

GSO Senate – Minutes – November 21, 2006

The meeting begins with 15 Senators and 5 Executives

The Speaker announces that an Emergency session of the GSO Senate has been called in accordance with the GSO Constitution. We will be discussing the situation with the University Café.

1. Lounge Committee Report

- a. Luigi Longobardi, Chair of the committee, presents the Motion that was passed in committee last week. The Motion states that the GSO will withdraw all funding from the University Café (UC) effective the last day of November due to severe financial losses. He also presents financial figures illustrating the loss as compared with the losses that the café incurred last year.
- b. *Sen. Pagano (Marine Science)* asks why the line for personnel expenses is so high.
- c. Luigi replies that management turnover is the main reason for this.
- d. *Sen. Bonsra (Pharmacology)* asks about the inconsistency of the labor costs.
- e. Luigi replies that the differences are accounted by the daytime supervisor salary plus benefits. We must also take into consideration student labor.
- f. Daniel Rosen (WUSB) states that he is concerned about outstanding contracts between the Café and WUSB.
- g. GSO will honor the contract with WUSB, replied Luigi, but any recurrent costs by UC will be covered by whomever takes over.
- h. *Sen. Colmenares-Angelo (Materials Science)* raises concerns about the rumored Starbucks that is expected to open in the Student Union. Students do not want it to take the place of UC.
- i. The President says that UC will be picked up another organization, not Starbucks.
- j. Ron Willa (FSA) says there are indeed plans to put a Starbucks in the Union, but it is conjecture to say that it is going to be in the space where the UC is. Lawrence Martin wants UC to stay. The question is, who is it going to be? Maybe Chartwells. Maybe a local pub. Rob doesn't believe Starbucks is going to take that space.
- k. *Justin Hall (Anatomical Sciences)* asks about the fluctuation in food costs.
- l. *Miranda Moore (Economics)* replies, it correlates with demand and with sales. This depends on the time of the year (semester).
- m. *Sen. Colmenares-Angelo (Materials Science)* says he discussed the prospect of closing down the café and students were concerned about there being a place for international students to go on weekends.
- n. Luigi says, that is exactly why we started the UC. But we cannot keep it open. It would be financially irresponsible.

- o. *Sen. Moore (Economics)* adds that people say they want it for the weekends, but when you talk to the management about how many people go on the weekends, they say no one goes.
- p. *Sen. Walls (Ecology & Evolution)* asks, what if we just opened as a bar? It would cost less?
- q. Luigi replies that it would and we discussed it in the committee, but we've been caught late with the problem and we've already run out of money. It is too late.
- r. *Sen. Brown (Ecology & Evolution)* asks why the costs cannot be lowered.
- s. Luigi says that on this campus there is only one provider for goods and we have to work with that.
- t. *Sen. Brown (Ecology & Evolution)* replies that if it was less expensive, people would go. I could go buy beer and drink it in my house and it's cheaper.
- u. *Sen. Moore (Economics)* replies, Chartwells holds our liquor license. We can't lower the cost. They charge us fees for insurance and management. This adds to costs. That costs about 10% of the price. Also we have to buy all these other things that you don't have to buy. Pay employees, etc. we cannot subsidize the sale of alcohol on campus according to university alcohol policy.
- v. President adds that we cannot have happy hours, as this is also prohibited by the university alcohol policy.
- w. *Sen. Bonsra (Pharmacology)* interjects, we're missing the point. The GSO isn't funding the UC—that is it. But it should be managed by someone else. The café is being underutilized.
- x. People ask how much of the loss is due to food? What if we had only sold alcohol? How much would we lose then?
- y. Ron Willa replies that it would cost about 30k a year for just evening service.
- z. *Sen. Christidi (Physics)* asks when the personnel charges blew up.
- aa. Luigi replies that this happened in October.
- bb. *Sen. Christidi (Physics)* asks what expenses we can trim before we get rid of the café.
- cc. Luigi replies that the question is, what can we do before we go into the red?
- dd. *Sen. Colmenares-Angelo (Materials Science)* asks, are we voting on whether or not we take money out of UC?
- ee. *Sen. Moore (Economics)* replies, no, the Lounge Committee already decided to do that and now the Lounge Committee is informing the Senate of that action. We are reporting because it is a serious and major action and we have to report it to the Senate floor.
- ff. *Sen. Colmenares-Angelo (Materials Science)* replies that he understood and said, There is nothing we can do. We should at least make sure that whoever takes this place does what graduate students want.
- gg. Luigi says, it looks like it is going in that direction

- hh. The President says we want to continue this service to better graduate student services and continue to be a bar.
- ii. Daniel Rosen says WUSB would like to sponsor a Save the Café Concert Series if it could help.
- jj. Luigi says we'll talk about it in committee, we cannot respond now.
- kk. *Sen. Christidi (Physics)* asks, what are the alternatives? Can we use the surplus to keep it afloat? Can we do a Save the Café concert series?
- ll. The Treasurer advises against it.
- mm. The President says that this would be throwing graduate student money away.
- nn. *Sen. Christidi (Physics)* says we still have another month to change things. To throw a Save the Café event. To try.
- oo. Luigi asks, what if the administration takes it? Would you be against it?
- pp. *Sen. Christidi (Physics)* replies, yes, because I want UC to be graduate student owned.
- qq. The President says that he doesn't think a month will change much. What is the benefit to the campus community? Is it worth it to keep it open for limited services and lose graduate student money?
- rr. The Treasurer reminds us to keep in mind that high level officials, as Ron Willa said, like the UC and want to keep it open as it is.
- ss. *Sen. Moore (Economics)* says, what you are saying is that you value the café at this high of a price. Others are saying yes, we have strong feelings, but we cannot afford this. We can use this money to invest in better services like the tax clinic and other places.
- tt. *Sen. Bonsra (Pharmacology)* concurs. She continues, A lot of people are getting very emotional. Why don't we channel that energy into helping the café. We can funnel business there and have influence over whoever runs it by bringing the business in. it would be almost selfish to keep going even if we have good intent. We have to take the chance to loose it because it isn't happening for us.
- uu. *Sen. Woulfin (History)* adds that whenever we have increased the subsidy, it was in April or May, not November! We would just be prolonging the death. We've already been cutting things little by little. It still isn't working. This is about trying to provide the services we already provide, without losing all the money. Take into account all the transaction costs that FSA adds, it is actually much worse than this. They will have to answer to us as customers. We answer to undergrads and admin, but we are the ones subsidizing. Why can't someone else do it? The culture is different now. Last year it was great. Now people have a beer and go somewhere else.
- vv. Lugi adds that this has been aggravated by the fact that Godfrey owned all the equipment and now he is gone.
- ww. *Sen. Moore (Economics)* says, if we keep it, we would have to make a major investment in audio equipment and we aren't ready to do that.
- xx. Victor Rosado says, if we give it to the administration, then we don't have access to that space anymore.

- yy. Luigi says we are reporting what is happening with the café to Lawrence Martin. He has asked if we still want to be involved in running of the café.
- zz. The Secretary says we can change the mission of the Lounge Committee to be an advisory board to communicate concerns that graduate students have about the café to the new management.
- aaa. Ron Willa adds, I don't think the administration will turn a deaf ear. Surely the GSO will lose some control, but you'll have a lot of say in how the café is run in the future..
- bbb. Victor Rosado replies, as long as we get whatever we want in writing from the vendor, then it is fine. Get it in writing. Especially from corporate vendors
- ccc. People ask, when is the turnover happening? And what if the university decides not to open it again?
- ddd. The President says, there will be a bar on campus. Martin is on the case. I believe there will be no long gap. Fridays at five is popular for many administrators. It is too valuable a service for them to not have it.
- eee. Ron Willa says, I can try to make a report about it at the next meeting. I don't think people are going to wait too long. It is not going to be 6 months.
- fff. The President says, It will probably be next semester, February or March.
- ggg. People ask, who will run the café?
- hhh. Ron Willa replies, I don't think it is possible to say who will run it at the next meeting
 - iii. Victor Rosado says that advertising for the café is terrible. Chartwells have torn down our flyers in the past. Godfrey has also.
 - jjj. The President says that it is weird that Chartwells would do that. It is a problem for advertising alcohol, but not for events. It's possible that it was illegal for Chartwells to do that.
- kkk. Victor Rosado continues, and the next entity that runs it won't be able to make money if this continues.
- lll. The President says that the new entity will have an incentive to make money.
- mmm. The Vice-President says that it is strange that it is not making money. There is no incentive. If I gave the license to any one of you, you would make a profit in a month. But because of the unique situation, we can't do that.
- nnn. The Speaker says we can put the money elsewhere and leave the job of running the café to someone else.

Sen. Woulfin (History) makes a Motion to adjourn. *Sen. Bersamin (SPD)* Seconded the Motion. The Motion passed by unanimous consent.