

Minutes of the GSO Senate meeting on Thursday November 14th, 2002

Meeting started at 6:05pm with 36 senators present.

Minutes from October passed with no changes.

Committee reports

a. *GSO/GSEU Committee*. The Committee is inactive because there is not chair so far. Christine Promin was nominated to be the temporary chair, which was approved by the Senate.

b. *Housing Committee*. Masha presented the new apartment complex that is been built on campus. The report is attached. The rooms in the new apartment complex will cost \$775 in a 5-bedroom apartment. The question that was raised was whether we should support the new housing or not and if we do support it how many spaces should we fight for?

Jasmina Sinanovic suggested that people should not be forced to live in the expensive apartments. Audra Van Wart said that we do not have a choice but to go with it. Chris Noto added that we should make sure that there is a better system for off-campus housing. Alex Kolker said that graduate students spend a lot of money on rent in total and that GSO should manage off-campus housing.

c. *Student Life Committee and Graduate Council*. Angeliki presented the issues discussed in these committees. The report is attached.

d. *Social Concerns Committee*. The Committee presented their guest, Marianna Savoca from the Career Center. The Career Center is located in Melville Library and it offers free counseling appointments, they review CVs, schedule classes for job search.

The meeting was interrupted by a fire alarm from 7:10-7:30pm

After the fire alarm the number of the senators declined to 23.

Old business

- a. *Senate List Server*. Shawn Pottorf suggested two alternatives for the senate list. Either the list to contain only execs and senators or the list to be open to all users but only senators and execs can send all the other members can only read. Kostas Pentikousis made a motion to wait for another month and see if the BBS that is created by the new Webmaster in the GSO web page will work. Motion passed (20 for, 3 against and 2 abstain).
- b. *Committees*. A volunteer for the Child Care Committee is needed but since no one volunteered Masa will represent GSO in this committee, which was approved by the Senate. Bin suggested that the Budget Committee should give priority to the less senior members of the Committee. Jasmina Sinanovic said that the amendment has to go through the RCC first. The issue was tabled.

Budget items

1. *New Computer Purchase.* A new computer is needed for the editors of the GSO newspaper. The computer along with the software will cost \$3,000 and the office equipment line in the budget has to be increased by \$3,000 since we have already used up almost all the money in that line. No one opposed the increase so it passed unanimously.
2. *Students for Peace and Humanity.* For the fundraising dinner ‘Chiapas: the people, the land, the struggle...’ the group asked for \$300 which is the same with the amount that the Budget Committee suggested. The Senate decided to give \$300 to the group (19 senators in favor, 1 against and 4 abstaining).
3. *Social Justice Alliance* for the ‘USA Patriot Art Exhibit’. The group asked for \$169.91 that is the same amount as the Budget Committee suggested. The Senate approved the request unanimously.
4. *Italian and European Club* requested \$695 for the Christmas Party that is been organized for December 6th. The groups asked for \$695 (total), which is the same as the amount that was recommended by the Budget Committee. The Senate approved of the funding request (24 senators in favor, 2 abstaining). Some concerns were raised by Salih Kocer about whether the party should be named ‘Christmas’ or ‘Holiday’ because of concerns from his Department (MCB). The club kept the name ‘Christmas Party’.
5. *Diwali* event organized by the Indian Society, Campus Residences and IGSA requested \$500. The Budget Committee recommended the same amount and the Senate approved it unanimously.
6. *Biomedical Engineering* requested \$665 for the December Industry Guest Lecture. Jasmina Sinanovic made a motion for the Department to be funded \$575, motion passed.

New business

Bin presented the quality of life survey that GSO is preparing.

André Levy from Ecology and Evolution started the discussion about the Iraq resolution stating that GSO should discuss political issues. Peter Langfelder and Daniel Kaplan (Physics) said that GSO was given no authorization to take stand in political issues and that the student body does not need to take a position on this issue. Daniel Woulfin suggested that we should vote. Stefan Hyman said that senators are not elected to take a stand in political issues. The Senate in the motion ‘Can the GSO adopt a resolution?’

voted 11 yes, 8 no and 1 abstain. At 8:30pm the meeting was moved to the GSO office (227) and the voting senators were 13.

Concerns were raised about how the senators can vote on this matter about whether senators should poll the students of their Department and what the majority will be (2/3 or 50%). Audra Van Wart suggested making a poll on each student individually and publishing the

results. André suggested forming a committee on the issue and the senators to consult their student bodies and RCC and Social Concerns Committee to be responsible.

At this point (9:25pm) the quorum was lost (11 senators present).

Submitted by Angeliki Field-Pollatou

GSO Secretary

12/12/02

Housing report

To: Graduate Community

My name is Masa Prodanovic, and I have been the GSO's representative on the Housing Planning Advisory Committee (HPAC) of this University for 2 years. I would like to raise a discussion on "hot" housing issues on campus since graduate students need to form an opinion and actively participate in decision making on campus.

Present state of things:

A new apartment complex is to be built on campus west of Schomburg (and new undergrad apts) with more or less 500 single student spaces in 4,5 and 6 bedroom apartments (altogether 3 buildings). Complex will have Commons, fitness and computing center in a separate building(serving the Undergrad apts, Schomburg and new apts). It is projected to be open by Fall 2004 and the cost of one space will be \$775 (the lowest cost to cover construction costs financed over 30 years).

Approximate costs of Schomburg and Chapin for comparable single space in Fall 2004 will be \$560 and \$510 respectively(5% annual increase; currently prices are \$498 and \$462). The new spaces are to be designated to be a combination of undergrad or grad student spaces (to be determined). In my opinion, the rent proposed is ridiculously high for graduate students to pay; however, this doesn't seem to bother the University, or rather they recognize the problem but offer no constructive (read lower rent) solution. The problem is not easily solvable indeed, since it is illegal to subsidize housing from the state funds (except in case that some private mogul comes and pays for it) and future rents have to pay off the cost of building (which is financed over 30 years).

Graduate Dean L. Martin seems to support building as much housing as possible, even at a high cost under the premise "better expensive housing than none".

Housing Planning Advisory Committee (HPAC) will pursue some analysis whether it is feasible to finance building even more housing on campus, and, if so, how many spaces and how much will it cost. A separate group including myself will try to come up with a model of how to make this new housing more accessible for the graduate students.

HPAC will include existant study of grad students and medical students housing needs from 2001. There is a belief that one can fill up as many on-campus spaces as one can build with some group including medical students and postdocs.

Furthermore, the University is increasing enrollment every year so more bed spaces will definitely be needed.

Problems:

That are a lot of issues raised by the building of these new buildings.

Should the GSO:

- a) support building of expensive housing at all?
- b) fight for a number of spaces in these buldings at all, and if so, what number? Will we try to get, say, all the spaces in six-bedroom apartments that will probably cheaper?

If the answer to above questions is no, catch 22 is that we might end up without new housing at all.

Discussion:

There is a definite need for housing. Let me remind you that at least 70 incoming, and mostly international, students were without housing whatsoever at the beginning of Fall in the past 3 years. At that time it is almost impossible to find housing in the area, and it involves having a car.

Since they are the most vulnerable, new students that apply by May 15th are guaranteed housing even if that involves kicking some of the older students out. This year, however, there has been big number of people who have guaranteed housing but in a single space rooms in Schomburg (\$498) and they are coming into Chapin office crying and asking to be put in shared bedrooms (approx \$300) since they cannot afford a single. This is a clear indication that price is already too high, let alone if it reaches \$700!

Also, if in 2004 we have housing on campus that ranges from \$350 for shared to \$510-\$775 single spaces how are we going to determine who is going to live where? The idea is that those with higher income will choose to live in costlier apartments. Can we guarantee this? If they choose cheaper apartments can you force them to move in the costlier spaces? Are we creating an environment where poorer students will live in Chapin and wealthier ones in "new apartments"? Isn't this a segregation of a kind?

Let me know what you think.

Regards,

Masa Prodanovic

GSO Vice President

GSO Housing Committee Chair

GSO Representative on HPAC

contact:

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Housing Committee message board:

<http://lol.to/bbs.php?bbs=housing>

(you can also click on Housing Committee Bulletin on GSO's website, www.ic.sunysb.edu/Clubs/gso)

Senate meeting on November 14, 2002

Secretary's report-Submitted by Angeliki Field-Pollatou

The following are not minutes of the meetings but important points that were discussed that I believe are of interest to the graduate students.

1. Student Life Committee (11/08/02)

I brought up the SPOT issue to the members of the committee. The Committee has no knowledge of the situation but they offered to back us up if we decide to move more dynamically towards the Administration. The only thing the Committee asked was a short review of what has happened with the SPOT so far. Having the support of the faculty will help tremendously and we are in the process of preparing this report.

2. Graduate Council (11/11/02)

1. *Housing issue*: New apartment buildings are going to be ready Fall 2004. The cost for a single accommodation will be \$775 per student!!! When Dr. Martin was asked how he believes that an average graduate student can pay such a high rent he suggested that students would find a way. So far there have been at least 100 beds secured but Dr. Martin will be asking for more (250). Kenneth Baynes (chair of the GC) sent out a letter to all the graduate directors urging students to send their complaints for the housing issues. They only received replies from 2-3 departments. The reason is that the graduate directors apparently did not forward the email to their students but that was a good opportunity for the committee and the housing people to support that there are no important problems with the housing. We will be gathering information about the problems and I will present them to the next GC meeting.

Some interesting facts that were presented in the meeting:

- a. When the new undergraduate dormitory was built it cost \$38,000 per bed but there was a lot of money lost so the new apartment building will cost \$56,000 per bed!
- b. The buildings would be cheaper if they were wood framed (like Chapin) but that construction will need more land and more expenses for renovations. The first renovations in Chapin cost more than building the apartments.

Is there a solution? It looks like it is the President of the University could decide whether money should be used to subsidize the apartments or other projects (according to Peter Baigent and Dr. Martin). Another solution would be if a donor was found or money used gathered by fund-raising.

2. *SOLAR SYSTEM problems*: The new website that was promised to us to be put up is not working yet because 'there is no person on the other end' and they need to figure out the categories of complaints.

3. Future of SPOT. Dr. Lawrence Martin met with FSA and administrators and he said that the move of the EOB is more difficult and expensive than anticipated, so they are discussing an alternative solution. The plan for the SPOT is to be demolished.