

April 14, 2010
Elections Committee Minutes

Members Present: D.Selterman, M.Engel, J.Colmenares, E.Jones, J.Fishstein, C.Salussolia, Q.Yan, D.Peter

Meeting called to order at 4:22pm by Dylan

Agenda Approved

1. Elect New Chair
2. Discuss Material Presented to Senate from when Jose was Temporary Chair
3. Vote to hold elections date/time
4. Discuss publicity and candidates
5. RCC Recommendations
6. New Business

1. Elect New Chair

Dylan calls for nominations for New Chair

Matt nominates Jessica. Jessica accepts and with no other nominations, Jessica assumes the duties of Chair of the Elections Committee.

Jessica moves on to the next order of business. She asks Jose to tell the committee to explain what happened at the first Elections Committee meeting when he was serving as temporary chair.

2. Discuss Material Presented to Senate When Jose was Temporary Chair

Jose Comerases was appointed Elections Chair after Matthew Engel resigned following the March 2, 2010 GSO meeting because Matt intended to run as a candidate. At that time, since both Matthew and Joseph Ortiz (former Elections Committee member) resigned there were only three members on the committee: Jose (Temporary Chair), Eboni Jones, and Burak Derkunt (He has been MIA). Jose contacted the remaining members of the Elections Committee via email regarding the election dates and proposed changes to the ballot. Voting was conducted via email. It should be noted that at this time, the Elections Committee did have quorum with regards to the first meeting that discussed the election date and the candidates whose eligibility was in question (i.e. Matthew and Joseph). However, with regards to the second meeting, since Burak did not actively participate in the email exchange, quorum was technically not achieved. It was during this second meeting that the addition of the disclosure information for this upcoming election was discussed. The Constitution in Article VII.B.D states that the Elections Committee be comprised of the Secretary who serves as chair and at least three other GSO Members. In addition, Section B also states that the membership and structural rules are detailed in the GSO Standing Committee Bylaws. Consultation of the Standing Committee Bylaws Article III Section A1 states that you need 3 members including the chair for the meeting to be official. Regardless, Jose sent two

emails to the remaining committee members regarding the issues mentioned above.

The first email discussed the dates and time in which voting should proceed. It was decided that voting should begin on April 26, 2010 at 8am and end on April 30, 2010 at 6pm. Additionally, they discussed whether Matthew and Joseph should be able to run for executive committee positions since they both resigned after the March meeting and the bylaws clearly state in Article 1 Section 1D *“No member of the Elections Committee (including the Chair) may run as a candidate for office if they have not resigned by the March GSO meeting.”* Both Joseph and Matthew resigned on March 4th, two days after the March GSO meeting. Matthew was told he could not run and decided on his own accord that regardless of the Elections committee’s decision he would not run. Matthew received a resignation email from Joseph on March 4th, but this is after he had verbally resigned from the committee to Vice President Angel. Three options were proffered by Jose to the committee: 1) to ban both Matthew and Joseph from running 2) allow both Joseph and Matthew to run or 3) allow the Senate to vote. Eboni and Barrack voted to let the Senate vote. Jose did not need to vote since both had voted yes and there was not a tie.

The second email was to discuss the upcoming election regarding an organization that is not run by graduate students trying to influence the election. It was suggested that the Elections Committee put a stop to this by requiring that for the Spring 2010 election that the candidates have to disclose the 1) number of semesters served as a GSO Senator/executive/Committee member 2) financial disclosure of organizations or institutions who have provided any payments related to any university activities. These requirements were taken from SUNY Binghamton’s bylaws. Jose called for a vote on these requirements via email. Eboni voted yes to disclose the suggested information for this upcoming election. Burak abstained by not responding to the email and Jose voted yes to break the tie.

Following Matthew’s decision not to run for an executive committee position, he resumed his duties as the Chair of the Elections Committee. At the April GSO meeting, Matthew presented to the Senate the outcome of the Elections’ Committee discussion from the email meetings when Jose was the temporary chair. Matthew expressed his reservations about the disclosure information at the April Senate meeting (although the exact wording is unknown since neither the minutes nor audio transcripts are not available at this time). The Senate motioned to remove the disclosure information from the elections this Spring. It was tied (e.g. 15 yes, 15 no, 2 abstentions- I made up those numbers as an example) and thus the motion fails and the disclosure information remains on the ballot and required for this election. In that same April GSO meeting the Senate did pass that this information be included in all elections going forward starting with the Spring 2011 Elections and that we amend the bylaws to include this.

That brings us to today’s debate which rehashed much of what is described above. Matthew said that we could not include the disclosure information requirement because it was not a valid meeting in which the Elections Committee

approved the addition of the ballot information for the upcoming election. Jose's argument was that we can't overrule it and revote because it already went in front of the Senate where they voted not to remove it. A reading of the Elections bylaws ensued with specific emphasis on Article 1 Section 6. Ballots. **Article I. Elections Committee Bylaws and Elections Procedures Section 6. Ballots**

The ballot should consist of the following:

- A. The statement: "Please read the statements from the candidates and vote for one person for each position, or write the name of a current graduate student. Also, read the description of the referenda, and select one of the two positions. Thank you for your participation in this important manner."
- B. Any referenda or constitutional amendments to be voted upon.
- C. The list of candidates for office.
- D. A space for a write-in candidate for each office. A write-in candidate for GSO office must be a member of the GSO.
- E. Statements of the candidates must be limited to 200 words, and must not refer to any other running candidate.

Matthew's interpretation was that only the things explicitly listed in Section 6 can be on the ballot. It was the opinion of Catherine and Dylan that nowhere did it say that the information included on the ballot is limited to these 6 things (Section 6. A-F). And there is nothing in the Elections Committee Bylaws that forbids the Elections Committee from making additions to the ballot. Section 6. Ballots states only the minimum requirements. In reading the bylaws it was noted that all information that is to be included on the ballot must be submitted to the Dept. of Instructional Technology by 5 business days prior to the start of voting. That means that all documentation must be received by the IT Dept. by Monday, April 19, 2010.

We begin more discussion whether changing the requirements (i.e. adding the disclosure information) for the upcoming election in two weeks is valid. Matthew says he has no problem including a conflict of interest, but doing so for this election is invalid. Matthew says that in order to change the ballot one needs to change the Election Bylaws which requires approval by at least 75% of the Senators in the GSO Senate (Article VII.A.a-Amendments and Referenda). This is not true, this refers to changes to the Constitution, not to Elections Committee Bylaws. We took a short recess to find the exact language of the proposed changes suggested by the Committee when Jose was chair. Upon resuming, the language was discussed and a straw poll was conducted: 5 yes; 1 no; 1 abstain (Jessica did not need to vote). Thus, the straw poll was in support of including 1) number of semesters spent as Gso senator/executive/committee member and 2) organizations or institutions who have provided any payments related to university activities.

Catherine motions to reaffirm the Senate's decision not to strike the disclosure information and to interpret their decision as that they wanted to include the disclosure information for the Spring 2010 election. Motion was seconded by Jose. Vote called by Jessica. 6 yes; 1 no; 0 abstain. Motion passes and the disclosure information will be included in the upcoming election.

Next we moved on to whether Joseph Ortiz should be allowed to run for office. From Monday's unofficial meeting (it was noted that all Standing Committee meetings must be announced to the GSO since they are open to all GSO meetings) we reviewed the facts. Matthew presented that Joseph had stated previously that he resigned to Angel verbally a few months ago, but did not resign in writing to Matthew until March 4th, 2 days after the March GSO meeting. The email he sent said "Consider this my resignation" thus it was believed by some that Joe was only resigning after the meeting since there is no hard evidence that he did so prior except the word of himself and Angel. By the Senate not voting to allow or not allow Joseph to run, they put the onus back on the Elections committee. Regardless of the Elections Committee's decision, Joseph has the right to appeal the decision. A motion was made by Catherine to bring Angel and Joseph into our next meeting on Monday, April 19 at 5pm in the GSO Office to discuss their point-of-views regarding the resignation. The motion was seconded by Dylan. Call to vote by Jessica. 3 yes; 3 no; 0 abstain. Chair breaks the vote. Jessica states that since there was no evidence that Joseph resigned since it was a verbal resignation, that we should bring in Joseph and/or Angel and ask them directly about the verbal resignation. Also, regardless of whether they can attend, the Elections Committee MUST make a decision regarding Joe's candidacy on Monday since all information must be to IT by Wednesday. Additionally Jessica was going to have all information ready to go by Monday so that she can just add Joe or remove his statement and submit the ballot to IT. Jose and Matthew were going to email her all the information regarding the Spring 2010 elections. Matthew stated that he will not be able to attend the meeting on Monday, but he would like to vote on the issue of Joseph's candidacy by phone.

3. Publicity of Election

Continue with the publicity as decided at Monday's unofficial meeting. This includes: email senate list serve, email dept coordinators, print posters, create facebook event- this has been done. Anyone can invite other people to join but only the members of the Elections Committee shall be Administrators. Also, the wall shall stay disabled because we don't have the manpower to monitor the wall. Candidate bios will not be placed on Facebook until Monday's vote regarding Joe's eligibility. Post bios on the GSO webpage, advertise mandatory SAF on website, and include all information regarding the upcoming election in the GSO Weekly Newsletter.

We did not need to discuss the dates/time because they were fine and accepted as is.

4. RCC Recommendations

Suggestions Regarding the Elections Committee Bylaws

- During the September GSO meeting, when Committees are being filled, an announcement shall be made by the Executive Committee to the Senate that any member of the Elections Committee cannot run for office on the EC unless they resign by the March GSO meeting in writing to BOTH the Chair of the Committee and the Vice Preseident of GSO. If you

do not resign to both people listed above, the resignation is not valid. The second proposal was that the Elections Committee should hold a mandatory meeting in February to discuss the upcoming election.

General recommendations to change the Constitution Regarding Committee Membership.

- It was proposed that “After the first GSO Senate meeting of the academic year, GSO members who wish to join a GSO standing committee must contact the chair directly.” However Dylan pointed out that the President must nominate candidates and the Senate must confirm them, however, in the Senate’s place, the Executive Committee can approve nominations to committees. Just as a point of reference, this is how Catherine, Jessica, Qinghong and Dinesh were approved to serve on Elections Committee. They were approved by the EC on Monday, April 11, 2010. Thus Dylan recommends that upon confirmation by the Senate or EC, the Vice President must contact the chair of the committee directly. The second proposal was “GSO committee members who wish to resign from a GSO standing committee must contact the Committee Chair and Vice President of GSO directly and submit their resignation in writing (e.g. via email).

5. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Motion to adjourn at 5:56pm by Dylan. Seconded by Catherine. Unanimous consent. Meeting Closed.