CLS Student Senate Meeting

Minutes

Monday, February 25, 2008 9:10 P.M.

I. Roll Call

II. Officer Reports
   a. President
      i. Met with Dean MGK and Marta Ricardo last week. We were told there is money available for travel to national events. Speak to Marta about this if interested. Please spread the word if students ask you. We also spoke about upgrades to school facilities, including:
         1. JG Annex – over spring break will change décor and during the summer will change lighting.
         2. JG 304 – will add drapes and paint the walls
         3. Individual mail folders to return during the summer
      ii. We are meeting this Wednesday to cover other agenda items that we did not finish last week
      iii. Tope attended provost advisory council meeting dealing with Manhattanville:
         1. They are on Phase I of construction, hoping to break down by the end of this year. There is a 5-6 year outlook for opening the buildings there.
         2. Columbia has an agreement with the local development corporation, an entity that is responsible for negotiating benefits on behalf of the community.
         3. Eminent domain issues have arisen; 3 landowners refuse to sell, they are not residential buildings. Eminent domain is necessary for building underground
         4. Athletic facilities
a. University is mainly planning to expand Baker Field, uptown to relieve pressures on Dodge facilities, rather than in Manhattanville.

iv. Last meeting, E-Board was asked to e-mail the student body regarding the gym closure. But Tope researched the issue and found that only the Levien basketball court will be closed, which does not warrant an e-mail to the student body.

v. Diversity task force met today and plans to have more concrete output by next Senate meeting.

vi. In terms of the faculty appointments task force we are still gathering information and will be moving forward shortly.

b. VP

i. Legal Practice Workshop focus group met a few weeks ago and its report has been completed.
   1. It is posted on the Senate website, go check it out!

ii. Barrister’s ticket sales are going well only a few tickets left! Get yours today!

iii. Social committee: please stay after full Senate meeting for a quick session.

c. Treasurer

i. Max met with GSAS and SIPA folks about forming an inter-school graduate event.

ii. Two ad hoc requests approved since last meeting.
   1. IMPACT/CJAN event -- $200
   2. FedSoc/ACS Quizzo event -- $500

iii. Pending ad hoc request that we will consider tonight.

iv. Max is cautiously optimistic in terms of the budget.

d. Secretary

i. Columbia Community Outreach – March 29

ii. Relay for Life cancer fundraiser, will check with committee to see if it is something we can do – April 12
iii. Food Drive – donations/tabling
   1. Speak to Gabe if you can help out!

iv. Clothing drive

v. Other minor projects currently being investigated by committee members

e. Parliamentarian
   i. One recognition request is coming up later in the agenda
   ii. Send in whatever outlines you have to Elliott Ash
   iii. Call for volunteers for this semester’s outline review team (we read each outline at least once before it is posted)
      1. Jennifer
      2. Francesco
      3. Jia

III. Committee Reports
a. Graduation
   i. Grad committee having graduation event this Thursday at Harlem Lanes. Please encourage all 3L’s/LLM’s/JSD’s to come!
   ii. Grad ball tickets going on sale TOMORROW and the committee will be tabling next week
      1. Buying tickets early will save you $25!
   iii. Grad committee had focus group regarding grad ball, culminating in the proposal before the Senate tonight
   iv. 3L’s and LLM’s met regarding the class speaker election. Nominations due March 4th.
   v. Mandatory 3L meeting is tomorrow during lunch in JG 104

b. Housing
   i. Lenfest café soda fountain will return
   ii. Coffee kiosk if approved will be set up downstairs on the first floor
   iii. Credit card payments may be available but still looking

c. IT

d. University Senate
i. On Friday, from 11-1 here in the law school will be a university-wide hearing on housing

e. Faculty Committees

i. Curriculum committee met today and discussed the following:

1. Committee wants to be more responsive to perceived “gaps” in the curriculum. They would like to hold a town hall meeting.

2. Committee wants to evaluate Legal Practice Workshop. Should more adjuncts continue to teach this course?

3. Committee looking into the first year elective program

   a. If you have views on the program speak to Devora Whitman

4. Enhancing course evaluations – evaluations are at an all time low in terms of volume

   a. Ideas to remedy this include putting a hold on grades until courses have been evaluated

IV. Student Recognition Request

a. Duke University Alumni Society is the group that seeks recognition

b. The committee recommend not to approve the group because of slippery slope considerations. Also, we are in NYC and every major university has an alumni group already.

c. The bylaws say that every organization must “enhance the life” of the community in some way

d. Q&A -- none

e. Debate

   i. Motion to call to question passes

   ii. The recognition request fails 39-2

V. Ad Hoc Request

a. Max’s introduction
i. This is a request by Law Students for Life for a speaker event, the topic being Exposing Coercion: Pregnant Women Stand Up, and the group is seeking $1,000. This would cover the speaker fee.

b. Student Group rep: Mojoyin Onijala
   i. This is an event that is first of its kind and would benefit students with families and those considering whether or not to have a family. This group has faced difficulty in raising funds because they are new and student senate should give them money for this event.

c. Q&A
   i. Where will the event be held?
      1. At the law school
   
   ii. Do speakers coming for other organizations receive honoraria from the law school, or from other sources?
      1. We have only seen a few requests for honoraria, and none have been funded by the Senate to Max’s knowledge. This is more of an informal rule/practice than a formal budgetary guideline.
      2. Jason: Fed Soc, which brings in many high-profile speakers and receives funding from its national organization does not receive any such funding for honoraria
   
   iii. Has the group spoken to the people hosting the event to see if they can fund more of it?
      1. All of the event’s materials are being provided by Columbia Health Services, but that is it
   
   iv. How many people in the law school would be able to attend and expected to attend?
      1. Targets are families and people who are pregnant. But it is hard to predict how many people will attend because such an event has never been held on the campus.
   
   v. Please clarify how the program is structured
1. This is a conference/forum, involving scheduled moderators for a series of panels. The moderators need to be flown in but the speakers on the panels will be Columbia health professionals. The national president of Feminists for Life is also speaking at the forum.

vi. What legal aspects will be addressed at the conference?
   1. Compliance with NY state laws primarily

vii. Where does the fee go?
   1. It goes to the speaker, and for materials for the forum.

viii. What was the discount?
   1. The original price was $5,000.

ix. Why is there need for this forum?
   1. Many Columbia students felt that what they were being told by Columbia health services was inadequate, especially concerning day care, the adoption laws, childcare options, etc.

d. Debate
   i. Paying for an honorarium is bad precedent, and especially one this hefty. This is not a critique on the event’s merits.
   
   ii. All groups could get better speakers than normal if we paid honoraria. But they do a great job as is and it’s beyond our role to provide honoraria.

   iii. Senator who served on budget committee for two years thinks that it has been a firm committee and senate policy not to fund honoraria. In addition this is not a legally-focused event.

   iv. This seems like a good event but there must be cheaper ways to hold the same event.

   1. They have tried to have this happen for years using only NYC people, unsuccessfully. Think about all the law students with children, or who are thinking about having children, and the particular challenges they face. We need
to know whether Columbia is complying with the laws in this area. The views of the group do not fit within any particular political party or religious group.

e. A motion is proposed to fund $250 for refreshments for the event. But the amendment is not friendly (group is not friendly to it) so it is not to be entertained.

f. Voting on the request: the ad hoc request fails 9-33-4

VI. Grad Ball Low Income Subsidy Resolution

a. Sponsors are Adam, Devora, Shawndra and Devora

b. Adam Sparks’ intro
   i. The idea is to subsidize grad ball for some students who will be earning much less than others, seeing as grad ball is the chance for all students to get together one last time
   ii. Last year there were concerns about the administrability of the measure. It can be pegged to the LRAP levels of students for ease, though.
   iii. Since the grad budget has already been set and we do not want to go into the red like we did last year, this measure would draw on the surplus in the Senate general fund

c. Q&A
   i. How much money is in the general fund right now?
      1. $5,591.99
   ii. Do we have an estimate as to how much the subsidy would cost?
      1. Yes, around 45 students will be clerking, and non-clerking public interest students are another 15. 60 total. Their guests will not be covered by the resolution.
   iii. Describe the general fund, etc.
      1. We have almost $20K unallocated as of today, but much of this is in the form of funds reserved for ad hoc funding or in the form of a buffer
iv. Do clerks who will get large law firm bonuses qualify under this resolution?

v. Likely attendance of the 60 students?
   1. Last year out of around 700 3L’s and LLM’s around 350 attended. So this year we are looking at 30 who would be covered under this resolution. But, not everyone who attended was a graduating student.

vi. Is the price of grad ball a deterrent to attendance?
   1. The sponsors believe so.

d. Debate
   i. There is strong sentiment that this is an important measure. This grew out of an earlier discussion with student services.
   ii. It is absurd that students paying $60K+ to go to CLS need a $100 subsidy to attend grad ball
   iii. A large part of the budgetary burden stemming from last year’s grad ball is falling on this year’s graduating class. If you take away one more thing you will create more resentment.
   iv. A friendly amendment is proposed, and hence incorporated, which will be placed at the very end of the resolution, and would have the effect of trying to get funding for this initiative from the development office, dean’s discretionary fund, and student services.
   v. David Peters suggests raising the price of tickets for all firm-bound 3L’s, to cover the price of the public interest folks.
   vi. But nobody wants to spend $100 for this event as it is. It can add up to $500 per couple with clothing purchases. Many firm-bound people do not attend as a result; it is not just public interest folks who are not attending. To increase attendance we should lower the prices for everyone.
vii. Maybe the attendance numbers suggest this is not the “one big unifying event” that the sponsors think it is. Also the fact that this is an entertainment event explains the numbers.

viii. In past years there have been 600-700 people and so last year’s numbers were the lowest in recent memory. It has the potential to be the unifying event that is envisioned by this resolution.

ix. We can afford this because of how fiscally conservative we have been all year.

x. SAF monies should not be used to subsidize one segment of the CLS population. If people wanted to help out public interest-bound classmates, more of them would donate to PILF.

xi. One Senator proposes asking the student services for help in funding grad ball.

1. Response: Student Services does not have the funds and the Graduation Co-Chairs who asked alumni development are still waiting for an answer. The effort has been made.

xii. The administration funds part of the graduation gown costs as does the student senate. That is part of where our SAF goes.

xiii. The student senate already subsidizes grad ball to a large extent. If we want to give a public interest subsidy the event should have been cheaper, or ticket prices should have been higher. This implies poor planning. This should have been done up front and not now.

1. Response: $14K is all that has been subsidized

xiv. Goodwill is needed in the Senate and people’s contributions ought not be minimized. Ad hominem attacks will not be tolerated.

xv. This is an honest resolution that does what it says it does. Every expenditure of funds can be considered a subsidy, but this really is, and it is a commendable one. The diligence the sponsors have shown in bringing us this far ensures they will seek the funds from another source than Senate if the resolution is passed.
e. Vote on the amended resolution: passes 29-10-7

VII. Room Reservations Resolution

a. Mojoyin’s introduction
   i. Student senators have spoken to student services about the lack of policy regarding reserving rooms for student groups
   ii. Some students believe this will lead to more problems
   iii. This resolution seeks to address these concerns

b. Q&A
   i. What efforts have the sponsors made to speak to the administration?
      1. Multiple students attended the meeting, at which the administration initially indicated said it was not amenable to changing the new policy, but then showed signs that it would welcome guidance from Senate on a policy that would best serve the student body. The point is that there needs to be some moderation of who needs rooms. Also, the administration spoke to the E-board about this issue last week.
   ii. If the concern before was abuse, how does this resolution protect against abuse?
      1. This would be run on an honor system. The abuse was not lying. There is no reason to assume this would occur now.

c. Debate
   i. This is a good system given our constraints.
   ii. Amendment proposed to resolution: takes four hours out, inserts two hours, and exempts lobby of JG hall and L107 in Warren
      1. Amendment is seconded. Adam’s introduction of it: this amendment helps fight the potential for abuse that would be present under the original resolution.
2. Motion to table the amendment passes, so we are tabling this amendment and resuming debate on the original resolution

iii. There is feeling that four hours is too long of a block. Perhaps 2.5 or 3 would be an appropriate maximum.

iv. A few concerns Senators have are that the time blocks are too long, and that these study groups will preclude student organizations from meeting.

v. Anything less than four hours is laughable. Being realistic, first year law students have four classes so if they have one hour per class, which requires a minimum of four.

vi. This is meant to be an ongoing and evolving process that can be revisited next fall.

d. Motion to remove the amendment from the table passes, so we will have Q&A and then debate on the amendment, divided into two parts

i. Q&A on the first portion of the amendment

ii. Debate

1. Some senators think that having a weekly cap on hours spent in reserved study group rooms is more important than a daily cap

2. Having a four-hour block would make student services’ life easier

3. The honor system is about how students pick resources.

4. The point is that there are three basic problems, and asks the administration to meet us halfway on each of them

e. Voting on the amendment: the amendment that would change the time block from four to two hours fails

f. Second part of the amendment would make JG lobby rooms and WJWH L107 off limits for room reservations

i. Adam’s intro: the large lecture halls should not be locked down by a small study group. This is purely to best utilize our space.
ii. Q&A on the amendment
   1. How will these rooms play out in terms of student use?
      a. A designation of quiet or talking rooms would help on this point.

iii. Debate on the amendment
   1. The amendment is admirable, but people generally have no problem sharing the rooms now.
   2. Motion to amend the amendment such that the rooms in question be designated either quite or talking rooms by student services, subject to reservations by student organizations
   3. Vote on this amendment: the amendment passes

g. New amendment would add a fifth point to the proposal, only allowing student groups to reserve a room up to two weeks in advance, and would ask that CLS staff post the reservation schedules at the applicable rooms, and would ask that Student Services inform the student body about how to view and make room reservations
   i. Debate on this amendment
      1. This makes it harder for student services to adopt the policy wholesale
      2. This amendment is a wise one and a rush will occur two weeks prior or at the beginning of the semester, and the amendment should be approved
      3. In terms of a rush of people reserving rooms, this is unlikely, as it is a few people who have abused the system and reserved rooms to the exclusion of others
      4. The policy of SS used to be that everyone, including student groups, could only reserve rooms two weeks in advance. It would not be a burden on them.
   ii. Vote on this amendment: amendment passes
h. Voting on the resolution as it stands (it includes the two amendments, the
one excluding certain rooms, and the other requiring the two week cap):
the resolution passes 31-3-6

VIII. Announcements
a. Our next meeting will be March 10; the following meeting will be after
spring break

IX. Adjourn @ 11:40 P.M.