

GSO Senate Meeting – December 7, 2010 – Minutes

I. Meeting called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Paola Espinosa

- Thirty-eight senators present.

II. Approval of Agenda, and November Senate Meeting Minutes

- Unanimous consent. Agenda and minutes approved.

III. President's Report

- Stony Brooklyn Concert Series has been successful this semester, and we need to continue to spread the word to ensure our constituents take advantage of these concerts.
- Notable accomplishments of GSO this semester:
  - We have strengthened the voice of grad students, especially in lack of fee transparency.
  - We have maintained a discussion on the closure of Stony Brook Southampton campus. If the administration wants to close departments, the GSO Senate is now a 'relevant senate.'
  - We have expanded our use of RAP funding.
  - We have increased institutional strength with more departmental representation.
  - We have gained respect from the administration
  - We need to maintain momentum to continue our struggles with budget cuts and potential fee increases.

IV. Vice President's Report

- Recently met with VP of Facilities, Chernow
  - Working toward expanding bike paths on campus (from Chapin to West Campus main entrance).
  - Working toward increasing safety of Nicolls Rd. for pedestrians. However, Nicolls Rd. is not under the control of the University, and we're waiting to hear back from County Commissioner.
- Successful bowling night, but 20 people didn't show up. Planning to release 10 more spots from the waiting list in the future.
- Reminder that Kai has direct contact with Barbara Chernow, and welcomes any suggestions to improve campus safety, or make it a greener environment.

V. Rules and Constitution Committee Report

- Constitutional Amendment and Standing Committee bylaws:
  - Insufficient Senators present to vote on Constitutional Amendment (below). Tabled to next meeting.

j. Committee on Academic Affairs (CAA)

The CAA shall be chaired by the Speaker of the Senate, and shall include at least three other GSO members. The committee shall review and provide advice on any University changes that could affect the academic progress of graduate students. If said changes involve a particular department, the committee shall invite the senator(s) of that department to participate.

## Standing Committee bylaws

### Section H: Committee on Academic Affairs

1. As noted in the Constitution, the CAA shall be chaired by the Speaker of the Senate and shall include a minimum of three other GSO members. The committee shall invite the senator(s) of the affected departments to join the committee.
2. The committee will meet to make recommendations regarding any proposed changes that could affect the academic progress of graduate students.
3. The committee shall also serve as an official liaison between GSO and the University Council.
4. The committee shall invite three faculty members to review the applications for the Tabarac Distinguished Travel Award, according to the guidelines in the application.

- Internal Control Program:
  - Motion to pass all proposed changes (in **bold** below). Motion passes unanimously.

### Tabarac Distinguished Travel Award

A. Is a special line of funding designated to support graduate students who present their work at prestigious conferences, performances and professional meetings that will contribute to and build the national and international reputation of their department and the University.

B. The application call will be sent **the first week of the spring semester and will be forwarded to all the departments represented by a GSO Senator.** The application will require the following documents:

- a. A written statement of no more than 500 words on the scientific or artistic contribution of the presentation, its impact in the national and international discussion of his/her area of specialty, and the significance of the event.
- b. An invitation or acceptance letter to the event. **This requirement will be waived for conferences taking place between the call for applications and June 30. In such cases, an invitation or acceptance letter shall be a requirement for the reimbursement.**
- c. A letter of recommendation from the student's advisor, stating the student's contribution and impact on the field or discipline.

C. Every department can nominate a maximum of two students for each academic year. The program director should write a letter of support to the nomination.

**D. The applications will be reviewed, and evaluated by the Committee on Academic Affairs and three invited faculty members.**

E. All funds will be reimbursed following the same guidelines as for RAP (6.3.2.).

F. The award can only be used once during a student's academic career, and the student is not eligible for RAP funding for the same conference.

#### VI. Committee Nominations

- Student Health advisory committee (SHAC) —may decide to increase infirmary fee, currently chaired by undergrad. No current nomination.
- Undergrad council – determines course size and course evaluations. No current nomination.
- School of professional development— No current nomination. Hope to recruit someone from SPD.
- Presidential task force on safety—nominated Blake Wind.
- Housing Committee—from CARA Essoh Gnassingbe.
  - All nominations passed unanimously.

#### VII. Treasurer's Report

- We have excess funds from unanticipated income from Student Activity Fee (about \$10,000).
- Budget reflects changes in funds from Graduate School to support RAP funding.
- We've spent close to half of our RAP budget for the academic year this semester.

#### VIII. Budget Committee Report

- Funding Requests
  - SoMAS Student Symposium (2<sup>nd</sup> annual): an interdisciplinary student symposium, provide platform for students to showcase their research consisting of oral and poster presentations. Inviting SoMAS graduate as keynote speaker. Requesting \$1,000 from the 'Speaker Series and Conferences' line to cover publicity, honorarium, and food. General consent.
  - SARA: requesting \$350, and \$300 from the 'General Cultural and Social Events' line to host a 'Christmas Party' and 'Late Night Breakfast,' respectively. Motion to approve both events. General consent.
  - Latin American Graduate Student Conference (10<sup>th</sup> annual) event: requesting \$875 from the 'Speaker Series and Conferences' line to cover publicity, honorarium, and food. Motion to approve for \$875. General consent.
  - CARA: requesting \$400 from the 'General Cultural and Social Events' line to host a 'Christmas Party.' Motion to approve for \$400. General consent.
  - Behavioral Ecology Group: requesting \$1051.80 from the 'Speaker Series and Conferences' line to cover publicity, transportation, honorarium, and food. Motion to approve for \$1051.80. General consent.
  - Cabaret Collective: an interdisciplinary event (Studio Art, Theater, Music, etc.) designed to showcase graduate student work. Requesting \$225 from the 'General Cultural and Social Events' line for food, and advertising. Motion to approve for \$225. General consent.

#### IX. Board of Appeals

- Senators voted 25-1-5 to suspend the bylaws and allow for a hearing at the current GSO Senate meeting.
- BoA recommends lifting the hold on the IGSA reimbursement voucher, pending following the recommendations of the BoA. See BoA recommendation for details (attached as Appendix I).
  - Motion to approve BoA recommendations. General consent.

#### X. National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS) Conference Report (Matthew Engel)

- Organization consists of 52 member schools, and GSO equivalents across the U.S.
- Served as Employment Concerns Committee Chair
- Passed resolutions including: 'Opposition to Student Taxes,' and 'Multiple Entry Visas for Iranian Students.'
- NAGPS can provide health insurance (details will appear in GSO newsletter).
- Requesting \$724.55 from GSO for travel expenses to conference (half of the costs have been funded by Graduate School). Motion to approve for \$724.55. Motion passes unanimously.

#### XI. The GSO Presents Report

- Good turnouts to Concert Series, about 100-150 at each event.
- Also hosting Trivia Nights and Jazz Nights at UCafe.
- Currently spending \$750 for production costs (sound equipment, monitors, sound board, sound engineer, mics, gear, etc.) of each Concert Series, and price will go up next semester (\$1200/event) because we will no longer have access to the current vendor.
- Announcing open meeting next Tuesday @ noon in GSO Office to discuss spring programming, promotion of events, and gaining control over programming of The UCafe.

#### XII. RA Union Liaison Committee Report

- New minimum stipend (\$21,500/year).
- 2% raise in first year of contract.
- Transportation fee waived (\$242/year).
- Have made some concessions, but still fighting for a technology fee waiver, and/or small annual raises

#### XIII. Meeting Adjourned

- Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Al Herrera-Alcazar, GSO Secretary.

On Tuesday November 30th, the GSO Board of Appeals (BOA) held a hearing to assess an appeal made by the Indian Graduate Student Association (IGSA) regarding the decision of the GSO Executive Council (EC) to block the signing of a voucher to reimburse IGSA for expenses incurred during the IGSA Freshers' Party.

#### IGSA Freshers' Party

The IGSA Freshers' Party is an event that has received funding from the GSO through the Educational Programming in International Culture (EPIC) line of the GSO Budget. Funding for EPIC events must follow guidelines as listed in sections 6.3.9 and 6.3.2 of the Internal Control Program of the GSO. During the September 7, 2010 regular senate meeting, the GSO Senate approved this event for \$2250.00 of funding. After the event, the IGSA requested reimbursement of \$2226.00.

#### Basis of GSO EC Action

The GSO EC blocked the signing of the voucher for reimbursement because an accusation of discrimination was raised against the IGSA. A student was denied a free entry pass, and was informed that s/he could have a pass if s/he made a monetary contribution of \$6 to the IGSA. The student in question felt that this denial was based on ethnicity.

#### Basis of IGSA Appeal

The IGSA asserts that this denial was the result of a miscommunication between the volunteer giving out tickets and the student. The volunteer understood the student to be an undergraduate student, when in fact the student was a graduate student, and it was this distinction that led to the denial of a free entry pass. The student who raised the original complaint has chosen not to present a written statement or to appear at the BOA hearing.

#### Concerns from the Board of Appeals

The BOA has concluded that the events involved in this case raise concerns regarding event funding proposals and lack of clarity of certain issues in the Internal Control Program (ICP) of the GSO. In particular, the use of entry passes or tickets for a GSO sponsored event is not addressed in the current ICP. In this case, the use of entry passes was not addressed in the IGSA funding proposal either in the Budget Committee meeting or the September 7th regular Senate meeting. However, we are aware of no precedent that requires such notification. It is our opinion that the type of scenario that led to the GSO EC action in this case could be avoided if ticketing processes are standardized. This will be addressed in our recommendations. Furthermore, in part because of a lack of clear guidance on the use of entry passes, the IGSA may have committed actions that decreased the access to entry passes. These actions include the aforementioned failure to include the entry pass requirement when presenting the funding request and failure to widely disseminate information regarding how to acquire entry passes. However, we do not feel that there is evidence that such actions were taken for the expressed purpose of limiting the attendance of the Freshers' Party based on ethnicity.

Concerning the allegation of discrimination, the BOA is of the opinion that there is no strong

evidence to support such an allegation.

Recommendations from the Board of Appeals

We, the Board of Appeals, recommend that the Senate take the following actions:

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Lift the block on the voucher, conditional on appropriate revisions by the IGSA to the IGSA Constitution to reflect current practices. The current IGSA Constitution does not match with the current practices, as outlined by the IGSA representatives at the BOA hearing. Proof of this action will include meeting minutes of approval of revised constitution from the IGSA and the revised constitution, delivered to the GSO EC. Upon receiving these documents, the voucher can be processed.

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Include language in the ICP that discourages the use of entry passes. In particular, we recommend the following be considered by the RCC as an addition to the ICP:

The GSO discourages the use of entry passes or tickets for events sponsored by the GSO, however, if an event is deemed by the budget committee to require them, tickets must either be distributed by the SAC Ticket Office or be made available at the GSO Office during advertised open hours. If entry passes or tickets are required for attendance at a GSO-sponsored event, that fact needs to be publicized through the GSO PR Specialist.

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Require, via ICP and Budget Committee Bylaws, that the use of tickets or entry passes must be included in all budget proposals and be approved by the Budget Committee and the Senate.

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Recommend that the EC explore the possibility of university IDs for graduate students that indicate graduate student and/or faculty/staff status as opposed to merely student status.

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Recommend that the Budget Committee consider publicizing on the GSO website a checklist of typical considerations for funding proposals (i.e. standards for submission).