

September 13, 2005 Senate Meeting Minutes

Meeting starts with 15 senators, 4 executive members.

Changes to the agenda: NYPIRG announcement goes after Dean L. Martin's welcome remarks. Andrei Antonenko (GSO president), who is chairing for this time, welcomes the senators to the new academic year.

Agenda and May 3 minutes are unanimously approved.

Since neither the Dean, nor the NYPIRG representative is present on time, the senate meeting begins with item 3, and the Dean's welcome address is moved somewhere in the middle of the Budget committee report:

1) Committee Members Nominations

The following GSO and University committee members were unanimously approved:

GSO Standing Committees

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Chair</i>	<i>Members</i>
Budget Committee	Anirban Dutta	Andrei Antonenko, Jin Zhou, Ari Grossman, Miranda Moore, Monicca Shanthanelson, Kris Baker, Janette Ponticello
Rules and Constitution Committee		Ari Grossman, Danielle Royer
Elections Committee	Ilektra Christidi	Danielle Royer
Housing Committee		Miranda Moore, Gina Chiarella, Dan Woulfin
Lounge Advisory Committee	Chad Bender	Luigi Longobardi, Miranda Moore, Angeliki Pollatou, Anirban Dutta, Kristin Ericson, Shawn Pottorf, Monicca Shanthanelson, Andrei Antonenko, Jada Hamilton
GSEU Liaison Committee		Ilektra Christidi
Social Concerns Committee	Paul Ioan Fodor	Anirban Dutta, Andrei Antonenko, Dan Woulfin

University Committees	
Random University Committees	
Child Care	Rebecca Bonanno
Housing Planning(HPAC)	Miranda Moore
Stony Brook Council	Andrei Antonenko
Student Health Advisory	Ruchi Gupta
President's Committee on Diversity	Dumaine Williams
FSA Committees	
Board of Directors	Anirban Dutta
Finance	Anirban Dutta
University Senate	
Executive Council	Andrei Antonenko
Senators(6)	Andrei Antonenko, Anirban Dutta, Ramona Walls
Standing Committees of Univ. Senate	

Campus Environment	Ramona Walls
Graduate Council(2)	Andrei Antonenko, Anirban Dutta
Graduate Council Grievances and Appeals(2)	Andrei Antonenko, Monicca Shanthanelson
College of Arts and Sciences Senate	
Arts and Sciences Senators(2)	Melissa Patterson
Ad-hoc	
Parking Rules and Regulations	Janette Ponticello
Parking Appeals Board	Kris Baker

2) NYPIRG announcement

Dan Woulfin, History senator and member of the New York Public Interest Research Group's (NYPIRG) Statewide Board of Directors, gives his contact information and welcomes the graduate students to contact him with issues that affect them. Catherine Contino, NYPIRG's Project Coordinator, gives an overview of the project. NYPIRG is one of the largest student directed organizations in New York State. Their work spans multiple issues, including consumer rights, environmental protection, voter registration and empowerment, student rights and the fight against tuition hikes, hunger and homeless relief, amongst others. Some of their upcoming events, to which they encourage the students to participate:

- Board elections on September 14, any student can run, everyone is welcome to vote.
- A hearing on September 13 in Wang center, about a proposal for a natural gas facility that poses security and environmental threats.
- An ongoing voter registration campaign, everyone is requested to help register voters in their class or lab. There is a registration event at the University Café on September 21.
- A Beach Clean-Up on September 17.
- Their first public interest meeting for this academic year, where students can become members. There is no strict time commitment to this membership.

In general, NYPIRG is asking from the senators to help them access the graduate and undergraduate student body and get involved themselves if they are interested.

3) Speaker election

Andrei calls for nominations and explains the responsibilities and the stipend of the Speaker position. The Senate unanimously agrees to postpone the election until the next meeting, when there will be more senators.

4) Graduate Student Advocate (GSA)

Ari Grossman, the GSA, introduces himself and explains his position. He is here to help students with administrative and other problems individually. Senators should encourage the students in their departments to use the GSA, now that we have one that is willing to help. Some general issues that he is aware of:

- TA's and GA's are not going to start getting paid until late September. The GSO should push the GSEU to negotiate a better starting payday next time they renew the contract. It is also disturbing that Stony Brook University does not have a distress fund (an amount reserved to temporarily help students cope with financial hardships beyond their control). There used to exist such a fund only for

international students. Ari is going to meet with Dean Laurence Martin about this, but the GSO should push too, maybe with a petition. Shawn Pottorf asked if there is any established policy about paycheck advancements, but Ari said that this is left to the discretion of individual departments.

- The bus routes – more on this to come later by Paul Fodor, GSO vice-president.
- Last year's SCC's faculty-student relations survey: Ari is planning to keep reminding the graduate school to take action about its findings. He is also going to organise a symposium or some kind of all-day event with discussions on the subject, in order to make the issues more known. The senators should also do their part in finding out what to do.

A discussion followed:

- A concern was voiced by a senator about tuition waivers, since they can affect those graduate students with student loans. Ari thinks that they should not affect the grad student population at large, if issues arise, they should let him know.
- Monicca Shanthanelson, Neuroscience senator, asked what other plans Ari has to pursue the issues pointed out by the faculty-student relations survey. He repeated his plans for the symposium, and promised to work with the GSO for further action.
- The other people/positions apart from the GSA that the students can complain to when there is a problem is the Graduate Program director and then the Chair of the department.

5) Committee reports

a) Budget committee:

- Anirban Dutta, GSO treasurer, presented the financial report for the fiscal year 04-05, see relevant documentation. Last year we made about \$20k more than expected, but finally saved only \$5k, i.e. we spent \$15k over budget. From the surplus, \$15k is in cash and \$40k will be released in 2007. Some highlights: The extra RAP fund was not spent, the University Café YTD budget allocation figure should be \$25k instead of \$20k (FSA's mistake), we spent about \$1k above budget on office supplies last year.
- The Undergraduate Student Government is calling for external auditors, it would be a good idea for us to do it too in January for the next year.
- The welcome party in the Café the week before was a great success.
- Program funding: The Social Justice Alliance and The Musicians' Alliance for Peace are asking for \$400 to cover advertising, snacks and drinks for a hurricane victims benefit on September 22. The rest is donated by other sources. The event will be at the Wang Center Theater and University Café and will include a panel discussion on the political aspects of the disaster, light dinner, and concerts. They expect hundreds of people to participate. The amount is unanimously approved by the senate.
- There was a complaint by a club that they did not receive all their money last year, although it was approved. Every club with more than 50 members gets \$350 per year, without needing to present any receipts, just a membership roster and a general description of their activities. But last year the Russian dance club got only \$200, although the rest was set apart in last year's budget, and they want the rest now. Since the complaint was received after the books were closed for last year, this money has to be allocated from this year's budget. Anirban said he does not know how this happened, since there was another executive council back then and he does not have any records, he is still investigating with FSA. Ramona Walls, senator from Ecology and Evolution, makes a motion to allocate an extra \$150 to the Russian dance club from this year's club allocation line, motion seconded. Monicca Shanthanelson says we cannot decide if we do not know how this mess happened, but Anirban will have an answer soon, not now. Motion to end the discussion, seconded. Vote: 11 for, 3 against, 3 abstain, motion passes.

- Anirban wants to amend the Budget Committee bylaws, for 2 executive members' signatures to be needed for a check to be written, instead of one that it is now. This is not an issue for the senate, it should go to the RCC.
- Funding request: Full Moon Festival. Members of the SBCSSA described the event and asked for \$1730, see relevant documentation. The only other funding they have is \$200 from a Chinese company. Their reply to senators' concerns of why they did not find any other sources of funding and they ask so much from the GSO, was that they tried but had no luck. Last year CARA (Chapin Apartments Residents Association) gave them \$200, but not this year, same for some other Chinese companies they tried. The festival is a big event, last year they had more than 500 participants. Dan Woulfin, History senator, makes a motion to approve the amount, seconded, vote: 13 for, 0 against, 3 abstain, motion passes.

b) Social Concerns Committee:

Paul Fodor presents the situation. The new bus routes proved to be a big inconvenience for Chapin residents, it takes too long to get to campus, there is no direct line. In addition, the bus seems to be waiting at the SAC loop for 10 minutes at a time, as senators pointed out. There is a meeting with Terence Harrigan, Director of Facilities and Services, and CARA on Friday to discuss the issue, everyone is welcome to participate. The idea is that the new routes are in general good, we just need to improve them further. There are no specific ideas how, at the moment. Monicca reminds the senate that Harrigan promised coordinated connections in the last senate meeting, when he presented the new routes. Paul says he promised 10-20min between connections, which is kept, but is still too long. Ari proposes that the old Chapin loop comes back in effect and cautions that Harrigan also lied to the senate about the transportation fee. Senators point out that there are no shelters in many bus stops, which is going to be intolerable when it starts snowing. Paul says that they have promised to put shelters at least in one side of the street for every stop, which is still inconvenient.

6) Welcome remarks by Dean Laurence Martin (LM)

The Dean expressed his appreciation to the GSO senate, saying that it is, together with the GSO executive council, the link between graduate students and administration. The senators should be the contact to the students of their department. The administration wants to meet with the GSO execs, which is a great tool that the GSO should use when it needs to, since things get done and issues resolved this way (eg. Faculty-students relations survey). The University café is also a very good thing for the students of this campus, and it is for them to use it. Eventually it should generate profit to fund other GSO activities, but its main purpose is to be there to serve the grad students. In this spirit, it is going to be expanded to include a more quiet, lounge-like area, in addition to the more busy one.

He also informed the senate that there is an internal audit of the GSO finances going on after his request. There is also an external audit, which is a procedure that happens normally periodically and is good housekeeping practice in general for every organisation with a substantial budget, in order to find out if money is given according to the rules, regulations and contracts and following the proper paperwork. For the internal audit, he specifically asked for the GSO officers payments and the RAP, clubs and department allocations to be checked. There is still no outcome, he will communicate it to the senate as soon as it is out.

Questions:

- Ari asked if it is possible that have been mistakes in the money allocations due to FSA's carelessness. LM said that it is possible and it will be checked, they will make sure that they are working properly for the money they are paid.
- Monicca asked what can be expected from the audit. LM said it is quite unusual for the outcome to be completely clean, usually such processes reveal bad habits. These are then corrected by posing

better/tighter rules and procedures, to make sure we will pass the audit by the State. The exact measures applied are decided through dialogue.

- Monica asked what is being/will be done for the issues that the faculty-students relations survey revealed. LM said the survey raised issues of great concern and that the administration is definitely going to take action to correct things that should not be happening, if they are really happening. It was a very surprising and substantial report and has generated a lot of discussion. It was a wake-up call for many people in administration and there were many meetings during the summer to discuss action to be taken.

7) New business

a) Evolution of Language Symposium: Marianne Borroff announced the symposium to the senate and invited everyone to attend it on October 14-16, in the Wang Center. More information will soon be sent around. She also asked the senators to make known to other grads and undergrads that “crash space” is needed for students that want to attend this symposium but cannot afford the Stony Brook area accommodations.

b) The graduate newsletter: Jennifer Doebbler, the new “Graduate” editor, introduced herself and gave her contact information. The newsletter is going to be printed again, the 1st issue of this year coming on September 19. If anyone has a column to contribute, is welcome, the deadline is on September 16. It is going to be published 1 week after the senate meeting, instead of before, according to the new contract. In the start it is going to be small, a 4-page newsletter, and paid by the GSO, but eventually it should become larger (8 or 16 pages...) and get some ads to finance the printing. The stands around campus, and especially in the SAC, are going to be used for distributing, and the senators are also supposed to pick packs to distribute at their departments. Distributing it electronically, via email, does not seem to be a good idea, as people’s inboxes are already cluttered. It will be available online, though, from the GSO webpage. But first it has to be distributed in paper, for students to know its existence.

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