CLS Student Senate Meeting

Minutes

Tuesday, October 16, 2007

I. Roll Call

II. Visit by Deans Schizer and Greenberg-Kobrin
   a. Schizer and MGK
      i. Upsetting things have happened on campus, and since we are one community, it affects all of us. This is an attack on everyone. Dean Schizer asks for responses from students.
         1. Manhattanville: what are the updates in terms of campus planning as it relates to the law school? Also, what about providing legal assistance to the Harlem community?
            a. Schizer responds: there are a number of exciting opportunities for the law school in connection with Manhattanville. One thing we will not do is move! We have put too much time and money into our current building. We share space with the B-school, and we would be the logical institution to take their space over if they move. Our classrooms tend to be 80 or more, or 40 or fewer, and the B-school in WJWH seat around 60. This would allow more rooms, and different sized rooms.
            b. Our clinics are engaged in many great things, and are always looking to expand. We have launched the Center for Institutional and Social Change, collaboration with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.
         2. A student asks whether there is room on the ninth floor for a moot court room.
            a. School has not made a final decision, although a moot court room would not go on the ninth floor. We will have 38 offices on the ninth floor, but since we don’t need that many right away, some of them will be seminar rooms that can be converted into offices. The place to do it would be on the first floor, in a room like 102.
         3. Students ask for an update on the noose/hate situation.
            a. Schizer reports that the NYPD investigated using its hate crimes unit. The FBI also got involved. Many people looking into this, but so far no suspects.
        4. Student asks whether we have a no-tolerance policy with regard to these types of hateful actions.
            a. It is possible that the perpetrator is part of the Columbia community, but it is hard to craft rules for this until we have more information.
b. Student responds that just as law firms have no-tolerance policies that send a clear message, so could the school.

c. MGK responds that there are disciplinary procedures that would have led to expulsion. There are also bar rules in terms of character and fitness. The law school policies, like those of other schools, tend to be university policies.

5. Student asks about institutional ideas about building a greater community among classes, since each year tends to be somewhat insular. Also, student-faculty interaction could be fostered, especially among students who do not take a certain teacher.

a. Schizer thinks there is a role for the administration to play, and says that students and faculty both want more interaction with each other. As the faculty grows and the student body plateaus or even shrinks, interaction will naturally occur more easily. Schizer asks the Senate to serve as a focus group, and answer the question what is the most effective way to foster interaction?
   
i. There is room for both formal and informal interaction. The idea would be to give faculty 3-5 minutes at a reception to give a recap of their research and spark discussion.
   
   ii. 1L welcome dinner is great! Why not have a 2L and 3L dinner as well?
   
   iii. LLM-JD interaction!
   
   iv. 1L's are able to go to lunch with their professors; fostering 2L and 3L lunches with their professors would be a positive development
      1. Technically, there is a committee of 10 faculty members who are to serve as mentors
      2. 1L professors aren’t the only ones with budget to take students to lunch
      3. An opt-in system might be ideal
      4. Attaching faculty members to small sections is another possibility
   
   v. A series of lunches that introduce students to new areas of the law would be a great way to help people choose future classes

b. Student asks whether there needs to be a “carrot” to draw faculty members in.
   i. Schizer says that just like outside people come in and participate in the “Dean’s Lunch” series, faculty might be likely to as well.
c. Just like the successful free speech panel that occurred today, there could be topical panels bringing together the handful of top scholars in a given area.

6. Students could be involved in the faculty hiring process
   a. Schizer says that school continues to think about this possibility. The appointments committee worked hard last year, and asking them to take on additional responsibilities may not be well-received. But, what the school is interested in doing came up in Advisory Committee yesterday—strategic promotion of diversity.
      i. Also, the way that students respond to visiting teachers' teaching styles has mattered in the past year or two. It is a factor that the school cares about.

7. Student asks about faculty diversity, whether there are any updates on that front. Specifically, pipeline-building
   a. There is a vice provost for diversity, now Geraldine Downey, recently head of the psych department, and our representative is Buffy Scott. This group is not limited to gender diversity, and it plays a valuable role.
      i. Quick update about where we are: we have hired 16 people since Schizer has been dean; seven are women, nine are men; three are minorities (Johnson, Wu, Burnett); the school has been lucky to attract such amazing professors of late. Still, we have to keep working. Someday, current Columbia students will be a source of faculty for us.

8. In terms of involving students in the hiring process, what about including a student element on the committee or in the process someplace? This would not "add" work to the committee, but would add a student element.
   a. The Appointments committee is a fulltime job! They "read" one or two people a week. Student input may not be extremely beneficial in this regard, but there may be other ways to get students involved.

9. Question about the LLM class: people talk about diversity in JD program and in terms of faculty, but in LLM class, some continents are overrepresented. What can we do?
   a. Historically Columbia has stronger reputation in some countries than others; last year, Schizer formed international advisory board which helps Columbia with its international outreach. On Friday, the board met, and discussed forging closer relationships with law schools in other parts of the world, and continuing to increase financial aid to LLM's. Schizer is confident we will make progress.
10. Student asks about efforts being done to have a small section in the 1L spring semester
   a. Pilot small section in constitutional law this year is in the works (Dean is 90% sure). School is interested in doing this. First year electives are increasing as well.

11. Have we put thought into how we can make the academic experience less stressful? We could do away with a strict curve, and have each professor give midterms or papers as well.
   a. Those are good suggestions! They have discussed the curve as a faculty, and some people are very wedded to it. Grading standards were seen as so variable that they unfairly advantaged some students over others, and led towards uniformity. Columbia ought to be challenging, yet pleasant, and Dean thinks we’re getting better but are not there yet.

12. Student says that Dean Schizer is a rock star and he is happy to be here. Student asks about the Center for Korean Legal Studies and international legal studies in general: what is the Dean’s vision for international studies in the future, and specifically for Korean legal studies with the imminent opening of the legal market to American hires.
   a. Dean agrees, and says there are also changes in legal education that may be exciting for us. Potential Korean professor to head the Korean program at Columbia. International strategy has two components: what we do here, and what opportunities Columbia makes available to students overseas. The number of offerings in comparative and international studies at Columbia is larger than at any other peer school. The innovative teaching initiative asks professors to dream up a course; Jane Ginsburg dreamt up international trademark, with Lionel Bentley from Cambridge. Developing exciting, new things here in Morningside Heights is crucial. Also, our exchange programs are robust and growing. New idea would include the faculty more directly in the exchange relationships. Students should not be “on their own” when abroad. The way that this will develop is unclear.

13. Student asks about access to language courses. Also, students want more coffee around campus, and for longer hours! It would create community.
   a. Language education is a complement to legal education, and the school provides course credit for some number of classes taken outside the law school.
b. As to coffee and cookies, we have as of yesterday expanded those services by 50%! Come in, eat and drink.

14. Why didn’t we hear about the recent hate crimes from the university?
   a. At the deans and provosts meeting, it was agreed that Jim McShane would handle post-crisis communications going forward.

15. Student asks about Columbia vs. NYU in terms of fundraising.
   a. Our endowment is double theirs -- ours at $500 million, theirs at $250 million. The average participation rate (% of graduates who make a gift to the law school) is at 22%, which is better than it once was, but still not great. But the class of 2007 participation rate was 75%! Our fund-raising is “gangbusters!”

ii. Wonderful things going on at the law school
   1. This year, we received more applications (over 7,000) than any of our peer schools
   2. School is a warmer place than it once was; new lobby, furniture, more student-oriented
   3. Guaranteed summer funding for public interest jobs
   4. Changes in the first year curriculum – prompted by thoughtful student input in the past
   5. A record seven (7) new faculty hired this year, allowing more mentoring, innovative research projects
   6. The ninth floor construction project is underway, and we are on schedule to open Floor 9 in April-May, allowing roughly 38 new faculty offices
   7. There are also a record number of visiting faculty, who are potential new hires for next year

b. Thoughts on the deans’ visit
   i. It seemed like there is room for more student representation in many capacities. One specific question relates to the Advisory committee. Students do not serve on the appointments committee.
      1. Tope responds that the e-board’s meetings with the administration do allow some student input, and if Senators have input they want to provide, they can directly provide it to student services, etc., or they can provide it to the e-board and the e-board can convey the message.
   ii. Senator asks whether there will be a bar review course at Columbia this summer.
      1. It seems that there will be, and there was not last summer only because of the ninth floor construction noise.
   iii. Senator asks about how to foster more JD-LLM communication, feeling that there is very little.
      1. Kirstin and Eelco have discussed programming and ask for ideas from JD’s
iv. Senator asks about communications issues, and the fact that things that come out of committees are obscured to the rest of the Senate
   1. Response: let’s brainstorm together more often

III. Officer Reports
   a. Tope
      i. Three events this week
         1. Free Speech Event took place this evening. Kudos to Gabe, John, Adam, Devora, and Mikhaile. Over 75 people attended.
         2. Tomorrow, we are hosting a Scrabble Tournament. Please attend and publicize the event.
         3. Thursday at 6 P.M. is an event led by Professor Shechter on how to succeed on a law school exam.
      ii. On Monday, E-board met with Acting Dean of Students Carol Liebman.
         1. Faculty committees that have not met yet are a problem, and we brought this up. But, Liebman also mentioned that Senators have not responded to her e-mail regarding scheduling a meeting time. Please respond if this is you.
         2. We also discussed extended hours in Lenfest cafeteria and individual mailboxes. MGK was upset to find this out, because these issues were meant to be taken care of.
         3. We talked about beefing up the faculty advising program.
         4. We discussed funding for student group travel. Administration starting to talk about these issues.
         5. There is a faculty meeting on Friday that Tope will be attending, and she will report back afterwards.
   b. Dan
      i. Scrabble tourney is tomorrow at 7 in Lenfest café, and is open to students, significant others, etc. Just stop by and play!
      ii. Thanksgiving is coming up and if you know people who are around, spread the word that there is a CLS dinner they can join.
   c. Max
      i. Two ad hoc requests – the budget committee voted to not fund the CRLS mentor dinner because mentorship programs are typically not funded; Rightslink requested funds for a Spanish table and a French table at a cost of $15/week for eight weeks, and the committee voted to fully fund that program
   d. Gabe
   e. Kathrin

IV. Hate speech/hate crimes response update
   a. Meeting with Bollinger last Wednesday
   b. On Friday, forum held by GSSC was very helpful
   c. Yesterday, meeting of students who were at the Bollinger meeting – Bollinger left open the option of compiling a list of student concerns to be tackled by the administration.
   d. We talked to Carol Liebman about law school-specific responses
      i. Student Services is always available to talk to concerned students
   e. Student comments
      i. Are these actually hate crimes, or what is the exact terminology?
1. Tope clarifies that it is based on the NYPD’s classification
   ii. JKJ says if there are things that should be on the President’s agenda, please share them

V. Announcements
   a. We will probably meet again in late October
   b. We will not meet next week unless something comes up
   c. JKJ met with Lisa Hogarty recently
      i. There is a machine in Lerner that provides discounted Metro cards
      ii. Please make sure to transition to the new ID cards. After Nov. 6, your old cards will not work.
      iii. All call boxes now work
      iv. New shuttle bus routes should be publicized
      v. University communications issues will be brought up at the next University Senate meeting. Next Friday will be the meeting.
      vi. Islamo-Fascism week is planned for next week. David Horowitz has been invited by the campus Republicans, and this event may be the next firestorm at Columbia.
   d. Franz from IT met with David and Ben
      i. Official transition to firstname.lastname@columbia.edu will be happening very shortly
      ii. Double-sided printing in computer labs is now the default
      iii. Dropping the cover page is more complicated
   e. Wednesday the 24th at 6:30, CJAN is putting on a sentencing guidelines event moderated by Gerard Lynch
   f. Tuesday the 23rd IMPACT is putting on a voting rights and election reform panel with visiting Harvard Law School Professor Lani Guinier from 6:00-7:30 P.M. Please join!
   g. Visiting GSSC representative says
      i. He is member of East Asian language and cultures department; and for each language there are discussion groups that can be found on the Columbia College website.
      ii. The savings in Lerner are minimal and should be increased!
      iii. He thanks us for welcoming him
   h. Bar review this week: Slate with NYU and Fordham

VI. Adjourn – 10:29 P.M.