

GSO Senate – Minutes – November 4, 2008

The meeting begins with 29 Senators and 5 Executives

1) Approval of the Agenda and the November Minutes

The Agenda was approved unanimously.

The November 4th 2008 minutes were approved unanimously.

2) Presidential Report

President Naydan welcomed the senators, she gave an update on the previous night meeting regarding the relationship between PI's and RA's and the RA's unionization efforts. She also mentioned a future article to be published on the chronicle of higher education regarding the salaries for incoming graduate students. President Naydan explained the procedure for retention fund application process, and finished by briefly explaining the situation of graduate students at the cold spring harbor laboratory who are about to lose their employee health insurance.

2) Internal Committee reports

- a. **Rules and Constitution Committee:** Speaker Longobardi explained the proposed the following changes to the GSO constitution. Underlined sentences will be included, stroked sentences will be removed from the document.

Article IV Sec. E part c

If the office of the Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer is vacant, the President shall nominate a candidate for that office. The nomination shall be confirmed by a majority vote of the Senate. Should the nominee fail to be confirmed, the President may nominate another candidate. If the office of President is vacant, the Vice President shall assume the office and nominate a new Vice President. Should the offices of President and Vice President be vacant simultaneously, the Senate shall meet to elect a new President. For such a meeting, a stricter quorum shall apply of 66% of the total number of currently certified GSO Senators, or 24 certified Senators, whichever is greater. If necessary, a special Senate meeting can be schedule with the purpose to elect a new President. Nominations shall be accepted from the floor and are open to any member eligible for the office in question. The candidate receiving a plurality of the votes cast shall be elected and shall assume the office immediately.

Article V Sec. A part f

In compliance with the GSO Internal Control Program and The Chancellor's Guidelines, the passage of any subsequent amendments to the GSO annual budget shall require a ~~two-thirds~~ majority vote. All budgetary allocations recommended shall require a two-thirds vote.

Article V Sec. D

- a. All Senators will be required to submit their credentials to the Secretary for certification according to the procedures outlined in the GSO Election Bylaws. Should there exist a question of legitimacy for a Senatorial election, the Executive Council shall ~~oversee~~ refer to the Board of Appeals the resolution of the disputed election within the department.
- b. A list of eligible departments and schools shall be compiled by the GSO secretary within one month from the beginning of the fiscal year and shall be approved at the first senate meeting of the fiscal year.

Article VI Sec. A part g

The Executive Council shall:

- g. Approve the hiring and removal of GSO administrative personnel and suggest possible removals to the Board of Appeals.

Speaker Longobardi Also proposed the following change to the Board of Appeals Bylaws:

Article I Purpose

~~The Board of Appeals (hereafter the BOA) shall act in an advisory capacity in matters concerning the removal of an officer or of a GSO employee and shall adjudicate grievances against the GSO senators, committees or representatives brought by any member of the GSO.~~

The Board of Appeals (hereafter the BOA) shall adjudicate grievances against the GSO senators, committees or representatives brought forth by any member of the GSO and shall act in an advisory capacity in matters concerning the removal of an officer or infringement of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the GSO and a third party, including employees of the GSO.

Given the insufficient quorum of senators present to amend the constitution the proposed changes were tabled for a future GSO meeting, the possibility of voting the changes on the university SOLAR system was also mentioned by Speaker Longobardi.

b. Budget Committee:

Treasurer Young presented a report on the current status of budget expenditure
Funding Requests:

- I. Andrei Antonenko from the Linguistics department requested 900\$ for a visit from Professor Kenneth Wexler on February 5-6 2009, the funds were approved unanimously.
- II. Representatives from the Stony Brook University Cat Network requested \$1500 for food, surgery and vaccination of ferret cats on campus. The funds were approved unanimously

- III. Matthew Engel (Biomedical Engineering) requested \$650 for the screening of the movie “Naturally Obsessed” with the filmmakers Caroline and Richard Rifkin, the date is to be set in February 2009. The funds were approved unanimously
 - IV. Angel Gonzales and Julie Reiderer (Psychology) Requested \$1050 to promote for a month a trivia night on the University Café and create a university wide tradition. The funds were approved unanimously
 - V. A representative from the Music Department requested \$250 for a talk by Professor Lydia Goehr on Friday, January 30, 2009, at 4:15 in the Music Library Seminar Room. The funds were approved unanimously
- c. **Social Concerns Committee:** Vice-President Selterman commented about the upcoming meeting parking subcommittee. He mentioned that Town hall meeting notes were available from him if anyone wanted them. He also spoke about the proposed policy of banning smoking on campus 25 ft away from building in order for the university to obtain federal environmental certifications

Marlies Rossman and Xiaoyun Wu from Cold Spring Harbor Labs explained their current situation regarding the loss of employee health insurance by Stony Brook graduate students in the lab. A resolution regarding the Cold Spring Harbor graduate student health insurance problem was approved unanimously (Appendix I)

Vice President Selterman also explained the need for a resolution on graduation caps and gowns. The Resolution (Appendix II) was approved unanimously

3) Committee nominations: Onte Johnson was appointed graduate student representative to the Provost Strategic Advisory Group.

4) NYPRIG update: A representative from NYPRIG commented about the successful Budget Cuts Rally. He also invited GSO members to a New York State Senate forum on Farmingville December 11th at 10 am. He also introduced a book exchange website to reduce the cost of textbooks: www.nypirg.org/bx

5) Graduate Council Report: Gina Sorrentino (Anatomical Sciences) explained the future plans of the graduate school to conduct the faculty surveys online for graduate courses. She asked for the senators suggestions on this new policy.

6) New/old business: Megan Daum (Gradmag Assistant Editor) reported on the current efforts to collect food on campus for underprivileged communities.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jose Colmenares-Angulo
Graduate Student Organization Secretary

APPENDIX I

Resolution on the University Caps & Gowns for Graduate Student Commencement

Whereas the majority of graduate students enrolled in Masters and Ph.D. programs at Stony Brook University have expressed dissatisfaction with the caps and gowns provided for University commencement; and

Whereas the caps and gowns for University commencement are of unsightly color and texture and made of a lesser quality material; and

Whereas the caps and gowns for University commencement provided through Oak Hall and Herff-Jones cost \$63.98 and \$128.38 for Masters students and Ph.D. students respectively; and

Whereas a significant number of graduate students do not wish to pay the required funds for caps and gowns they cannot appreciate nor own permanently; and

Whereas the GSO understands that Stony Brook University modified the design of the caps and gowns last year in an attempt to improve them; be it

Resolved that the GSO asks Stony Brook University to investigate improvements to the design of commencement caps and gowns either through the current distributors Oak Hall and Herff-Jones or through a new distributor; and be it further

Resolved that the GSO recommends to Stony Brook University that the official colors and material for the caps and gowns be changed to meet the standards of the graduating students; and be it further

Resolved that the GSO Social Concerns Committee will assist Stony Brook University in selecting more suitable caps and gowns for University commencement and to find solutions to make the rentals more affordable under graduate student wages.

APPENDIX II

Resolution on Cold Spring Harbor Graduate Student Employee Health Benefits

Whereas Stony Brook graduate student Research Assistants conduct research at Cold Spring Harbor Lab; and

Whereas the research they conduct presumably helps them in attaining their Stony Brook doctoral degrees and most certainly helps their Cold Spring Harbor Lab Principal Investigators in their individual research endeavors; and

Whereas these Research Assistants receive employee I.D. numbers, submit W-2 forms, receive paychecks from Cold Spring Harbor Lab, and pay state and federal taxes that are deducted from the paychecks provided to them by Cold Spring Harbor Lab; and

Whereas Cold Spring Harbor Lab has provided Stony Brook graduate students conducting research at Cold Spring Harbor with employee benefits for over twenty years; and

Whereas Cold Spring Harbor presently provides these Research Assistants with employee health benefits through the Choice Plan; and

Whereas Cold Spring Harbor Lab was supposedly audited and received audit results that allegedly indicated that Cold Spring Harbor Lab would no longer be able to provide the Stony Brook graduate students conducting research at the lab with health insurance through the Choice Plan because the Research Assistants are only considered students and not employees; and

Whereas as early as the spring of 2008, officials at both the Stony Brook University Graduate School and at Cold Spring Harbor Lab were aware that Cold Spring Harbor Lab would no longer be providing the Stony Brook graduate students conducting research at the lab with health insurance through the Choice Plan; and

Whereas Cold Spring Harbor Lab sent a letter to these Research Assistants on Wednesday, November 5, 2008 informing them that beginning January 15, 2009, they will no longer be eligible for employee health benefits through the Choice Plan because Cold Spring Harbor Lab no longer considers them employees, but students; and

Whereas two months and ten days does not, for the affected Stony Brook graduate students conducting research at Cold Spring Harbor, constitute sufficient notice for a change in terms of employment; and

Whereas the only alternative Cold Spring Harbor Lab has offered to the Stony Brook Research Assistants conducting research at Cold Spring Harbor has been a \$1000 supplemental increase to help cover the cost of purchasing either the Student Health

Insurance Plan (SHIP) or the International Student and Scholar Health Insurance (ISSHI); and

Whereas coverage through SHIP or ISSHI is far inferior to coverage through the Choice Plan; and

Whereas these Stony Brook graduate student employees will incur significant premium and per-visit out-of-pocket expenses that drastically exceed Cold Spring Harbor Lab's proposed \$1000 supplemental increase; therefore

Be it Resolved that the Graduate Student Organization urges Cold Spring Harbor Lab to reexamine the audit results and possible resolutions to those audit results with the goal of immediately rerecognizing the Stony Brook University graduate students conducting research at Cold Spring Harbor Lab as employees; and also

Be it Resolved that the Graduate Student Organization urges both Stony Brook University and Cold Spring Harbor Lab to ensure that the Stony Brook University graduate students conducting research at Cold Spring Harbor Lab receive health benefits that are, at bare minimum, comparable to those provided by Cold Spring Harbor Lab to its other graduate student employees, specifically those conducting research through the Watson School, through the Choice Plan; by the state of New York to Stony Brook University Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants through the NYSHIP plan; by the Research Foundation to its graduate student-employee Research Assistants through the POMCO plan; and also

Be it Resolved that the Graduate Student Organization urges Stony Brook University to establish a memorandum of understanding with Cold Spring Harbor Lab so that Cold Spring Harbor Lab cannot change the terms of employment of Stony Brook graduate students conducting research at the lab without informing the Stony Brook University Graduate School and receiving its approval; and also

Be it Resolved that the Graduate Student Organization urges Stony Brook University's Graduate School to much more responsibly support the Stony Brook graduate student Research Assistants working at Cold Spring Harbor Lab by actively ensuring that Cold Spring Harbor Lab always adheres to the very best practices as an employer of Stony Brook University graduate students.