



Students' Association Senate Minutes
Meeting of November 9, 2009
Speaker: Kierstin Hughes
Deputy Speaker: Dan Cohn



SENATORS PRESENT: Arastu, Brooks, Brookstein, Gonzalez, Guerra, Halpern, Hu, Junig, Mills, Nave, Rath, Slone, Strenger, Sussman, Tejada, Umesi, Yoon

SENATORS ABSENT: Bhattacharyya (excused)

CALL TO ORDER: 9:01pm

SPEAKER'S BRIEFING

Speaker Hughes welcomes the Senate and explains the new absence policy regarding Senators who have infectious illnesses or cannot attend meetings due to religious holidays.

OPEN FORUM/CONSTITUENCY REPORT

Soph. Comm. Senator Strenger briefly mentions that many midterms coincide with course registration. The college will work in the future to advertise course registration more to faculty, so they can plan their syllabi accordingly.

Rath asks about freshmen who have midterms during class registration. She asks if advisors can lift the hold early so that students who have a midterm can still register for classes. Halpern comments that this is a registration hold, not an advisor hold. Hughes comments that the Registrar places this hold based on birthday and seniority. The Registrar will not allow students to register before their allotted time slot. This is based on a computer program.

SCAPE Mills comments that a survey will be released soon to gather information about alcohol culture on campus to gauge future alcohol policies.

CDR Hughes comments that CDR met two weeks ago. The group discussed the lack of minority students studying abroad.

Greek Life Gonzalez invites any questions about fraternity and sorority management regarding anything other than alcohol policy. He will attend an upcoming meeting with administrators about fraternity and sorority affairs.

Bookstore Brill comments that four aides went to the Bookstore Advisory Committee. They discussed how the Medical and River campus bookstores are doing. Weissmann asks how many total students were at the meeting. Brill was not present and does not know.

Junig asks if data has been compiled regarding book prices over the past several years. Brill comments that that information is not involved. Professors have

started to submit their book lists earlier than in years past. Junig wonders if this has translated into price reductions. Weissmann comments that the data is difficult to collect because book prices increase regularly, disregarding new editions and other factors. Junig encourages the Projects to come up with a way for the Bookstore Advisory Committee to monitor the differences in book prices as years progress.

Mills comments that book editions do not change all that often. He encourages the Bookstore Advisory Committee to look into books that do not change often (like the calculus textbook). Halpern comments that Senator Bhattacharyya will be instructed to look into it.

Sussman asks about Sustainability and the bookstore. Brill does not know to what extent used books are encouraged at the bookstore. She does not know if the bookstore encourages professors to refrain from using new book editions. Sussman asks Brill to keep the Eastman bookstore in mind as well.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Approp. Treasurer Flack states that two supplemental funding requests were submitted this week on time. Mini Baja is looking for funding for \$84 for a tent. Flack already signed off on that request since it is under \$100. He asked the group to answer the same questions any other group requesting money would. SAAC saw those responses before he signed off on the request.

He states that Women's Rugby is also requesting supplemental funding for a future tournament. He waited to process this request because their advancement was contingent upon a victory this weekend. The request is for \$1,800. There is currently \$16,000 in the program supplemental account.

Weissmann asks about post-season play. He thought the post-season fund was only for undergraduates to get buses for post-season games at other institutions. Flack responds that the money comes out of the program supplemental account. This is the only way in which Flack has seen it used. In the past, the equestrian and alpine skiing teams used a similar request for post-season events. Weissmann then congratulates Flack on his work on the budget.

Strenger wonders about the precedent that will be set for other competitive teams (particularly dance groups) who may ask for supplemental when they travel. Flack comments that no dance groups have ever asked for such a request. The request is meant for competitive teams that have made it to tournaments. Flack disagrees with Strenger's basic premise, and he thinks this information should be advertised more.

Nave asks if dance groups normally receive funds if they are exclusive. Weissmann comments that those groups could still apply for supplemental funding.

Commun. Chair Brookstein comments that Rocky's Report went out last week. Tomorrow

the first SA Press Release will go out. Wednesday is the next Fireside Chat at 8pm in Hirst Lounge. He comments that Slone made a great video to advertise the Chat. He mentions that he developed a way to put Hive blog posts in order. This will help make things run more smoothly.

Senator Slone asks Senators to invite their friends to the Fireside Chat Facebook event.

Weissmann compliments the Communications Committee for helping make this Fireside Chat different than those in the past. He mentions that there will be S'mores at the Chat. He requests that each Senator attend and bring one friend.

Junig suggests serving the S'mores after the Chat. Strenger comments that even those students who stop by for S'mores before the event might sign the email sheet.

Policy

Chair Brooks comments that there was no Policy Committee meeting last week because quorum was not met, and two groups cancelled. She is developing a form for community service organizations that would like to be a group under CSN. It is a way for CSN to approve, in writing, their support for potential groups when they come before Policy.

Cohn asks about the process for officially de-recognizing student groups. Hughes comments that once a group does not renew for one year, they are typically deemed "de-funked." After the following semester, the group can be brought to Policy and then to Senate to have their SA recognition revoked. Nave comments that it is typically a two-year process.

Projects

Chair Halpern mentions his continued communication with the Pandemic Planning Committee. The group is no longer meeting regularly, but will meet as the times necessitate.

He also mentions the working with IT about Wireless. There are no concrete updates. But he mentions the expansion plan developed yesterday. He comments that Starbucks was updated this year, not just Douglass Dining Center. Site surveys have also been obtained for the first time since 2004 to estimate potential costs of establishing Wireless in buildings.

The taxi survey will be cut off this Wednesday. A finalized suggestions list will be sent to the appropriate administrators on Monday.

Winter bike storage will occur on December 3 and 4. Brill reminds those who volunteered that the City Cycles storage will occur shortly.

Brill comments that she met with Dining recently to discuss dining hours during finals week. Because there are finals on Sunday this year, the dining centers were originally planned to be open until 2pm this Sunday. Because Projects approached Dining with this issue, they have agreed to extend hours until 8pm. During other finals, dining hours will also go until 8pm.

She also mentions a meeting with Residential Life. They discussed plans for Towers renovations.

She asks for feedback about Meliora Dinner Nights. She wonders if people would be happy if a daily lunch buffet and dinner were offered.

Sussman wonders how the menu would change; would the lunch and dinner menus be the same. Brill comments that the dinner and lunch menus would be different. Weissmann is concerned that this is a way to make a buffet-style lunch, then to phase out the dinner if it is unpopular – as was suggested last year. Halpern suggests no longer having Meliora lunch and just offering dinner. A straw poll was taken for these suggestions, and Brill recorded the results.

Strenger asks if there was any discussion about the recent issues with Wireless. Halpern did not bring up recent Wireless issues across campus because they were crunched for time, and it would be more appropriate to bring up at CTLTR this Thursday. Based on what he has heard recently, there is not much information available about the problems with Wireless.

Halpern mentions that the Thanksgiving shuttles are available again this year.

Weissmann asks how we are promoting bike storage. Halpern and Brookstein comment that it will be advertised via posters and Rocky's Report. Weissmann encourages Senators to tell their friends about the storage. He asks if there is a system in place for storage. Halpern believes that the storage plan itself will be up to student government to develop.

Hughes asks why the Pandemic Planning Committee is no longer meeting when parents were recently notified via email about an increase in pandemic flu cases on campus. Halpern comments that there is an emergency council that still meets regularly. Brill comments that those on the Pandemic Planning Committee have stated that the plans in place have been working well.

Tejeda asks how the University is making sure that students who are quarantined actually stay in their dorm rooms. Halpern comments that they cannot stop students from leaving their rooms. Cohn comments that there is not much UHS can do to legally force students to stay in their dorm rooms. He also states that UHS did a great job when he was ill.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion A. Motion to discuss student feedback surveys by Junig, seconded by Mills.

Senator Halpern briefly introduces the discussion. He comments that we must justify our arguments to administrators using either logic or hard numbers representing student opinion. He asks to what extent we need to receive student feedback before meeting with administrators on behalf of the student body. He comments that a student gave feedback about shuttles to Amtrak and the Grey Hound station for Thanksgiving.

Junig thinks bombarding students with surveys is not worth it. He thinks that for

statistically significant surveys, we should talk to the statistics department because many students are required to complete surveys for projects. They could help in completing surveys that we feel are important.

Sussman thinks that we are smart enough to develop a taxi plan. But she knows that the administration asks us a lot for exact numbers regarding student opinions. She thinks we can have our own discretion about distributing the surveys. Hughes asks Sussman quantify her statements. She asks Sussman when our opinions are enough to represent the opinions of the student body. Sussman thinks that an institutional change – such as a change to the shuttle system – should require student feedback. Decisions about Fireside Chats, for example, should not require student feedback. Hughes comments that we decided to have this discussion because Steering was not sure the extent to which we, as a Senate, represent the student body as elected representatives.

Weissmann comments that we are in a Catch-22. Even when we ask for student feedback, we often do not get it. We have an obligation to ask for student feedback, even if we do not get a lot of it. He thinks we should keep offering surveys because students who care enough about a particular issue will theoretically respond. He thinks we need to decide what to do with student feedback if we do not get much of it. He acknowledges that we are elected representatives, and our opinions are also an important piece of the puzzle.

Nave agrees with Weissmann. There are 18 Senators at this table, and we all come from different places. Surveys should be used when we do not have a definitive answer in the Senate room. We are diverse enough that we could probably give enough feedback without getting a general opinion from students. He thinks the more surveys that are sent out, the more feedback we would get based on different students caring about different subjects, but we could also represent different students well.

Brookstein thinks that surveys should be available so that we can get feedback from those who want to give feedback. He comments that most of the issues brought up at the first Fireside Chat, though, were brought up first in Senate. He thinks this is a good indication that we do indeed fairly represent the student body.

Junig comments that most of the student body does not know or does not care about the things we do in Senate. He contends that we are here to deal with the stuff other students do not want to deal with in college. Students often do not care, so we should trust our ability to represent them. He asks that we keep the burden off the shoulders of the students we represent.

Brooks wonders how valuable numerical data is to administrators when it comes down to making changes. Halpern has never been asked for opinions directly obtained the students. But administrators often ask what the students want. Brooks contends that we should be able fairly represent student opinion and to present those opinions without getting student feedback unless administrators ask for information specifically.

Sussman thinks that surveys are needed when we need to show the administration when we have to show specific data.

Hasan from the gallery comments about communication. She does not think we have

bombarded the student body with surveys. We have a voluntary system, so we have not bombarded anyone. She agrees with Sussman. She thinks surveys should remain.

Weissmann qualifies Junig's comments. Of those who do not care about all issues, there are certainly many who care about specific issues. He thinks that we should think about this in terms of any given issue. Students clearly cared about our work on alcohol policy. Regarding other issues, students might not care. He is curious to hear what freshmen at the table think about the number of surveys offered to students.

Arastu comments that he does not feel bombarded by the available surveys. He gets information and does not have to respond to a survey unless it is important to him.

Umesi has only received one survey to his knowledge, and it was from Residential Life.

Yoon does not feel overwhelmed either.

Nave comments that general issues could be discussed at the table, but something like Riverview shuttles might need a survey, since there is not much Riverview representation in Senate.

Cohn comments that we are both elected representatives and students of the University. We are also students in the thick of it all, and we can represent students because we *are* students.

Strenger comments that we are the student government, and we do represent the students.

Umesi wonders how many people actually go to the Hive website. He did not know about the Hive website until he ran for Senate. Halpern comments that about 180 students visit the Hive. Halpern asks Umesi to send him suggestions if he has any ideas about improving communication with the student body.

Tejeda suggests that those sending out surveys not include the estimated survey time.

Weissmann responds to Umesi by stating that our responsibility is to the students. Over the past 75 years, much communication has been unsuccessful. Right now, the Hive website is the best form of communication we have. He encourages Senators to spread the word about what student government does.

Halpern thanks Senators for telling people to speak with Brill and him when they have questions and comments. He states that students usually do not know when we are doing things well, but they certainly know when we are not doing things. They know when something is wrong.

Motion B. Motion to approve the Minutes and Attendance Records from the November 2, 2009 meeting by Sussman, seconded Gonzalez.

Cohn introduces the motion and mentions a few changes made to the Minutes.

The *motion* passes by a 17-0-0 hand vote.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Weissmann attended the Faculty Council meeting last week. He learned about the Dean's approval process. Every five years, each upper-level Dean undergoes an assessment. Dean Lennie is currently under assessment, and the Council is looking for students to be involved with that process. He is looking to appoint a student to help with this assessment.

It has been 15 months since Senate passed the Fall Break memo. He comments that the memo is technically feasible to be implemented next year. However, it must first be approved by the Faculty Council. Within the next few weeks, the Faculty Council Steering Committee will review the proposal and potentially send it to the Faculty Council. He mentions that the Fall Break plans may affect exam schedules, which would impact professors more than students. Responding to a question from Halpern, Weissmann comments that the memo suggests extending exam period one day without affecting reading period.

He comments that several students including Brooks, Cohn, and Hughes attended the ACUI conference this past weekend. Cohn and Brooks will develop a document shortly to highlight what they learned.

He mentions that the Student Sustainability Council decided to break up into three working groups. We are now able to see progress from the highest level of the college. This means changes will be made, possibly even in academic programs, to include sustainability. He is not sure what may lead to, but he is happy about the discussion.

He mentions the Fireside Chat. He wants Senators there to bring their friends.

He comments that course registration is going on this week. Hughes asks why students did not receive an email from Nancy Speck until after registration began for seniors. Halpern comments that large mailing lists have recently been backed up.

Rath asks about the ACUI conference. Weissmann briefly describes the conference.

Sustainability Coordinator DeWitt announces that Sussman is the Sustainable Senator of the Week. She mentions the SSC Operations Working Group met recently. They discussed a project to be worked on this year. She spoke with Cam Schauf about developing a Sustainable package for student groups catering events.

DEPUTY SPEAKER'S REPORT

Deputy Speaker Cohn asks the Committee Chairs to email him attendance records for their meetings and office hours. He offers to make a reservation for Senators to attend the upcoming Meliora Dinner Night. He also mentions the upcoming end-of-the-semester SA Senate Dinner.

SPEAKER'S REPORT

Speaker Hughes welcomes Elliot Zenilman to the Senate gallery. He works closely with Stacey Fisher in the WCSA. Hughes encourages the Senators to talk with him after the Senate meeting. She thanks the Senate for partaking in the discussion about student feedback. It helps to know when to use surveys and when to rely on ourselves to represent students. She encourages the Senators to register for NSNS.

ADJOURNMENT

Slone *moves to adjourn the meeting*, seconded by Brooks. The meeting is adjourned at 10:44pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Daniel J. Cohn