Student Senate General Meeting Minutes
January 27, 2009

I. Attendance: 43 present, 41 voting

II. Officer Reports
   a. President’s Report
      i. Reflection on the events of last December and concern about e-board communication. There were some positive results.
         • See later agenda item when there will be time for informal discussion about e-board communication, and how Senators want the Senate to operate.
      ii. Positive progress with administrative communication
         • See Dean Schizer’s email “Some Thoughts”
         • Town Hall meeting tomorrow
            a. Encourage students to attend
            b. There will be time for question-answer
      iii. SJP/CPIL
         • February 24 possible meeting visit from Ellen Chapnick
         • Domestic Programs and Pro bono
      iv. Students will be involved in the hiring of a new career services dean
      v. Grading policy update
         • Grading changes are still under consideration, different student groups being consulted.
         • Involvement by student members of the advisory committee
         • If interested in giving feedback, contact Max
      vi. Stapler/Computer lab changes
         • Current proposal: remove three computers from the computer lab to provide room for an electric stapler.
         • Max walked through the change today with Garrett Bergen of Building Services.
         • Quality of current staplers will be improved
         • Feedback
            a. Moving three computers seems unnecessary given that the room is already crowded and computers are often broken.
            b. Opposition to the change. Electric staplers break as well and the computers are in high demand.
            c. Can laptops plug into the system so they don’t have to email stuff to themselves?
               i. Probably not
            d. You can already print to the printers from the network so it’s pointless to make room for laptops
            e. There should be more AC plugins.
            f. There should be a manual plugin for computers so that people can print from their own computers.
               i. Another senator looked into this, it’s technologically difficult. Students are encouraged to bring their computers to IT and they’ll set up the ability to print to the network computers.
               ii. Some versions of Microsoft are finicky about network printer setup.
      • General objection to the change expressed.
      • Informal vote: Broad support for removing one computer to put in an electric stapler (25+ votes). Fewer votes for removing two computers (5-). No one thinks three computers should be moved.
      • There is a three hole bunch in the corner of the computer lab.
      • Agenda will include Spring 2009 student group budget approvals
• Possible visit from Dean Moroni about budget cutbacks and their impact on the law school.
  a. Student expresses interest in having Dean Moroni address financial aid
  b. Desire will be relayed to the dean.

b. Vice President’s Report
  i. Superbowl Party 5:30 this Sunday in Lenfest.
     • Trying to get a projection screen
     • Dinosaur BBQ will be served.
  ii. Social committee meeting after the general meeting to discuss Barrister’s Ball plan.
  iii. Barrister’s Ball March 7.
     • Will try to advertise on the big screens in the law school.

c. Secretary’s Report
  i. Community Action committee meeting in the next two weeks
     • Call for ideas
     • Clothing drive ongoing, keep donating

d. Treasurer’s Report
  i. Budget requests submitted

e. Parliamentarian’s Report
  i. Koleinu re-recognized.
  ii. Two other groups will be voted on later in the meeting.

III. Committee Reports
a. Graduation Committee
  i. Underground Keg program ongoing.
     • Went above ground temporarily last week. From here on out the location will be printed in the Black Letter.
     • East Village bar night
     • Chelsea Piers fun night
     • Brooklyn Bridge Night
  iii. Around the World party
     • For 3Ls and LLMs, stations in the basement of Big Warren with regional food and drink.
     • 3Ls and LLMs should encourage one another to attend.
  iv. Sweet Treats Date Night Auction
     • JD09 and LLMs will be auctioned off
     • The whole school will be invited
  v. Senior Superlatives awarded in March (“Most likely to be run out of office” etc.)
  vi. Graduate Awards
     • Non-academic awards for graduating students who have influenced the law school in a positive way.
  vii. Atlantic City trip in March
  viii. Field day with Social Committee and Intra Vivos in April
     • Grad-Bowl: LLM vs. 3L flag football game, played by women, coached by men
  ix. Goodbye Morningside Heights bar crawl
  x. Grad Ball at Capitale
    • There will be gift bags to encourage attendance, which will out-price the price of tickets
  xi. Valentine’s Karaoke night will follow the Sweet Treats Date Night

b. Newsletter Committee
  i. First issue out next week

c. IT Committee – nothing to report

d. Housing committee
  i. Online rent payment system shot down. Under NY law, people need to pay by check.
  ii. Housing Committee has been working to get individual housing problems fixed
  iii. Is it credit cards or electronic checks which are the problem?
• You can pay with electronic checks. Credit cards are the problem.

iv. Is remeasuring of apartments to reassess rent ongoing?
  • Chair of committee will look into it.

e. Advisory Committee
  i. Kathrin and Ben met with Professor Persily and had a general discussion. He’s the point person on the grade reform.
    • The issues are numerous.
    • Possibility of upper year students having a credit/fail option.
      a. Professors may be able to opt in or out
      b. Lots of details to be worked out
    • Open to discussions about stress in the law school. The advisory committee will continue to explore this issue.

IV. Recognition
  a. Three groups this semester, one was automatically re-recognized (Koleinu)
  b. Golf Club
    i. Mission statement read
    ii. Requisite number of members, they drafted a constitution, and currently there is no golf club
    iii. Unanimous recognition committee approval.
  iv. Question & Answer Period
    • Does the committee recommend approval?
      a. Yes.
    • What are the reasons for recognizing the group?
      a. The recognition committee is limited to a finite number of considerations under the bylaws. The Golf Club has met these requirements and beyond this, the committee has little discretion to recommend against recognition.
    • Are there constitutional guidelines on what factors the entire Senate can consider?
      a. The Constitution doesn’t specify anything on point.

  v. Debate
    • Concern about overabundance of groups and the hamper it puts on budget flexibility. We should reconsider funding priorities. Expression of reluctance to recognize.
    • Counterpoint: Groups should be approved on their merits, regardless of how many groups are currently recognized.
    • A golf club could facilitate people’s enjoyment, particularly since we’re in NY and people don’t know where to go.
    • Strong disagreement from one senator that the current number of groups can’t be considered in the recognition of new groups. When there are a lot of groups we should be more vigilant about recognition because they’re a drain on financial and administrative resources.
    • Golf does fill a niche and may attract a number of students.
    • Golf Club is not that different from a softball club or a yoga club (both recognized student groups)
    • Perhaps there could be review of continuing groups because some that apply for funding are practically defunct.

  vi. Vote
    • 42-0-1

c. Mentoring Youth through Legal Education (formerly “Legal Outreach Students Association”)
  i. Purpose of the group as presented in the Constitution
    • Affiliated with Legal Outreach Inc. based in NY
    • Education goals for underserved students in NY. Law students provide them with legal skills.
  ii. Issues that came up with the committee:
    • Number of groups in the law school
      a. Every group is automatically entitled to a certain amount of core funding.
Activities of this organization overlap somewhat with that of HSLI and Harlem Tutorial Project.

The organization does have access to substantial outside funding

iii. Presentation by group organizer, Laura Swanson

MYLE currently has 40 students involved but it’s not recognized. Each individual is assigned to 1-2 high school students in grade 8-12.

a. Each student does 4 debates a year, mentor meets with them once before each Constitutional Law debate
b. Upperclassmen can get pro-bono credit. Currently a larger provider of pro-bono credit to CLS students.

MYLE is distinctive from other programs because law students get to work with high school students and each student has a mentor at a law firm.

a. Gives CLS students an opportunity to network with law firms.
b. A CLS student can potentially form a 3-year long relationship with a student.

The group wants recognition because there’s no money available for CLS students to meet with high school students, aside from when there are law firm events. Particularly crucial at the beginning of the year when they’re trying to encourage participation.

iv. Question & Answer

Question about overlap with Harlem Tutorial Project and HSLI. Clarification about what HSLI does. High school students tutored in classes, then they debate against high school students trained by NYU law students.

a. Different focus - mock trial versus debate.
b. Difference between teaching a classroom of students v. one-on-one tutoring

What will the group send money on?

a. Debates are held at the law school, but there are no funds to have a reception with

Can you be a club without recognition?

a. Membership has to be open to all CLS students once you’re recognized.

v. Debate

It’s good to have community outreach groups. Pro bono work is important.

There are reasons why groups want recognition beyond money, i.e. email address, soliciting students, etc.

Groups like this need money if they’re going to attract students.

All these groups have to go through Budget Committee before funds are approved.

It’s hard to reserve space if you’re not a recognized group.

Overlap with HSLI

a. The group is distinct but what it offers other community members is not distinct because CLS students have ample opportunities to be a teacher for underprivileged kids through other programs.
b. HTP and HSLI have both had to struggle enormously to get funding.
c. The student activity fee should be used to benefit law school students, arguably but recognizing MYLE will compromise opportunities for funding.
d. The group already functions well as a non-recognized group and is a large provider of pro-bono credit so the overlap is not outweighed by the benefits.

Funding for tutoring students is very difficult. By having three similar groups, all three may lose their funding.

Columbia students should do everything that builds community support.

Funding requests of the group are limited

The groups don’t seem to be cannibalizing each other in terms of members so they should all be recognized.

The administration should fund these programs more broadly

vi. Vote

Call for consent, no objections, MYLE recognized.
E-Board Communication Discussion

a. Rules suspended to allow for more informal discussion
b. President: Recognizes that there were some difficulties at the end of last year, but the e-board hopes to be responsive and receptive to maximize the Senate’s effectiveness.
c. Call for dialogue:
   i. Preference expressed that committee chairs be more flexible with time options for committee meetings.
      • The Senate used to meet every week. Now we meet every other week. The idea is that committees will meet during off-weeks.
   ii. The Senate should be briefed when the e-board meets with the administration about what the administration says. The e-board should inform people even when they can’t detail the specifics.
   iii. Appreciation for the extraordinary job the e-board is doing and the time they commit because a lot of time goes into every decision and email.
   iv. Objection to having meetings when there isn’t deliberative business (Jason Lear)
      • Observation that most comments at the meeting have been made by the same individuals
      • Objection that more isn’t conducted through email because the e-board assumes the senate doesn’t read its emails.
         a. The e-board never made or expressed this assumption that people don’t read their Senate emails.
      • Senators signed up for this commitment. Committee reports are important as information dissemination, especially given the senate-wide interest in transparency.
      • Meeting face-to-face is important, but the Senate could explore a more robust role for Basecamp.
         a. Coffee example. The conversation was much more civil on Basecamp than the in-session meeting was last year.
      • Basecamp is intended to be a tool for the Senate but keep in mind that Senate deliberations are intended to be open to the entire school – minutes are posted, students are encouraged to attend meetings. It’s unfair to the student body for substantive discussions to occur on Basecamp which is an exclusive forum
      • Objection to debates that go nowhere and debates about debates because there’s the perception that meetings are to no real end. No one’s really listening to announcements. Communications could easily be made online or to the whole school.
      • Meetings should be as efficient as possible.
      • Senators are supposed to be representative of the student body.
      • People can have pet issues on the Senate and that’s part of what’s good about it.
      • Tension between a demand for more transparency and aversion to long meetings and announcements, generally.
v. Call for ideas on how to address more substantive issues. The executive board sees its role as important to executing the ideas of the Senate. The e-board needs to know what the body actually wants done.
   • Suggestion that this can all be done on Basecamp.
   • Solicitation on Basecamp hasn’t always been positive
      a. Example: the stapler
      b. People have problems with participating on Basecamp. It’s not an internal communication.
         i. Internal communication aren’t necessary for a lot of issues that the senate addresses.
         ii. It’s hard to discern tone from Basecamp.
vi. Can meetings be held earlier in the day?
   • Tuesdays at 8:30 is the earliest possible time.
• The goal of establishing Senate as a zero credit course goes towards trying to set up earlier meetings times.

vii. Suggestion that Basecamp should replace meetings.

viii. Perhaps there should be no laptops during the meetings.

ix. Suggestion that committee reports be included in the agenda.

VI. New Business
   a. Parliamentarian delivers a clarification about the purpose of “New Business” agenda item
   b. Jason Lear: suggests that there should be a resolution eliminating the requirement of mandatory meetings.
      i. The Constitution currently requires the Senate to meet twice a week.
      ii. Procedurally, a constitutional revision, requires another special meeting and the submission of specific language.
   c. Dan Shin: Suggestion for an overhaul of the Legal Practice Workshop.
      i. Could take resolution form at first.
      ii. Requires some brainstorming first
   d. Brittany Schoepf: Fridge
      i. Request to include this as an agenda item to discuss the steps that have been taken towards acquiring a fridge thus far

VII. Announcements

VIII. Adjourn, 10:20 p.m.