

Stony Brook University – Undergraduate Student Government – Senate

Regular Meeting – Thursday, September 11, 2008

Meeting called to order at 7:49 p.m Executive Vice-President Geeta Malieckal presiding.

Agenda

0.0 Attendance

Members present:

Senator Matthew Anderson
Senator Sungyong Bae
Senator Aharon Benelyahoo
Senator Aneta Bose
Senator Ebbie Boutehsaz
Senator Kevin Brady
Senator Shamell Forbes
Senator Jonathan Harounian (arrived late)
Senator Adam Kent
Senator John Kriscenski (President Pro-Tempore)
Senator Dae Young Lee
Senator Kirin Mahmud
Senator Sean Moore
Senator Lauren Potenza
Senator Ashley Reji
Senator Kathleen Schultz
Senator Blake Wind

Members absent:

Senator Shahzad Chaudry
Senator Steven Hauptman

1.0 Approval of the Agenda

Senator Kriscenski moved to approve the agenda. Senator Anderson seconded. Senator Kriscenski requested unanimous consent. Motion carried unanimously.

2.0 Approval of the Minutes of the September 4, 2008 Meeting

Senator Anderson moved to amend the minutes to strike the period at the end of the sentence and add “and all who ran for President Pro-Tempore” and to adopt the minutes as amended. Senator Kriscenski seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3.0 Announcements

The Chair described the various committees, responsibilities and powers of the University Senate. She called on the Senators to serve on one of the University Senate’s committees and directed them to speak to her for more information.

Senator Wind asked what the University Senate’s meeting time was and the Chair informed Senator Wind that the Senate meets on the first Monday of every month at 3:00 p.m. She was unsure of the meeting place.

The Chair briefed the Senators on the impending 10.3% budget cut, of which Dean Stein informed her. She warned the Senators that if implemented, tuition may be raised, classes may be cut and be bigger and there may be a paper shortage. She directed the Senators to investigate the USG website for more information regarding “Save SUNY Now” and urged them to become involved as this is an issue that directly affects them and the rest of the student body.

Senator Anderson added that he currently has a Facebook group titled “Save Stony Brook” which will become active in the near future.

Senator Wind noted that he has spoken with USG President Akita recently who is planning a more active response to the budget concerns. Senator Wind stated that President Akita urges Senators to speak with him directly to help plan an active response. The Chair added that President Akita is drafting a letter to be sent to the Governor and noted that if any of the Senators wish to help draft the letter he or she should speak with President Akita.

Senator Kriscenski mentioned a proposal to tax the Student Activity Fee by 3% that was introduced last year and asked if anyone knew what the status of that proposal is. Senator Kent responded that said tax would be a New York State tax on all school fees, not just SUNY schools. Senator Anderson briefly explained that the tax wouldn’t be just on the Student Activity Fee and noted that it would not be in effect this year.

The Chair noted that there are many different options for responding to the budget cuts and stated that some of the options have just now been brought to her attention. She asked the Senators if there were any additional questions or comments on this topic and seeing none moved forward with the agenda.

4.0 Committee Appointments

The Chair announced the committee appointments, which were as follows:

5.0 Contracts

The first contract was the CSA Newspaper Program Agreement. Senator Wind drew attention to a typo, which the Chair explained was not in the final and official copy of the contract. Senator Wind moved to approve the contract. Senator Kent seconded the motion. There was no debate. Motion carried unanimously.

The second contract was the Statesman subscription contract.

Senator Brady asked whether Statesman was on an even playing ground with the other newspapers on campus or if it was treated as extension of USG, in terms of insurance underwriting and other issues.

Eunice Ro, Administrative Director of USG answered Senator Brady's question by explaining that the Statesman incorporated a long time and consequently they are their own publisher. USG acts as the publisher for the rest of the newspapers on campus and assumes the liability for them. USG does not underwrite the insurance for the Statesman, they are currently buying their own.

Senator Brady asked Ms. Ro why the Statesman incorporated themselves.

Ms. Ro replied that they chose to incorporate themselves a long time ago.

Senator Potenza asked for clarification in terms of whether or not the contract gave USG space for articles or advertisements in the paper.

Ms. Ro replied that the contract did not grant USG space in the paper but just bought a subscription from the Statesman to make the papers accessible on campus. She explained that because we essentially own the other student newspapers accessibility is not an issue with them.

Senator Anderson moved to approve the contract. Senator Wind seconded.

Senator Kriscenski asked if the Statesman is currently receiving any money through the line item budget.

Ms. Ro indicated that the Statesman is currently receiving approximately \$30,000.

Senator Kriscenski asked if that is equal to how much the Stony Brook Press receives.

Ms. Ro replied that she is unsure.

The Chair asked if there was any further debate and seeing no further debate, called for a vote. Motion carried unanimously.

The third contract was the RESPONSE contract.

Senator Wind noticed a typo in the third item of the contract wherein it says “cruses” but should read “crises.”

Senator Potenza pointed out a typo wherein it says “July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2008” but should read “July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009.”

Senator Wind moved to amend the contract to strike and replace “cruses” with “crises” and strike and replace “2008” with “2009”. Senator Anderson seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Senator Benelyahoo moved to strike “2007-2008” and replace it with “2008-2009”. Senator Kent seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Senator Forbes moved with approve the contract as amended. Senator Kent seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The fourth contract was the SBVAC contract.

Senator Anderson moved to amend item six to strike “2007-2008” and replace it with “2008-2009”. Senator Wind seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Senator Potenza moved to approve the contract as amended. Senator Kent seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

The fifth contract was the Child Care Services contract.

Senator Kent moved to amend the contract to strike “2008-2008” and add “2008-2009”. Senator Wind seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Senator Potenza asked for confirmation that the Child Care Services facility is located across the street from the South Parking Lot.

The Chair confirmed the location.

Senator Potenza asked for confirmation that USG currently gives Child Care Services \$40,000 per year.

The Chair confirmed that amount.

Senator Potenza asked what percentage of their clientele is undergraduate students.

Senator Kriscenski replied that Child Care Services is always over-booked and noted that it is a well-used service.

Senator Potenza reiterated that her question is how many undergraduate students use the service. She wants to know if most of the clients are graduate students.

Senator Brady asked if USG did not fund Child Care Services would undergraduate students still be able to use it.

The Chair replied that she was not sure.

Senator Wind stated he was personally aware of multiple undergraduate students who use the service. He will gather further data.

Senator Brady moved to table the Child Care Services contract until next week. Senator Potenza seconded.

Senator Anderson asked if there are any negative consequences associated with tabling the contract.

Ms. Ro stated that she was unsure of what the consequences would be. She went on to indicate that it will be easy to find out what percentage of their clients are undergraduate students. She noted that if USG stopped its funding of Child Care Services undergraduate students would probably still be able to use the services but would probably lose the discount they are currently

granted. She then stated that there would probably not be any negative consequences caused by waiting until next week to vote on the contract as they are not owed their first payment from USG until October 15 which leaves the Senate plenty of time to act.

Senator Bose asked if Child Care Services always receive \$40,000 from USG or if the amount represented in the contract is an increase to their funding.

Ms. Ro replied that they received \$40,000 last year as well.

Senator Bose asked why the Senate should cut the funding if this is the same amount they have always received. There is obviously a need for the funding.

Senator Benelyahoo asked if the funding is going directly to fund the discounts undergraduate students receive.

Senator Potenza stated she was not questioning whether or not USG should support Child Care Services but rather is wondering if undergraduate students use the service. She went on to say that she simply wants the information because she feels the Senate could be a little more enlightened before they make the decision.

Senator Wind stated that he respects the idea of having a lot of information regarding large expenditures such as this. He went on to say that Child Care Services is a great service that a lot of people on campus use. He stated that if USG does not fund the service – it will be detrimental to students.

Senator Moore confirmed that \$40,000 was the budget of Child Care Services last year.

Senator Brady stated he and Senator Potenza are simply looking for more information and are not attempting to put any assets on the line.

Senator Kent reiterated that the Child Care Services are not receiving their first payment for more than a month and therefore by voting on it next week their funding is not affected.

Senator Anderson stated its highly doubtful that once we receive the information we'll disapprove and stated that they are not due to the receive any money for more than a month.

Senator Forbes stated it is not official that it won't affect them in any way. Ms. Ro is assuming it won't. He stated that he sees no point in waiting until next week because it's the same amount as last year. He stated that waiting until next week to vote may have a negative effect and the Senate should vote and get this contract out of the way.

Senator Brady suggested that the Senate should set a precedent of getting all the information when it comes to allocating money. He went on to say that we will scrutinize this contract and all other contracts because the Senate is simply doing what it needs to do.

Senator Potenza stated the contract needs to be looked out and it needs to be determined how many students the \$40,000 Child Care Services is allocated services.

Senator Kent stated that USG doesn't base funding for other clubs on membership numbers but rather financial need.

Senator Anderson pointed out that because this funding is for a service the need can vary because sometimes a small group needs the service and sometimes it's a big group.

The Chair asked if there was any further debate and then called for a vote.

13 voted positively. 4 voted negatively. There were no abstentions. The motion carried.

6.0 Clarification of Senate Report

The Chair stated that the Senators are required to make monthly reports and the Chair has the discretion to call for either oral or written reports and she has decided to call for written reports. The first report will be due September 18.

Senator Kriscenski asked if the first report is due September 18 and the Chair confirmed that.

Senator Wind asked what the monthly reports should contain.

The Chair stated that the reports should contain committee work, office hours activity and other USG-related experience.

Senator Benelyahoo asked if the format of the reports should be formal reports or written as stories.

The Chair stated that the reports should be formal signed reports.

Senator Potenza asked if the reports are due every month and the Chair confirmed that.

Senator Kent asked if the reports should be e-mailed to the Chair or delivered as a hard copy.

The Chair stated that either form would be suitable as long as the reports are delivered before the appropriate Senate meeting.

7.0 Open Agenda

Senator Benelyahoo discussed the Clarification in Employment Act, which prohibits any USG official from receiving compensation from more than one USG position. He stated his desire to amend the legislation because he feels it was geared towards Executive Council members who had to put in significant more hours than Senators. He wants to amend the legislation to allow Senators to become PASS tutors and asked the Chair how he can do this.

The Chair stated that he must write legislation and present it to the appropriate committee.

Senator Brady asked if the Clarification in Employment Act prohibits Senators from having more than one job – for instance is a Senator prohibited from working in the food court?

The Chair stated that USG officials are not permitted to have more than one USG position.

Senator Kent asked if the Clarification in Employment Act was passed by the Senate last Spring and the Chair confirmed that.

Senator Kriscenski explained that the Act was passed independently of an amendment to the Financial By-laws. He supported Senator Benelyahoo's idea and stated that PASS is in need of math tutors and a change to the Clarification in Employment Act could help.

Senator Anderson stated that Senator Benelyahoo should write something and put it through the Legislative Review Committee. He then asked what the current status of the previously proposed Farmers' Market is.

Senator Wind stated that the former Senator Moore had been working to set up the Farmers' Market but his current schedule prohibits him from doing that. He indicated that Moore would like to a current Senator to continue the project as an entirely USG-funded initiative.

Senator Anderson suggested that the Senate should consider that as a committee in the future.

The Chair asked the gallery if there were any comments.

A representative from the Stony Brook Press made several comments about the high amount of advertising in the Statesman and recommended that the Senate should consider doing an audit of the Statesman

Senator Brady, who is on the Budget Committee, assured the representative that as he will audit all clubs or organizations he deals with.

There were no further comments from the Senate or the gallery.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.