

# COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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## SCHOOL OF GENERAL STUDIES GENERAL STUDIES STUDENT COUNCIL

Present: Arash, Josh, Richie, Pavan, Chris, Matan, Abigail, Marguerite, Rob, Scott, Justin, Tinishia, Stephen, Ariel, Claudia and Jimmy.

Absent: Abby.

A quorum is established.

### **Updates (via e-mail)**

Arash Yomtobian (President) –

Josh Joseph (Vice President External) –

Richie Space (Vice President Internal) – Following a healthy and robust debate on Sunday evening, a consensus was reached on all debated Constitutional items. The President will update the GSSC on Tuesday.

Pavan Surapaneni (Treasurer) –.

Matan Ariel (Senate) – A) Student Caucus:

1) The Student Caucus is going back to the issue of TA/RA unionization. Background info: 2 years ago the graduate students had a vote on the issue of creating a union to negotiate the contracts of graduate students that also teach and do research. The university appealed to a federal union body, and the votes have never been counted. The students are now signing other graduate students on cards of support, in order to demonstrate the will of the majority. The caucus might be a form for them to pass these cards to the administration.

2) The caucus discussed its role in the current response to offensive language, publications and acts committed by students. Since the Senate is a legislative body, we are not looking for ways to judge groups, but to create open discussion and reduce tension.

B) Full Senate:

1) The Manhattanville project continues to progress. The administration is going to present more concrete plans to the various community boards.

2) President Bollinger talked about the recent racial tension. The recent events have injured our community. President Bollinger has had meetings with the group of concerned students (even before the Fed cartoon) and he considers these meetings very productive. They suggested several ideas, and the administration will try to answer them by Monday, March 1. He is not going to punish any of the student groups; the remarks/cartoon were offensive, but are still an allowed form of speech at the university. There already is an advisory committee on free-speech that was established after last year's De Genova incident. It was suggested at the Senate that the Senate Rules Committee be activated to discuss free-speech vs. hate-speech.

3) The Senate did not have enough members to vote on issues that require 3/5 majority (this has been going on for several meetings).

4) A Senator from the Italian department "took over" the floor and started discussing what he calls the lies of the administration on Casa Italiana. It wasn't sure what action he wants the

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Senate do take, but he gave out some information that will be checked on the legal owner of Casa Italiana.

C) Housing Proposal: The GS Housing Proposal was sent to an e-mail vote among committee members. If it gets passed, it would still have to be accepted by the Senate Exec. Committee and the full Senate. The Spec might be running a story about the proposal in the Friday issue.

Marguerite Daniels (Social Chair) – GS Formal Update - Our website is up and running. Chris designed it, and he

rocks! If you want to take a look at it, here is the link:

<http://www.zigos.com/GSFormal/>.

Though we've sold 142 tickets, ticket sales have been slow this weekend We hope to entice GSers to buy this week through persuasive emails. Oh - and to the members of student council who have not purchased their tickets - I KNOW WHO YOU ARE! Buy tickets!

Social Chair Update - Great turn out for the Billiards and Games event.

Thanks Rob and Abbey for helping it come together so well! Special thanks to Matan and Justin who moved and stored the left over beverages.) We have a midterm break in the GS Lounge with the Stressbusters (AKA massaging wonders) scheduled for Wednesday, March 10th 12 PM - 2 PM.

Abigail (E.) Becker (Academic Affairs Representative) – No updates.

Claudia Barrera (Alumni Affairs & Career Center Representative) - \*Last Thursday, Feb 26. the LITERARY NIGHT WITH CARMEN BOULLOSA went well, we had an OK turn out of people (approx. 35 counting non-Columbia students)

\*Last Friday, Feb. 27. we had the 1st part of the career workshop. 14 people signed up.

\*This coming Wednesday, March 3, we'll be having: Jobs, Graduate School—What are My Alternatives? at the CCE from 5:00pm to 6:00pm CCE Conference Room - East Campus Lower Level

Ariel (K.) Beery (Committee on Instruction Representative) – In answer to questions brought up in last-week's council,

1. The minimum number of credits before which each additional credit is free, 17, was calculated through statistical surveys of the Columbia population, and is therefore nondebatable.

2. Ever since the creation of the School of Continuing education, GS has lost its ability to create new programs for the service of GS students, such as the Writing Department in the past. Presently, each academic program

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needs a departmental home, which GS cannot provide. Therefore, GS cannot initiate new GS-specific academic programs.

Scott Olster (Student Services Representative) –

Chris Danzig (Senior Class President) –

Rob Ward (Junior Class President) – Last week, cosponsored and helped with Marguerite's game room event.

Organizing a brunch for this Sunday (3/7).

Stephen Davis (Sophomore Class President) –

Abbey Dubin (First-Year Class President) –

Tinishia Bass (CCSC Liaison) – no update.

Won Lee (ESC Liaison) -

Justin White (SGA Liaison) –SGA voted to approve the Harlem Wizards allocation after some heated debate. They attached a provision stating that all future joint-council events should be discussed and workshopped in advance instead of having a final form of an event thrown at them with a "take it or leave it" attitude.

Jimmy C. Chiu (SGB Liaison) –

Arash: Rescheduled Town Hall for Tuesday after Spring-break. Some of you wanted Town Hall to be a Town Forum, however we think that this should be a regular thing, and we are soliciting student feedback. There will be no meeting that Tuesday as we will be in the GS Lounge.

### **Constitution:**

Arash: A number of us met for the Constitution and it was very productive. A finalized version of the constitution will be produced shortly.

Matan: First of all, about succession and President being in GS for a year it needs to be stated that in order to run, you can only run if you do that. In order to prevent this paradox, it has to state that person running for the election, has to have the minimum requirements.

Justin: I think we should do as much as we can to avoid the e-board to be a clique. I think that should be the motive so in my opinion not all the e-board should have the minimum requirements.

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Josh: Something I actually just thought about, I do not know if this is feasible, not to plunge in huge debate. During one or two heated discussions, we had a smaller than average number of people present at meetings. By removing themselves then it obstructs.

Stephen: You can leave, but quorum is still established with the amount of people that originally showed up at the meeting.

Matan: Can we see a final document before we pass it. It can be an online version as well.

Arash: Why don't we do it online. We will send it out in the next couple of days.

Stephen: Can we send it out to the GSSC for final approval? I don't think it hurts us.

Ariel: As elected representatives of the student body, we represent their vote of approval on this document.

Dominic: At this point when it is a final draft it is going to take even longer to get it passed and it will be counter-productive. People will be arguing minutia.

Stephen: O.K. I see your point.

Matan: I would like to suggest that the changes apply immediately.

Arash: Everything would take place for the next coming academic year.

Dominic: You need to amend you current election bylaws to meet the new requirements.

Arash: O.k. so then the debate is closed, we will vote online.

### **Agenda Item-Columbia Statement-Ariel**

Ariel: I made some of the changes we made last week, with new reports and articles that Saudi Arabia has barred Jews from the Country, taking money could be problematic. I would like to know what people think. The law is a self upholding law. Institutions are a self-holding law with no rules of action if law broken. People could sue the institution under that law, but the Fed government doesn't comment.

Abigail: Are these tax laws? What does this law require Columbia to report?

Ariel: It requires that when foreign governments donate money to University's it must be reported

Matan: I would ask that we get a reply from legal office before we do it.

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Stephen: I was also going to ask about speaking to anyone. I am worried of accusing the University of breaking the law. Ariel: We are by 170 days.

Pavan: I have a few questions? Has the University acknowledged that they broke the law?

Ariel: In the article the University didn't report this one, as well as other ones. When they didn't report it was already ½ a year after deadline. Federal officials are looking at what can be done. The fear is this, if the University doesn't tell, it will close up all info. This shouldn't have to do with our ethics.

Pavan: Did they mention who made the statement?

Ariel: Made by spokesperson of the University.

Pavan: I think the first two paragraphs represent this. I agree with most of this stuff, but there are 20-30 countries that I do not agree with. Every time this comes out there is a government that we could condemn. It will set a bad precedent.

Ariel: If it was declared it wouldn't be a problem, it becomes a problem when it is covered up. If the donation was made by a just a self-made business man, then it is perfectly fine. If money is going to increase public relations for a despotic regime, then I have an issue with it.

Pavan: I do not feel comfortable. We are dictating policy of University. I do not think that last two are main issues.

Scott: A lot of the stuff in the third and 4<sup>th</sup> paragraphs, I am almost peripherally aware, about.

Ariel: I can send you more articles.

Scott: Did the NY Sun, quote officials? How do we know it is true?

Ariel: If this was an editorial I would have the same questions. This is not an editorial.

Scott: The third and 4<sup>th</sup> paragraphs I do not believe should be used. Additionally I do not feel comfortable speaking for all GS students on this matter given our diverse community.

Josh: Basically I am in line with what I said last week, besides that I sympathize with most of what was said last week; we would get picked apart by most. One is the source, footnoting the law and quotation from the actual law; I think that we as representative do have serious interest. We don't want donations like this affecting us as students.

Ariel: So I will take out 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.

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Chris: I will do my best not to be redundant, what I see is two parts which we have gone over, law breaking and the ramifications of it. What we are dealing with is on global scale. What is our role as a council? Some inherent controversy involved in all statements, all though both pitching righteous notions. The goal is to sift through what is controversial; and take the minimum of what is acceptable. Which law was broken? We can generalize as to cause and effect without citing specific goals. We should generalize as much as possible.

Abigail: I think it is hard to say anything about the origins from Saudi Arabia, we cannot say because we don't know. We need to make it less controversial, since we don't know it makes it hard to say anything.

Rob: You are obviously getting a lot of attention, if you cut out 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, it makes a statement.

Matan: We should include a footnote as an index any article from the Sun.

Ariel: 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph can go then what about the 4<sup>th</sup>?

Matan: 2<sup>nd</sup> we accept students from Saudi Arabia, we do not deny enrollment.

Justin: I say cut the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>. In case any one feels adamantly about 4<sup>th</sup>, I think it is a mistake to include a specific country. You just make issue controversial.

Dominic: The idea of quoting the law is a good idea. Use official names.

Arash: Bring it back next week and we will discuss it again.

### **Agenda Item-Anti-Discrimination Statement- Tinishia and Justin**

Marguerite: I believe that the type of discrimination the GS faces is only on campus and I do not think it is exactly the same sort of issue; I just think two different statements. It makes us look like the only reason we support this is so that we can jump on the bandwagon.

Ariel: Same Fed same article that repeated attacks on Jews. By changing the wording on GS it could be acceptable. As students from many different backgrounds we understand and feel the pain. We need to clarify.

Claudia: I do not think we should include our (GSSC) name on it. I disagree with it and don't feel we should include it.

Stephen: As far as the GS portion I do not want to appeal to the bandwagon. Instead of coming out and accusing of ageism and elitism, I think we should avid citing specific forms of discrimination.

Matan: I am not sure, I think we should only put the date of the 27<sup>th</sup> if it was passed that day, if not is should be the date of when it is accepted.

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Justin: Ok, so first of all we both actually discussed the part about GS, certainly valid concerns, someone used opportunistic, didn't want someone to think we were co-opting cause. This is about discrimination of all forms on campus, not only racism. That's why ageism and elitism are relevant to this statement. I do not agree with the discrimination in all its form part because this is more than race and we should include and open more the issue. I think that this goes in to what I wanted to touch on. We are advocates of the student body; it is absolutely our responsibility to address it. It addresses what has gone on recently.

Pavan: If we could rework the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph and make sure that the current dialogue is expanded upon, segue way to it. My only concern is then the message in the third paragraph is buried.

Ariel then that would be the compromise.

Marguerite: A second statement would be imperative regarding our stance. If the language [of the current letter focuses on our institutional discrimination and incorporates the language of our personal discrimination we face as people of color, different religions, backgrounds, etc.], then it is easy to tie into.

Ariel: I feel event has come and gone, it would have more impact when written. We need to respond to President Bollinger. A longer more intense statement needs to be made.

Matan: I think the statement as is, with few changes should be voted on tonight, instead of waiting for another week, do not want it to happen, If we need to have vote to have GS in statement. 2 or 3 leave, rewrite then come back. We are missing out.

Ariel: I think that originally compromise that we as GS students know what it is like to be discriminated in and out of letter.

Tinishia: Everyone said so many good things that I lost my point, I want to stop sugar coating stuff. We know some of our students are marginalized. This is movement this is not going to be over. Students will still address concerns, not just race, sexuality, age etc. Everything is included with that. The Town Forum, we just walked out of a meeting and happened to catch a forum. The Council there, was speaking with someone, look we do represent the Council and we are pushing a statement out. I feel I am excluded from things. Can relate to two CC girls when these African American girls stated that "I feel as if I shouldn't be here and I may have better grades than everyone else". I agree with what Ariel said.

Dominic: If second document, talking about GS left out of things, then a 4<sup>th</sup> way to work it in. If we are doing 2<sup>nd</sup> statement we could talk about statement also run copy past Dean Awn. In addition we feel that GS needs representation on these councils.

Ariel, Justin, Marguerite and Tinishia, please address. Three individuals leave room to re-write statement.

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## **Agenda Item-University Senate and Student Councils-B School-Matan**

Presents a proposal that will be fantastic and is sponsored by all four of the undergrad councils. Many people will come to discuss options, there will be food, drinks, mingle, network, knowledge about B-school.

Stephen-How much is B-School giving?

Matan: BS will give the extra if needed. ESC is giving less because the speakers coming are more geared to liberal arts students and not to engineering.

Pavan-I think there are other opportunities for funding, that have not been picked up. If ESC only gave 200.00 we should be giving less. My calculation states that we should give 130.00.

Matan-I would just like to say, that this is an event organized by the Councils, it is us organizing for our students.

Chris Motions to 150  
Claudia Seconds 10 in favor  
0 Against.  
2 Abstentions  
Motion Passes.

Matan: The only person that has gotten back tome about the GSSC guide is Tinishia, so please get back to me.

Justin: Rereads letter.

Ariel: Would like to see anti-Semitism added specifically to the letter. Vote taken  
4 in favor of the addition  
7 opposed  
1 abstention

Matan: Move to adopt letter in its current form.  
Justin seconds 11 in favor  
1 Against  
0 Abstentions.

**Meeting Adjourned**