

April 12, 2005 Senate Meeting Minutes

Meeting starts with 26 senators, 5 executive members. Changes to the agenda:

- SUNY assembly conference discussion by Glenn added after technology fee discussion
- Lounge committee proposal included in committee reports

Agenda and March 15 minutes were unanimously approved.

1) Technology fee discussion

Richard Reeder, CIO (RR) presented his case: the president's cabinet has to approve the increase to the fee, then it goes to SUNY administration to get into effect. There was a delay in this procedure, that's why it showed up only this semester. Increases in SB are less than in other SUNYs. Administration has to inform students about such increases, not get their approval, which is what he did in last spring's senate meeting that he attended. He claimed that issues about grad students and fees in general isn't his business, so he's not going to talk about it or answer such questions. Then he presented his budget breakdown – see relevant document. He claimed that the bulk of the money grads pay go for immediate grad student needs: ~\$671k out of ~\$982k that grad students pay in technology fee is returned to them directly, the rest go for the “common technological good” of the university, that also benefits grads. Students should communicate with Nancy their specific needs to get funding, which they're eager to give to departments.

Senators' et al concerns/questions:

- How are the needs of specific departments taken care of? In many places it's difficult to separate grads' needs from others'. RR insisted that students' needs come first.
- When shall we have working wireless clients? RR's answer was next fall.
- Network in Chapin was installed last, showing the administration's (dis)respect for grad students. RR claimed that there were safety/procedure issues to punch holes in walls.
- The network upgrades benefit mainly the undergrads. Also, only 2/3 of our last year's money went for grad services, couldn't improvements be done with the rest? About 1/6 of the increase goes to grads, the \$200k of “graduate student increase allocation” was added in the last minute in the document to appease us. RR said that technology fee is not a “fee for service”, can't be guaranteed to be returned to students.
- RR was asked if they got any feedback from students as to which software to get license for. There was opposition to MS software, was it taken into account? It was pointed out that it's not such a good deal after all, with all the extra fee one has to pay in 5 years, you can buy everything as academic software. What's the procedure to give feedback? RR claimed that they did take students' suggestions into account, and that for more feedback we should talk to Nancy. There is a SUNY-wide deal for Mathematica, Maple, Lotus etc, imposed to all sites, that we can't get around. He defended that MS is a good deal, cause the copy belongs to the student, who'll also get the upgrades.
- Is the fee collected from HSC students too? RR said yes.
- Will there be any increases in the near future? How much? (suggestion: few % every year is better than 65% at once!) Any guarantees? RR said that he didn't think so and that he's fairly certain it won't happen for a few years.
- If more funds are needed, will the administration lobby SUNY, or impose more fees on students again? RR said that lobbying SUNY is like “talking to a potato”, we get just 12% from state and all campuses have juicy fees.
- How can the communication between grads and IT be improved? Could we use SOLAR for surveys? RR encouraged the GSO to send a representative to the committee. He said we could use blackboard for surveys.

2) SUNY assembly conference

Glenn informed the senate about the assembly conference: he said it's a very good opportunity for all SUNY students to network together, communicate with each other, organize on issues that affect us (ex. Tuition increases). At the moment there is no (permanent) grad student representative in the assembly. In the Rochester conference, there will be workshops on fraternity-sorority matters, lobbying, diversity, NYPIRG issues, etc. Glenn will email to the senators the conference info and a report of what happened there when he returns.

3) 2005-2006 exec board elections

Andrei, the GSO speaker, explained the situation: the constitution demands that elections have to take place in April. However, this year, due to the late change of secretary, we cannot have them on time if the senate also wants to see the candidates present themselves. A motion to hold SOLAR elections in the last week of April (25-29) although the senate will not have an opportunity to meet the candidates at a regularly scheduled meeting, was made and passed (18 for, 8 abstain).

Elections committee nominees were presented by Prasanna, the GSO president, and voted unanimously. The newly elected members are: Dan Woulfin (history senator), Nadia Khatib (political science senator), Andreana Leskovjan (biomedical engineering senator), Andrew Farke (anatomical sciences senator).

4) Committee reports

(a) Appointment of new committee members:

Gina Chiarella, chemistry senator, was appointed to housing committee, with unanimous consent

Adam Ehmer, ecology and evolution senator, was appointed to campus life awards committee, with unanimous consent. A presentation of this committee was given by Cheryl Chambers, 2004-2005 Campus Life Awards-Committee Chair and Assistant Dean of Students: these awards are a SB tradition since 1981, and they're given to individuals and organizations to recognize student leaders. The GSO has always been involved, apart from last year. The recipients are chosen by an award selection committee, for which 1 grad student is needed (Adam was eventually appointed to this committee by the senate). There's also a planning committee, where there are already 3 grad participants. The deadline for nominations is April 15, and the senators/GSO are encouraged to participate in the nomination procedure. The total budget of the awards committee is ~\$5400. From that, the \$500 that the GSO contributes will be used to purchase the awards. The amount was approved unanimously.

(b) Budget committee report:

Rong, the GSO treasurer, presented the proposal for next year's budget, see relevant documentation. We have a large surplus, therefore a discussion on the possibility to increase RAP followed: ~300 students got \$250 each from RAP last year, could we increase this amount by something substantial (i.e. not by \$10-20)? To increase to \$300, we need \$8k more (total \$90k), other contributors will then match. The possibility to give more RAP money to less students (have some selection) was suggested, but regarded as a bad idea by the senate. Also the allocation of RAP funds to departments was deemed undoable. A motion was made and unanimously passed, for the BC to investigate the feasibility of the increase of RAP to \$300/person. The results will be presented in May's

meeting, when the budget will also be approved. Prasanna asked the senate whether the chair of the lounge committee should be a paid position. He stated that he had not yet consulted with the executive board about the idea, however, would like to ask the senate's opinion. The senate unanimously was opposed to the idea after the chair of the lounge committee, Chad Bender, announced that he would relinquish his position as chair should this unconstitutional proposal be implemented.

(c) Lounge committee:

Chad presented the situation, see relevant documentation: the Lounge committee requests for this year an additional \$2500 in café subsidy, in order to keep the café open both day and night hours until the end of the semester, and only nights afterwards (until June 30). To operate the café both day and night till the end of June, \$5k more will be needed. After learning this, the senate decided to allocate \$5k as additional café subsidy this year, needed to operate normally, from the surplus. Few people use the café during the day (20-30 paninis/day), but unclear what will happen in the summer, as we have the patio and this year alcohol will also be permitted there. Senators noticed that the advertising of the café isn't sufficient – FSA pays for the ads, and there are many colorful posters, but they have yet to get to the departments. Motion passed unanimously for Chad to leave posters and/or fliers for the senators to pick up in the GSO office. The lounge committee is also asking for an extra \$3k from next year's budget (total of \$23k). Motion passed unanimously to recommend this increase to the BC and for them to investigate the feasibility of this proposal.

A motion to adjourn was made and passed by unanimous consent. The meeting adjourned.