Student Senate Regular Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 19, 2010

1. Roll Call at 9:15 p.m.

2. Officer's Reports.
   a. President.
      i. Welcomed back everyone. Handed out the schedule conflict sheet and said that
         the Senate was planning to host Dean Schizer and Moroni in future meetings this
         semester.
      ii. Said that Grad Committee was trying to launch a JD/LLM program for bonding.
          Asked people who had a camera and acting skills to contact Elisa.
      iii. Said that Shana was working on formulating a Post-Exam Feedback report to
           present to the faculty.
      iv. Said that Senate Constituencies emails were going out soon, after the formulation
          of a greeting template.
   b. VP.
      i. Previewed various upcoming events: Barristers, Ice Skating, March Madness,
         Superbowl, Open and Notorious, various other social events.
      ii. Khalil is doing his Valentine's Day Quiz again.
      iii. Aditi and Lauren are putting together a club night for Valentine's weekend.
      iv. Working on a 5k Fun Run, Assassins, Ballroom Dancing!
   c. Treasurer.
      i. Said that Budget Committee liaisons should be contacting their groups, making
         sure that their forms are in by Wednesday, January 27th at 5 PM.
   d. Secretary.
      i. Talked about upcoming community service events. Relay for Life on April 17,
         Community Service Day on March 27th, and Blood Drive tentatively planned for
         April.
   e. Parliamentarian.
      i. Said that he will be sending out an email to the recognition committee soon about
         the process for new groups.

3. Committee Reports.
   a. Graduation.
      i. Meredith spoke about the schedule for this upcoming semester. First event is the
         Around the World event on the 28th. Looking for people who want to put together
         booths representing their home countries. Harlem Globetrotters game, Atlantic City
         trip, Grad Bowl, other events.
   b. Housing.
      i. Ron said he was meeting with Student Services on Thursday to discuss any
         events over break.
   c. IT.
      i. New wiki content and working on a Student Services link to all current student
         groups.
   d. Faculty Committees.
      i. Public Interest.
         i. Jean said the main issues of discussion were summer funding and
            continuing the LRAP program. Said that guaranteed summer funding was great,
            but trying to look into increasing the amount, but not optimistic because of the
economy. Have been exceeding the amount budgeted for because of the economy and unexpected student demand, but was recognized as a valuable asset for students.

2. Trying to do summer fellowships again this year for graduates who still haven't found employment. Tentatively trying to provide $20-25k.

3. Trying to identify curriculum gaps and bring in guest speakers.

4. Dean Schizer gave a presentation on the federal government's new program for graduate school graduates who go into public interest, similar to our LRAP program. Looking into whether both programs could be combined and work together.

5. Pro Bono Hours for 1Ls. Faculty would have to vote to change the rule so that 1Ls could get credit. Professors wanted to limit to second semester of 1L year so 1Ls would focus on academics, but was still up for debate.

4. Haiti Resolution.
   a. Ben introduced the resolution. Described the disaster in Haiti. Came up with the resolution for students to show support and donate to humanitarian relief efforts. The funding would come from a 3% cut in the Student Activities Fund. Since that original proposal was distributed last week, the sponsors have received a number of comments and concerns. They incorporated many of these into a second, revised resolution that will be discussed later tonight.
   b. Worried about the impact to current student groups. The "voluntariness" of such a contribution. Also, the fact that it may not be proper to spend SAF monies on humanitarian groups (as a technical matter).
   c. Second, revised resolution changes the funding source, transforming Barrister's Ball into a charity event. Given the extremely popular attendance last year, thought it would be good to use that excess demand to contributing the increase in price to Haiti funds. Recipient was changed from the American Red Cross to the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund.
   d. Q&A phase.
      i. Mike Anderson asked whether there was precedent to channel student funding for humanitarian relief. Ben said there was no strong precedent; the Senate did respond to Katrina by funding a Spring Break caravan for about $6000. Gradman said there was a general clause that we could spend money for the "broader community," according to the Senate Constitution.
      ii. Jean asked about the potential for slippery slope, if some other big disaster happens next year. Ben said that he hoped something this big wouldn't be a common occurrence, but doesn't know what would happen in the future. LDP said that never before has an entire country has been devastated to this extent.
      iii. Nona pointed out an article talking about transparency problems with the Red Cross, but also questioned where the money, if given to the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund, would exactly go. Ben said that the money would be utilized at the organization’s discretion, and believed that such a reputable organization would make sure the money was spent wisely. Ben said the change of recipient was made in response to particular concerns about the Red Cross.
      iv. Ryan brought up the slippery slope concern again, asking why exactly we were getting involved in this particular disaster. LDP said the issue was not so much what had been done in the past or in the future. Said this was one disaster that was catastrophic and where the Senate could make a significant impact.
      v. Mia asked why not Partners in Health or other organizations, and why this particular fund was chosen. Ben said he was open to hear about other various organizations, the main point of the resolution was to contribute. LDP said they picked
this organization because it was generally least controversial, not really political and specifically set up for this disaster. We could be sure our contribution would be applied to a specific purpose: disaster relief in Haiti.

vi. Soo asked whether there were other alternatives, such as a fundraising event, given the constitutional concerns. Ben said they did explore those alternatives and reached out to a few organization, but didn't receive many responses, though it has been a short time. Had originally envisioned a direct contribution or making a previously existing event a charity event.

vii. Yael said there was a meeting tomorrow night to discuss the Columbia community’s response.

viii. Kathleen Hunker asked since the Senate could donate money to a fund, whether student groups could do the same. LDP said that student groups have strict guidelines on what money they can spend money on, and those kinds of direct donations would be subject to review by the budget committee. But the Budget Committee has previously encouraged groups to hold fundraising events, similar to the second, revised resolution for discussion tonight.

e. Motion to extend Q&A by 5 min by Jae and seconded by Austin.

i. Jae asked how much money was expected to be raised by Barrister's Ball for the Haiti fund. Ben said, going by last year's number, and if the event was held in Lerner Hall again, capacity was 750 people (though 775 tickets were sold). Would probably sell out Lerner again, even if raising ticket prices by $5 or 10. The amended resolution calls for a $10 increase, saying that $6500 would be returned to the social committee (as a reimbursement for our immediate $6500 contribution) and any excess could be donated later for disaster relief in Haiti, at the Senate’s discretion.

ii. Chris asked about whether holding a fundraising immediately would be better than waiting until the money from Barrister's would come in months later. LDP said that charitable contributions meant a lot right now, and would probably have a bigger impact and was considered. But there were also a desire to hold a big, successful event so that the maximum amount of funds could be raised. McCormick said a fundraising event to raise $6500 would need to be very big and would require a big expenditure by the Social Committee. Adding this charitable purpose to an already budgeted and planned event would help boost the chances of raising more money.

f. Jess extended Q&A by 3 min.

i. Lenny asked if we were going to raise the price of Barrister's tickets anyway (given the great demand last year) and whether those proceeds go back to the Senate. McCormick said that the event is usually revenue negative, and no surplusage in a typical event. Said that firm decisions haven't been made about Barrister's, but would probably increase ticket prices this year. Gillian said that ticket sales constitute a small amount of revenue to help pay for the event, most of it comes from the budget from the SAF.

ii. Kathleen asked if there was any consideration given to the option of asking for a suggested donation at the door instead of a flat ticket price increase. McCormick liked the creative idea, but was worried about having that much cash on hand, but would further consider the idea. Ben said there was a need for certainty when forecasting in the future for budget purposes, and a larger amount would send a bigger message and make a bigger impact.

iii. Ron asked why the original amendment was changed from $3000 to $6500. Ben said that the sponsors realized that more money could be raised from a charitable event. Additionally, $6500 is almost exactly $4 per CLS student.

g. Debate phase (5 min).
i. Mike looked into the Senate constitution, looking at Article 7, section 3, which had general provisions. Had a constitutional concern, but liked the fundraiser idea. Said that this would be great precedent for other groups to hold fundraisers. So opposed the first resolution but supported the second, revised version.

ii. Gillian concurred with the sentiment, said that as Treasurer, she didn't feel it was appropriate to take funds out of the SAF (which was set up for student events and groups) to give as direct donations.

iii. Mia said that dollar per student breakdown was helpful by putting it into perspective, raising an additional $2–4 per student.

iv. Art said he liked that idea, could raise a lot of money by appealing to students to just give some additional dollars.

v. Jae said it was equally against the constitution to raise Barrister's Ball ticket prices, especially since the Senate has a monopoly on the event. Didn't think that alternative was better than taking money out of the SAF, since it would force people to buy more expensive tickets even if they don't want to donate. Expressed doubt that the $2–4 figure wouldn't be too persuasive.

vi. Lenny agreed with Jae, strive for the highest level of voluntariness. Don't want to coerce people and alienate students who want to contribute anyway.

vii. Jess extended debate by 10 min.

viii. Lisa said that both proposals were unconstitutional, the Senate could only extend funds for student groups and events, not one of the Senate's purposes to donate to humanitarian relief. Supported voluntary donations, and that people were underestimating the generosity of law students.

ix. LDP said that he no longer really supported the first resolution, but still supported the second resolution. Said that Barrister's was going to be thrown anyway, and it would great to make it a charitable event.

x. Ben moved the second, revised proposal. He noted that the revision made the following changes to the original proposal: (1) having Barrister's becoming the proposed funding mechanism, as a charity event. So changing the nature of the funding source from direct appropriation to charity event, (2) raising the amount to $6500, and (3) changing the recipient to the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund. Though he supported this revised proposal, Ben said he would deem it unfriendly, to allow full debate for those who supported the original resolution, or no resolution at all.

1. Q&A on that motion.

a. Eric asked why Barrister’s versus a separate funding event that could be done just for Haiti. McCormick said that it was Barrister's was a fantastic opportunity to raise a lot of money, the structure is already in place, to hold a separate big event would require a big expenditure. A bigger risk of not getting as much money if a separate event was held.

b. Nona asked what the distinction was between a direct carve-out by the SAF vs. taking the money from Barrister's. Ben said that the instead of reducing the subsidy, would keep it constant and capture the excess from the increased price to be donated to the fund. McCormick said that we were having Barrister's regardless, and not so much an extra charge on tickets, but change the purpose of Barrister's to charity.

c. Vasily asked why we were limiting ourselves to internal funding, could sell advertisements in programs or posters, or invite VIP guests to donate money as well. Ben said that this was in line with the proposal and would be great if even more money was raised.

d. Ron asked what the proposed amendment was. Ben outlined the three changes already elaborated (change amount, fund recipient, and
mechanism). Ben said the money could be paid now and repaid later from the event, which would be fine since interest wasn’t generated on our Senate account anyway. That is, the opportunity cost of paying now and reimbursing later is de minimis.

e. Meredith asked LDP how making Barrister’s a charity event would be more cost effective than to have a whole new event. LDP noted there were lots of start up costs to hold a new event, to publicize, etc. Said it would save us money in the long run, since we have already budgeted expenses for the event and already planned for it.

2. Debate phase.

a. Mia said this was well thought out, supporting previously existing events. Argued against dipping into the SAF and could instead have a donation box at Open & Notorious events, or other things.

b. Erik cited coercive concerns, didn’t want a direct tax, or increase in price, but suggest maybe a wristband or some special recognition for the extra donation.

c. Nick said all the emails sent out to the student body have been just discussing the SAF, and people have not supported that, though there seemed to be much more support for the Barrister’s idea.

d. Gradman said that coercion concerns weren’t really right, was within the right of the Senate to choose whether to spend money on pizza vs. charity.

e. Meredith disagreed, said that students gave the money to Senate expecting the money to go towards student events and groups instead of being donated to charity. Supported the Barrister’s idea more than the SAF one.

f. Ravi supported the Barrister’s idea, said that people could still drink and have a great night while giving money to charity. Pointed to last year’s excess demand.

g. Kathleen said that she liked the initiative of the resolution, but said that she personally thought that the proposal held the Senate to a different standard than regular student groups, because, although groups could hold fundraising events with SAF funds, they could not contribute allocated SAF monies directly to charity.

h. Yael asked why this amendment was not being put forth before the student body, and a poll conducted. It was responded that two emails were sent to the student body soliciting feedback by three avenues: (1) email, (2) anonymous comment at clssenate.org and (3) in-person at tonight’s meeting.

i. McCormick made the point that the price of Barrister’s tickets would not be increased by the proposal, since the price was going to be raised this year anyway.

j. Soo asked whether the issue could be put to the student body to come up with various ideas to raise money, wondered if the resolution could phrase it like that instead of specifically picking Barrister’s and a specific amount.

3. LDP made a motion to call the question. Motion passed.

4. Motion to accept the amendment. 40 in favor out of 42 present.

xi. Ben then moved a Motion to Postpone further consideration of the resolution until the Senate’s next meeting. He noted that other, Haiti-related events might be in the works within the larger Columbia community. Ben noted that the purpose of this
motion was to enable a conversation about whether we should wait to commit funds until there was more information about other possible relief efforts within Columbia that the Senate might fund, or whether we should proceed with the revised resolution that would make a charitable contribution to an outside humanitarian organization. Ben stressed that we may or may not have additional information in two weeks’ time.

1. Q&A (5 min).
   a. Nona asked that if we passed this resolution tonight, the money would be donated tonight, and if there are constitutional problems with taking the money out of SAF, in effect. Ben – last year’s Parliamentarian – opined that it was within the Senate's constitutional authority, and also said there was an overwhelming urgency and need for immediate donation, which would have a bigger impact. Gradman – this year’s Parliamentarian – thought it was fair to have constitutional concerns, but thought it was constitutional, even if there were procedural concerns.
   b. Njoya asked whether it was imperative to get the money from the SAF now or whether we could wait until after Barrister's. Ben gave the same response to the previous question, we could make more of an impact if we acted sooner rather than later.
   c. Art asked whether there was problem in using SAF money to support student groups in their fundraising events, set aside a certain amount instead. Later, we could use the money from Barrister's ball to still make the $6500 donation. LDP said that he was happy to support those groups, but to set aside a concrete amount and give them extra money would end up costing the Senate more instead of just making an existing event have a charitable purpose. Art said his main point was to give the money when we had it and not taken it out of SAF.
   d. Motion to move into debate.

2. Debate.
   a. Meredith said that it would be better to use SAF money to fund student activities, would be in favor of postponing the decision to find out what kind of student activities are being planned.
   b. Jean said that if we were going to donate money, we should donate to organization that can actually help. Donating to Spring Break caravans wouldn't help, since law students can't do as much months from now as workers on the ground right now.
   c. LDP agreed with Jean, supporting giving money to organizations that could best use it.
   d. Art agreed with Jean and LDP. But he said that there were still a lot of students that were interested in putting on events to fundraise, and SAF money should go to the purpose.
   e. Soo agreed with Art, and said that it wasn't the purpose of the Senate to donate to these funds.
   f. Mia asked whether it was possible to vote on whether the money goes to an internal or external fund and also about the timing of the contribution. Jess said the timing issue would be resolved later.
   g. Ron said he would make an amendment, but Jess noted that we were not in debate on the amendment itself, just on the motion to postpone and to save his proposal until later.
   h. Lisa said that it was better to wait until student groups formulate their plans and events, so it would be better to postpone.
   i. Motion to call the question. Passed.
3. Vote to postpone the resolution and table the discussion. Did not pass.
   11 in favor, 27 against, 42 present.

xii. LDP made a motion to amend to wait until we had the funds after Barrister's instead of donating the money now. Accepted by Ben as a friendly amendment.

xiii. Back to Debate (10 min).

1. Mia said that she couldn’t see why Barrister's tickets couldn’t be $35 and offer a checkbox to allow students to say they want their ticket to be donated to Haiti. Thought it would solve a lot of voluntariness concerns. McCormick said that the resolution itself was a good idea, and shouldn't get too bogged down on the actual numbers.

2. Eric said that he disagreed that this was the cheapest way to raise the money. Suggested a bar event, charging a cover fee to raise money would be preferable. Said there was concern that Barrister's already costs a lot of money, and donations should be voluntary. Said there were other great causes besides Haiti.

3. Erik said that students were entitled to a big event like the ball that they paid for by giving money through their SAF, and it would be bad to commandeer this kind of event for a charitable purpose without everyone's consent.

4. James said that there would be no non-controversial option, and this was probably the best one. Said that the $10 increase was not a huge increase.

5. Mike said he liked Mia's idea of a checkbox. Also said that ground-up fundraisers usually end up losing money. Said that no one is coerced into going to Barrister's Ball, which also operates at a net loss.

6. Kathleen said that having a mandatory price increase might discourage students from giving more money, analogized to the mandatory 18% tip at restaurants.

7. Jae said a lot of points were being repeated, thought that Mia's point was great.

8. McCormick asked whether Mia could elaborate on the checkbox option. Mia said that the overwhelming concern was voluntariness. Conflicting information about whether the tickets would be increased from $25 to $35, or just having it set at $35. Said that this proposal would still allow for people to donate their ticket to Haiti funds, making it more voluntary. Could make it go the other way and make it opt-out, students could check the box if they didn't want the money to go to charity.

9. LDP made a motion to amend to implement the opt-out system. The default will be to give to Haiti, but if you check the box or fulfill some procedure, the money will not be given to charity. Ben asked where the money would go, if it didn't go to Haiti. Mia said she envisioned it going back to the Social Committee. Gillian confirmed this.

10. Ben asked whether this would complicate McCormick's life in running Barrister's. McCormick said it would work but would have to work it out. LDP said that he could plan for all the money to go to Haiti and use any surplus to pay back the Social Committee. Ben said that this amendment was unfriendly then.
   a. Q&A phase.
      i. Eric asked about where the extra money (not going to charity) would go. LDP said it would go back to Social, since it was a set subsidy for Barrister's.
      ii. Nick asked whether the money that people choose to go to Haiti would go to Barrister's and if not, whether there was money
in the SAF to make up for that. McCormick said that no, there wasn't extra additional money.

iii. Lisa asked how the student body would be informed about this opt-out procedure, worried about this becoming fine print. LDP said that the President shall publish this information to the student body. Also, will inform students when Barrister's tickets are being sold. LDP said he wanted to be as open and clear about the process as possible.

b. Debate phase.

i. McCormick said that he thought this resolution was capable of being executed.

ii. Ron said the general idea was good, and to make clear to the student body that Barrister's usually operates at a loss, and the surplus would be going to pay this down and not just disappear if it didn't go Haiti.

iii. Lisa said that there should be an effort to not chastise students into making donations, concerns about coercion.

iv. Khalil said that he was concerned about the numbers. Said that Social was thinking about holding the event at another venue (than Lerner's), but might not be feasible now.

v. Shana that this procedure might create an illusion of voluntariness, choosing between giving to Haiti or Social. Said she supposed it being a charity event.

vi. Nona said that we should decide whether Barrister's should be a fundraising event or not, and would like to have it in the future as well, even for other causes.

vii. Ben noted this could begin a tradition of using Barrister's as a charitable event, similar to how many professional organizations format their large social functions.

c. Vote on the amendment. 15 in favor, 25 against, 44 present.

Opt-out proposed amendment fails, back to the original $10 increase Barrister's ticket amendment.

xiv. Eric made a motion to table to poll the student body. No second.

xv. Motion to call the question on voting on the resolution itself. Passed.

xvi. Vote on the amended resolution, making the time of donation after Barrister's was held (instead of immediately) and donating the amount raised ($10 times the number of tickets sold).

xvii. Vote. 28 in favor, 12 against, 44 present.

5. New Business.

a. No new business.

6. Announcements.

a. Elisa asked for an actor to help with the JD/LLM program.

7. Adjournment at 11:34 p.m.