Room 079, or call 632-6457 (632-6458 for the Small Claims Court Hotline). NYPIRG also offers to students, faculty, and staff the services of our Fuel Buyers Group, where NYPIRG members can receive home heating oil deliveries at a much reduced price and with full service contracts.

Craig Seigel
NYPIRG Project Coordinator

Merrie Bernstein
NYPIRG Energy Intern

Use of Pre-fab Papers Cause for Dismissal

The following letter was received from the Graduate School:

To Department Chairs:

Advertisements have recently appeared on campus offering the sale of pre-fabricated research papers. Such offerings are protected by the Constitution, but we feel that you should be advised of the University position on such "services." The learning process is facilitated through a variety of means, among which independent study and report-writing are of high importance in the university setting. When a student fails to engage in these important exercises, he or she reduces the value of the education receive from the university and will leave here without the skills and knowledge that form the basis of our degrees.

In almost all courses at Stony Brook students are required to submit work that is substantially their own, with the contributions of others clearly acknowledged. When students respond to such a requirement by submitting work that is not theirs, they undermine their own education in addition to undermining the basis for the grading of the course. Furthermore, they are engaging in the single most clearly defined act of academic dishonesty. The penalties for such acts are severe and may include dismissal from the university. Please take note that our offices will encourage and support the faculty in seeking appropriate penalties for offenders. It should also be emphasized that aiding or abetting an act of academic dishonesty is in itself punish-

able by the same penalties.

The value of Stony Brook degrees rests very much upon their reputation. When students are awarded degrees that they have not properly earned, and pass themselves off as "educated at Stony Brook," they do serious damage to that reputation, since the gaps in their training will inevitably become apparent. It is therefore in the best interest of all those who hold Stony Brook degrees that they be earned honestly, and we urge you to help us uphold the highest academic ethics on this campus. The use of bought term papers is a serious breach of the ethical code which exists to protect the value of higher education.

Alexander H. King
Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

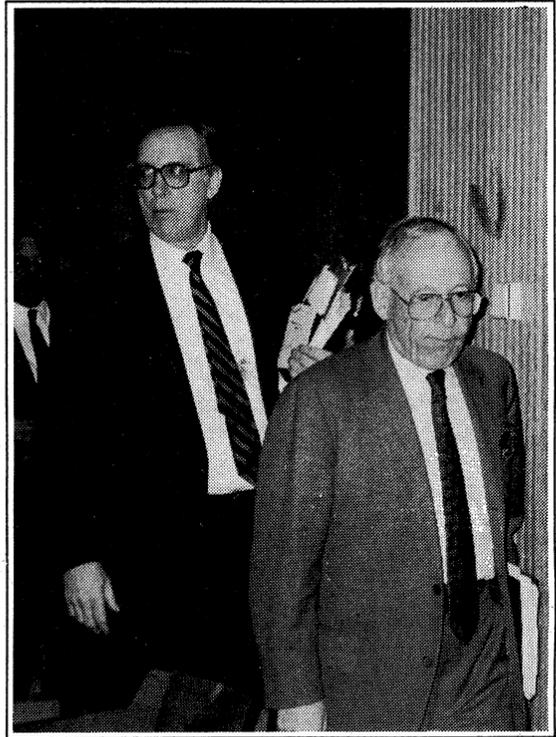
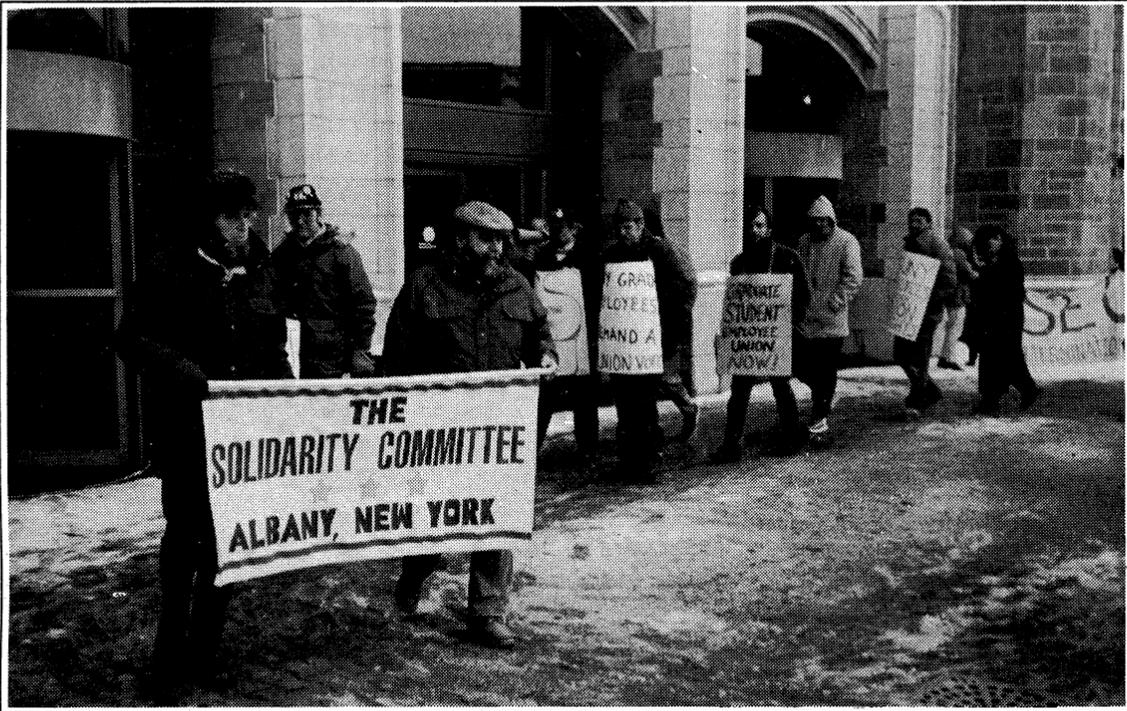
David Pomeranz
Acting Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

The next issue of
the *News and Blues*
will be published on
Wednesday, March 20.

Deadline for submission
of letters and viewpoints
is Monday, March 18.

Please mail or drop
your correspondence off
at the GSO office,
Room 206, Central Hall.

Pictures at an Exhibition...



(Clockwise from above)

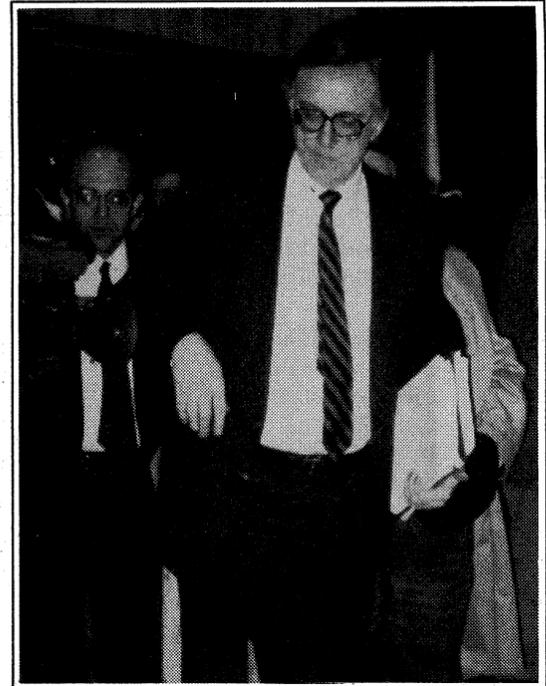
• *Members of the Solidarity Committee of the Capitol District join with GSEU activists marching in front of the SUNY building before the meeting.*

• *Chancellor Bruce Johnstone, looking less than happy, leaves the meeting after the trustees moved for adjournment.*

• *Graduate students, including members of the Stony Brook contingent, chant pro-union slogans and raise their banners.*

• *Johnstone, standing proud, re-enters the room following the demonstration.*

• *Business as usual: the trustees resume the meeting.*



All Photos News and Blues/Bidemann

Transcript of Demonstration at Trustees' Meeting

Editor's Note: The following transcript was typed from an audio tape made of the meeting, and begins with Dominic Chan's statement, which he shouted out shortly after the trustees began their meeting.

Dominic Chan: Graduate students are here today from Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo and Stony Brook. For seven years, SUNY has fought graduate students' rights to vote on unionization. On January 24, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution supporting the chancellor's anti-democratic policies. In this room, you have admitted that SUNY treats us like serfs. You do nothing about it, yet you would deny us any voice in our own fate. We call you to account. This board of trustees is a board of shame!

Crowd: Shame! Shame! Shame! [The cries continue, in unison, thirty more times.]

Carl Montgomery: D. Bruce Johnstone!

Crowd: Shame! [At this point, the trustees began motioning for adjournment -Ed.]

Julia Miller: Frederick Salerno!

Crowd: Shame!

Juliana Spahr: Roderic Chu!

Crowd: Shame!

Tracy Sedinger: Clinton Dominick!

Crowd: Shame!

Chris Vestuto: Judith Duken!

Crowd: Shame!

Sharon Delmendo: Hazel Dukes!

Crowd: Shame!

Montgomery: Arnold Gardner!

Crowd: Shame!

Miller: John Holloman!

Crowd: Shame!

Spahr: Alan Iselin!

Crowd: Shame!

Sedinger: Miles Lasser!

Crowd: Shame!

Vestuto: Victor Marrero!

Crowd: Shame!

Delmendo: Nancy Nielson!

Crowd: Shame!

Montgomery: Rosemary Solomone!

Crowd: Shame!

Miller: SUNY trustees: we charge you with crimes against graduate student employees and graduate education. You deny us decent health care, a living wage, basic employee rights, and for blocking a union election, we find you guilty! GUILTY!

Crowd: Guilty! Guilty! Guilty! [continues as trustees begin filing out of the room] Let us vote! Let us vote!

Let us vote! [repeated 57 times] Shame! Shame Shame! etc.

Miller: This board of trustees is a board of shame. They continue to shut out graduate student employees input and we feel the only way to get our message across is to come here and take the table.

Vestuto: For 12 years we have struggled just to get them to listen to the plight of people who are making \$7,000 a year, get no health benefits, and we just want the right to decide for ourselves whether or not we should have a union to speak up for us because they haven't been able to speak up and do anything for us. And they won't allow us this; for 12 years they've blocked us and last month they said that they would

(Continued on Page 6)

GSEU: The Only Union to Successfully Fight the Pay Lag

By Julia Miller

Reprinted from the Graduate Post

BUFFALO-- As most of you know, graduate student employees have narrowly escaped the recently imposed pay lag. The pay lag is one of New York State's creative solutions to the budgetary crisis, whereby the state skims one week of pay from the employee over a ten-week (or five paycheck) period. The back pay is then returned to employees at the end of their tenures.

While the unions that represent SUNY employees are fighting the pay lag and have filed a joint lawsuit against SUNY, only the GSEU has managed to get its employees exempted from the lag. This is

"Only the GSEU has been able to get its employees exempted from the lag."

welcome news since TAs, GAs, and RAs rarely win financial battles with SUNY.

In order to understand how the pay-lag issue fits into the larger context of unionization, it is important to understand the sequence of events that led to the Trustees' decision. When the pay lag was first discussed in early November, SUNY had every intention of lagging graduate students, along with all other state employees. In mid-November, about 50 graduate-student employees from around the state demonstrated at a Board of Trustees meeting in Buffalo, criticizing Chancellor Bruce Johnstone's (and SUNY's) continued opposition to a union certification election. At the next Board of Trustees' meeting Judy Krebs, the board's only stu-

dent trustee and the president of the Student Association of the State University (SASU), introduced GSEU's demand that graduate student employees, as the lowest paid employees in SUNY, should not be subject to the lag. The trustees then voted unanimously in favor of protecting graduate student employees from the lag.

This sequence of events is not insignificant. As the past year has shown, SUNY is not in the habit of protecting graduate student employees from economic hardship. We have not been protected from the \$100 increase in student health insurance. We have not been protected from the \$90 health fee (which goes into effect next fall at Stony Brook). We have not been protected from the \$50 transportation fee. And there is reason to believe that, very shortly, our tuition waivers will not be protected from erosion due to tuition hikes.

SUNY trustees voted to "protect" graduate student employees from the lag for two reasons: as a response to pressure from the GSEU and increased unrest among the state's graduate student population, and to begin to build a case that TAs, GAs, and RAs are not "employees."

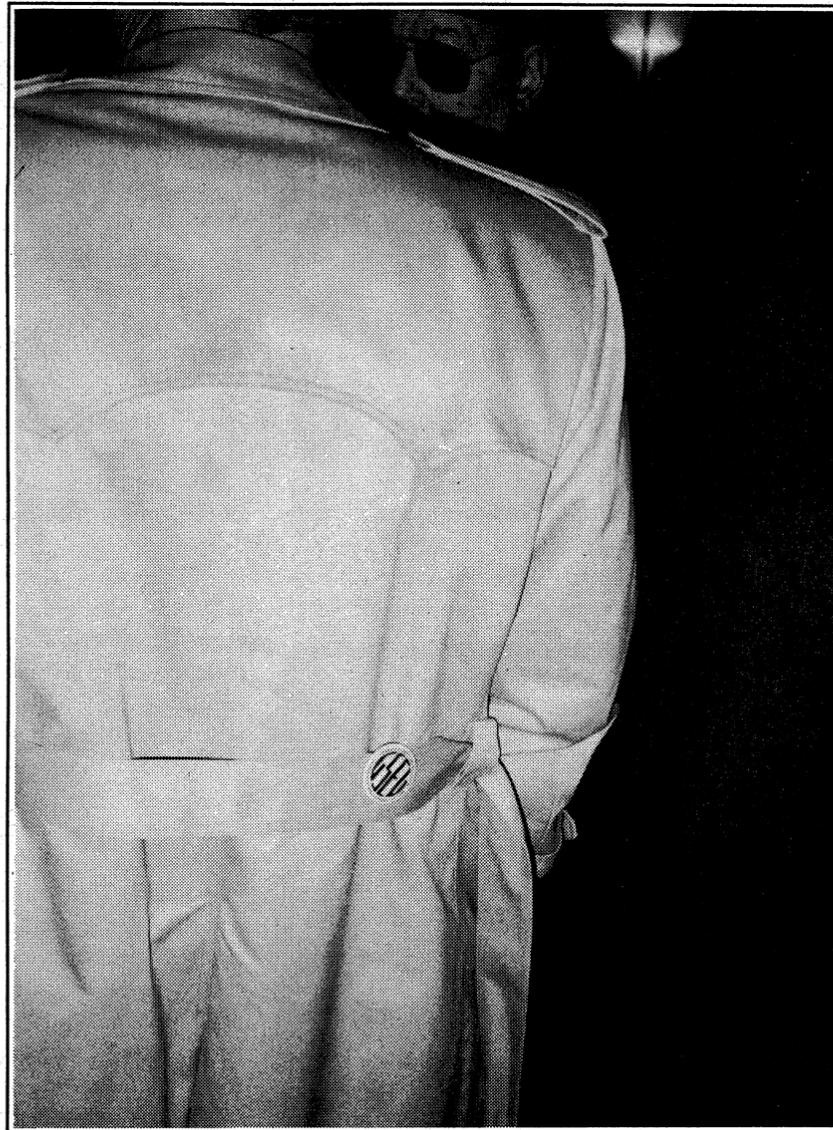
On the issue of employee status, you may have noticed that (like all state workers) you are, in fact, being lagged. Our protection from the lag has been achieved through a curious accounting maneuver in which our base pay has been increased by 10% to absorb the effect of the lag. (I must admit, it made my heart leap to see an increase of \$750 in my base pay, pushing me over the \$8,000 mark.) As a result of this fictional increase in base pay, most of us lost a few dollars due to increased withholding taxes. Graduate students are on the state payroll, and SUNY officials claimed that they had no way of separating them from the other employees.

The fact that graduate student employees have been spared (somewhat) from the pay lag this time is not a valid argument for denying our employees status. If lagging were a defining characteristic of employee status, then SUNY would have to declare us employees immediately since graduate

student employees' paychecks are already lagged due to a similar fiscal crisis several years ago, hence the month of payless pay-days at the beginning of each semester [Stony Brook students have been exempt from this lag as a result of negotiations with the administration after the 1987

work stoppage -ED.] The fact that we, as the lowest paid employees in the university, have been spared from the pay lag this time around is a victory for GSEU. SUNY arguments against TA, GA, and RA employee status are easily exposed through the acrobatics of their accounting.

GSEU:



News and Blues/Bidemann

Some of our best supporters don't even know it!

Transcript of Protest At Trustees' Meeting—

(Continued from Page 5)

continue to block us and that they supported the chancellor and his anti-democratic stance. The board of trustees is illegitimate. They are not a democratic body. All we want to do is vote.

Crowd: Puppets! Puppets! Let us vote! Let us vote! Let us vote! [repeated 13 times]

Miller: Graduate student employees have been going through all proper channels for the past 12 years. We've sought legal recognition of our employee status. We've appealed to the trustees, we've appealed to the governor, and we've been continually ignored. This state is in an unprecedented budget crisis and we're the soft money in the system. As the only non-unionized employees in the system, we're extremely vulnerable. We're among the lowest paid and most overworked workers in the system, and we just want an opportunity to protect ourselves and to have the same rights that all state employees have [loud applause rings out].

GB: What's disgusting?

Crowd: Union busting!

GB: Union busting!

Crowd: It's disgusting!

GB: What's *disgusting*?

Crowd: Union busting!

GB: *Union busting?*

Crowd: It's disgusting!

GB: *What's disgusting?*

Crowd: Union busting!

GB: *Union busting?*

Crowd: It's disgusting! [applause] SUNY Bleeds its TAs! Overworked and underpaid! [repeated three times]

Miller: We want to say that we've been appealing to the trustees since September and trying to ask them to address the issues of health care for workers without health insurance, and right now our message to them is that they have set off a chain of unrest in the state. We're going back to the campuses and there will be no peace until we get an election.

Vestuto: No peace!

Chan: This issue will not go away!

Crowd: We won't go away! We won't go away!

MY EYE'S BRAIN

George Bidermann

(With thanks and apologies to Christopher Reid)



The parking shortage worsens at Stony Brook and two cars sit illegally parked on the South P-Lot roadway last week. Where is Public Safety when you need them? This photo was shot with Libby's Minolta instamatic, which she got free for opening a bank account at the Holbrook branch of Long Island Savings Bank.

We won't go away!

Miller: Many people don't know that graduate student employees teach up to 40% of the classes at SUNY (universities). We're a major part of the work force and we just want the same protection that all of the workers in that system enjoy.

Vestuto: In 1984, over 2,000 graduate students signed a petition just acting for an election-- an election in this so-called democracy!

Chan: A simple election. What are they afraid of? What is SUNY afraid of? All we want is to vote!

Crowd: Let us vote! Let us vote! GSEU! GSEU! GSEU!

Miller: GSEU is the Graduate Student Employees Union of the SUNY system and it has seeking legal recognition for the past 12 years. Six years, enough graduate student signed union cards to make an election legal and we've been waiting; we've been denied due process before the Public Employees Relations Board, and the SUNY trus-

tees could remove their opposition to our petition and grant us that election. That's all we're asking for is a vote. That graduate students decide for themselves whether they want the protection of a union.

Vestuto: The state of New York will not talk to the president of the GSEU, Dominick Chan. They say the GSEU does not exist, but we are here to tell them that the GSEU exists, and we are right here in their room and where are they?

[The protesters proceeded to call the roll again, finding each of the trustees (with the exception of student trustee Judith Krebs, who introduced the resolution calling for SUNY to drop its opposition to a union election) guilty of crimes against graduate students and graduate education. The demonstrators then vowed to bring the battle home to their individual campuses, chanted for a few more minutes, and then left peacefully, chanting all the way down the stairwells of the building. -Ed.]

GSO Senate Holds First Meeting of Semester

The GSO Senate held its first meeting of the semester on February 6 in the Senate Chambers, Room 201, Central Hall. The big topic was, of course, Governor Mario Cuomo's proposed budget and the possible effects

of the budget crisis on graduate students.

President Jane Ely reported that while the administration is saying it is too early to tell for sure what the final impact will be, several things look certain. Tuition will most likely rise another \$500, bringing the one-year increase to \$800. As this will cost the Graduate School an additional \$1.5 million and the tuition waiver pool will not be increased, it seems likely that graduate student employees will be asked to cover some of the increased cost.

It also is apparent that there will be no cost-of-living increase this fall, as has been the case in recent years. The university's contract with the United University Professions (UUP), the union that represents faculty members, expires this year and it is unlikely SUNY will accept salary increases during negotiations on a new contract. UUP may be working without a contract this fall, and since Stony Brook has granted graduate student employees about the same cost-of-living increase it has granted faculty in recent years, nothing from nothing leaves nothing.

Cuomo's budget also includes a proposal which would take all GAs off the state payroll and put them on the Research Foundation. Teaching assistants would also be

moved off the state payroll to the "other than personnel services" line which, among other things, funds equipment, furniture, supplies (such as staples). "This would make us the soft money," Ely said. "It could also be seen as another attempt to create an argument that we are not employees." [As this issue went to press, no new information has come out about this proposal, Ely said. Stony Brook's administration is still awaiting clarification from SUN and the Governor's office.]

In other action, the senate:

heard a presentation from Craig Seigel, projects director for the New York Public Interest Research Group, Inc. (NYPIRG), on the organization's various campaigns for the environment and student issues. Some members of the senate asked why NYPIRG wasn't doing more on anti-war issues, but Seigel said that as policy, NYPIRG does not take sides on partisan issues.

granted \$600 in funding for ICON X, the science fiction convention to be held on campus April 19-21; and moved to hold its next meeting in three weeks on February 27 (the date this issue was printed). The senate is to decide at the February 27 meeting whether to continue holding meetings every three weeks instead of the traditional, once-monthly schedule.

**Next issue
of the
News and Blues
is March 20.**

**If you'd like to write
something, contact
Mr. G. Bidermann at
632-6492.**

SUNY Albany GSO Formed After Yearlong Struggle

By George Bidermann

Nine months after SUNY Albany graduate students voted overwhelmingly to form a graduate student government for the first time in that university's history, the Graduate Student Organization has opened its office, joined the United Graduate Student Organizations of SUNY (UGSO), and is gathering representation from many departments in its Assembly.

The campus is home to 2,100 full-time graduate students, of whom approximately 950 are GAs, TAs, or RAs, but it has never had a governance body for its graduate student population. According to Jeff Purcell, a SUNY Albany graduate student in Anthropology who spearheaded the movement, the administration said four or five attempts to form a GSO at Albany had fizzled due to "lack of interest and following through on the part of the students."

In 1989 Purcell, along with members of his department, began looking into the mechanics of forming a graduate student government. "It was my strong feeling that there were serious unmet needs, both social and professional, of graduate students on this campus," Purcell said. "So I decided to see what the administration's response would be at the same time as I gauged graduate students' willingness to both fund and participate in the formation of a graduate student organization."

That summer, he teamed up with members of his department and formed a departmental organization, as had been done

in some other departments. By the fall, they were working with graduate students on campus, representatives of the Student Association of the State University (SASU) and UGSO Projects Director Chris Vestuto on framing the issue, discussing constitutional powers and procedures, and approaching the administration for its opinion. President Vincent O'Leary voiced general support, but said he wanted to see a broad expression of interest from the campus's graduate students. The students then gathered more than 250 signatures on petitions requesting an election, and O'Leary said he found that satisfactory.

Election in April

The election was set for April, and ballots were mailed to all students. A provisional constitution appeared on the ballot, and full-time and part-time students were able to vote separately on whether they wanted a GSO formed. But three days before the deadline for the return of ballots, O'Leary released a letter stating that he wanted to see a 25% turnout in order to validate the election.

O'Leary took off for a trip to China right about the time the deadline for submission of ballots passed, and other administrators in charge refused to validate the election in his absence. Leaders of the election drive had received about 400 ballots, representing approximately 20% of the student body, but they refused to open the ballots until the administration

agreed to validate the election. Finally, after O'Leary returned and students produced election turnout data from the other SUNY centers which showed much lower turnouts, O'Leary agreed to validate the election.

More than 85% of the students voted in favor of establishing a student government and to pay a mandatory \$15-per-semester activity fee. The birth of Albany's GSO was underway. Last fall, elections for officers were held. Yvette Scarlet was elected president, Victoria Santos was elected vice-president, and Debra Lawrence was elected Treasurer. Tim Holden is currently serving as acting vice-president while Santos resolves some problems with the university that have affected her student status.

Everything Was Not Roses

But things were not going to fall into place so easily. The university claimed last summer that it would be unable to set up the mechanisms for collecting the activity fee from graduate students in the fall semester, and when the GSO asked for \$20,000 in start-up funds, Pat Swygert, Albany's new president, offered \$5,000. This, according to Holden, hampered their early efforts to set up shop.

The administration also requested the right to approve the GSO's budget before it would release approximately \$33,000 in activity fees collected this spring. Holden said the administration has finally approved the budget, and funds have been released, enabling the organization to begin purchasing the equipment and supplies it needs. The GSO Assembly meets twice a month, and things are going well, according to Holden. An office has been secured, phone lines are in, and the organization is purchasing a computer for correspondence and, eventually, a newsletter.

Holden said the organization is heavily targeting two issues this spring: getting adequate health care as a benefit for graduate student employees while also improving health services on campus, and secur-

ing the right to vote on whether graduate students want unionization. "We are definitely taking a strong stand on the right to vote," he said, "while we are being careful to maintain the distinction between GSO and the GSEU. We will fight for the right to vote, but we are also sensitive to the concerns of those who are unsure about whether unionization is best for them."

Better Health Services Needed

Health care is also a concern on campus, as it is a concern statewide for graduate student employees. Anita Eliot, SASU's vice president for Campus Affairs and a graduate student at Albany, has been sitting on a SUNY advisory committee set up to address the issue of health care in the system. She said that with the budget crisis, it does not appear SUNY will be taking major steps to upgrade health service; rather, efforts are underway to institute mandatory health fees for basic medical services that have been provided free to students in the past.

"This is an educational access issue," she said. "It is unfair to tack another \$100 in fees for basic health services onto student bills. The university has a responsibility to make sure students are, at the minimum, able to attend school." She urged students to get involved in their campus health service committees before policies become dictated to them.

As the GSO grows and establishes itself as a presence on campus, Holden said the organization is working on such shorter-term goals as extending library hours, establishing child care (the campus has none), and establishing a conference travel reimbursement program, similar to Stony Brook's Resource Access Project (RAP). A Constitution has been drafted and is being reviewed by members of the Assembly, and an advocacy committee has been established. "Communicating with all the areas of the campus is important," Holden said. "We are still trying to reach many departments and help them find out just what we are and what we want to do."

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Thank you Tony Pulio for your contribution to the *News and Blues*.

Students Disrupt February Trustees' Meeting—



News and Blues/Bidermann

Graduate students from the SUNY university centers hold GSEU banners at the meeting.

(Continued from Page 1)

union certification election. When the trustees moved to table the resolution, graduate students in attendance shouted down the board, forcing an adjournment of the meeting.

The board then moved to another meeting room, and Public Safety officers physically prevented graduate students from entering the meeting. One student, Binghamton GSO President David Baranov, was arrested, but he later received an adjournment in contemplation of dismissal (ACOD)

from the Albany court system.

The February 14 action was well-planned and coordinated, and the students attended the meeting with the intent of calling the board to account for their denial of basic workplace rights. Representatives from local unions, including the United University Professions (UUP), Communications Workers of America (CWA), the Newspaper Guild, and the Public Employees Federation (PEF), marched with graduate students outside the SUNY building prior to the meeting.

Members of the Solidarity Committee of the Capitol District also attended, and The Half Moon Cafe and Artists for a New Politics, progressive organizations in Albany, provided lodging and meeting space for the students. Ed Sabol, organizing director for District One of CWA, offered advice and participated in the action inside the meeting room.

The trustees were just several minutes into their meeting when Dominic Chan, acting president of the Graduate Student Employees Union, stood up from his chair and began reading from a statement. "Graduate students are here today from Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo, and Stony Brook," he shouted. "For seven years, SUNY has fought graduate students' rights to vote on unionization. On January 24, the Board of Trustees passed a resolution supporting the chancellor's anti-democratic policies. In this room, you have admitted that SUNY treats us like serfs!"

Trustees continued speaking for about a minute before, under the constant cries of "Shame!" from the demonstrators, giving up and motioning for adjournment. The trustees then got up and began filing out of the room while each of their names was called by an individual student, followed by a chorus of "Shame!" from the crowd. At that point several demonstrators, including Chan, Buffalo GSA Vice President Julia Miller, and GSEU organ-

izer Chris Vestuto, took over the conference table, laying out GSEU banners in the process.

The room took on a circuslike atmosphere as reporters thrust cameras and microphones into the faces of the demonstrators and others stood around looking perplexed. Speaking to a reporter, Miller said, "This board of trustees is a board of shame. They continue to shut out graduate student employee input and we feel the only way to get our message across is to come here and take the table." Demonstrators carrying large pro-union banners kicked in with slogans almost on cue after Miller or Vestuto made statements to the press.

After approximately fifteen minutes, the demonstrators announced they were taking the issue back to their campuses and that it would not die. "They have set off a chain of unrest in the state," said Miller, speaking of the trustees. "We're going back to the campuses and there will be no peace until we get an election!" The demonstrators then left peacefully, insisting on marching through the stairwells of the building rather than being split up to take the elevators down from the 13th floor. Their chanting could be heard in the meeting room for several minutes as they continued down the stairs.

This week, Miller said she was very happy with the way things turned out. "We were able to bring people out from across the state and at the same time we had the support of local labor. It was very important to send the message to the trustees, to SUNY, and to Governor Mario Cuomo that this is not just a student issue; it is a state employee-rights issue."

Chan said Board of Trustees Chair Frederick Salerno called him several days after the meeting to offer some "friendly advice" about behavior at future meetings, but Chan told Salerno that future disruptions of business as usual should be expected. "We accomplished what we set out to do and SUNY again showed its disregard by walking out as we were making our voices heard," he said. "While our efforts will be focused on the local campuses, I warned Salerno that we will not go away so long as they continue to deny us our democratic rights. All we want is the chance to hold an election."

Kwasny's Korner

Recent Public Safety Actions Are Cause for Concern

By Andrea Kwasny
Graduate Student Advocate

In the past few months, there have been some disturbing incidents involving the Department of Public Safety and graduate students. Several students have been arrested by Public Safety officers under questionable circumstances. Without going into details and without making any pronouncements of blame, let me just say that these experiences have caused considerable problems for the graduate students affected, problems ranging from the distress and humiliation attendant upon an arrest to the time, and in some cases, money necessarily spent to resolve the case once it moves outside the university to the county court system.

I cannot go into specifics here because the cases are still pending, and I do not want to jeopardize the students' chances for satisfactory resolution of their problems. I am not suggesting that Public Safety officers were not justified in the measures that they decided to take, primarily because I am not qualified to make that determination. Rather, I'm

choosing to write about this issue because many of you may not be aware that Public Safety officers are empowered to arrest students, in addition to giving parking tickets, and that this arrest bears with it the same weight and significance, as well as the same procedures, as an arrest administered by a police officer.

This does not mean, however, that you have no subsequent rights. If you feel that the legal action taken against you is unjustified, there are venues through which you can pursue some sort of resolution. For starters, please contact me. As Graduate Student Advocate, I can assist in obtaining more information about a case, and possibly mediate the conflict. I do not want to question the authority or legitimacy of the Department of Public Safety, as I believe its prescribed function is important to the operations of this campus. Nevertheless, I sympathize with (and hope to do more for) graduate students who become involved in circumstances of misunderstanding that lead to serious legal trouble.

**BASIX is located in the basement
of the Student Union,
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