Student Senate Regular Meeting Minutes  
Nov. 10, 2009

1. Roll Call at 9:05 pm.

2. Dean MGK Presentation.
   a. Professional Development Committee, formed to think about the economic downtown and student impact, put together a proposal for a faculty mentoring program. Primarily directed towards first-years. Build relationships to sustain throughout law school. Taking small section of 1L as the base, as well as 5-6 faculty members with 5-6 adjuncts. Students would have a chance to meet the professor of that section and 13 of those professors. Cocktail meet and greet where students could interact with faculty. Find faculty they identify with and carry on.
   b. Alumni network. Regional directed or specific area of the law.
   c. Peer mentoring program for the incoming 1L class.
   d. Faculty initiative to improve the quality of seminars. Offering three credits instead of two for seminars (perception that seminars are a lot of work).
   e. Three year JD-MBA program. Some peer schools currently do this by cross-listing between the schools and small summer classes. Thinking about shifting the spring schedule back to start after MLK day like the other schools.
   f. Open discussion.
   g. Meredith asked about graduating students about living situations while studying for the bar. NYU gets a extension on housing for their bar study summer. Asked about whether that could be an option for Columbia. Dean said that only a small number of graduating students since only guaranteed one year of housing. Noted that some students have used the housing website to look for subletting. Housing says that every apartment needs to be painted before someone moves in, and they need time to do that and clean-up. Also a matter of a large number of students.
   h. Khalil asked about options of health insurance and deferral of student loans as a result of having start dates deferred. Dean MGK said that last year, 90% of people who were deferred still got a substantial amount of money to cover this. Student Services stepped in last year to help students get health insurance coverage. COBRA coverage through Columbia insurance -- available but not cheap, can buy in 3, 6, 9, or 12-month increments. ABA actually offers health care coverage, less expensive. This year might be different, but those options remain open. Last year, usually dealt with on an ad hoc basis to obtain work opportunities.
   i. Ron asked why Election was not a holiday for the law school when it was a university holiday. IMPACT has put together a petition asking for that day off to be involved in election activities. Sent a memo to the faculty encouraging them to allow students to take the day off to help campaign during the Presidential election. No current initiative, but students could try to make it work. Argument that students aren't very engaged in activities 3 out of 4 years.
   j. Ben asked if that holiday would require an extra day in the school year. Dean MGK said it was a matter of hours, 700 minutes per credit hour. Faculty could cancel for Election Day by calculating the minimum requirements and the number of classes.
   k. Jae asked about Legal Methods and Legal Writing Workshop and questioning their necessity. Asked if it was possible to start LPW earlier so that memos would be turned in and would be taken care of before exams start. Dean MGK promised to discuss it with Professor Genty.
   l. Nona elaborated by saying that it would be better if she could focus on finals without worrying about memos.
m. LDP said that it sent a message to 1Ls that they shouldn't be worrying about outlining and exams so early.

n. Hanchu suggested a revision of Legal Research classes, more communication between LR and LPW, because students are still confused.

o. Amaris said the LR and LPW hadn't communicated at all. Said her LPW instructor pushed back the due date because students hadn't yet learned how to research.

p. Jorge felt the same way, would've been nice to learn research skills earlier.

q. Dean MGK asked about the quality of LR classes.

r. Meredith said that LR was the most practical thing she should've learned, but didn't take away much from the class. Said it seemed like an afterthought in the 1L curriculum, when it should receive more importance, but hesitated making it a graded class.

s. Jean said that it wasn't until we had to use it, until we actually learned how to use it. Suggested more substantive assignments that matched an actual practical experience.

t. Lauren said that general consensus was that the teaching quality was rather low, and would be fine with grading it, if it wasn't on a curve.

u. Gillian reiterated Lauren's comment, saying she learned very little from her instructors.

v. Amaris said that she liked her LPW instructor. Might be helpful to push the LR class up when we start Legal Methods, coordination problems with LPW, when class schedules were.

w. Nona said there was an information gap about what was expected of a instructor or what a student could demand.

x. Hanchu said that he liked his LPW and LR instructors, but the difficulty was that it wasn't high enough. Maybe if the difficulty was ramped up, you would learn more.

y. Ron said complex searches haven't been taught yet, the assignments are a bit too simple.

z. Jae said he learned a lot more from the conferences instead of the regular classes.

aa. Soo said that her LPW and LR instructors felt that the Westlaw and Lexis shouldn't be LR classes because they could use those extra classes to better prepare students. Suggested instead of the mandatory career services presentation could've been merged with Lexis/Westlaw.

bb. Leslieann said that LPW and LR should be graded, but it would require a change in the curriculum (too many classes for 1Ls). Suggest that regular classes start a week later. Also maybe a LPW class for upperclassmen.

cc. Dean MGK said that she would speak with Professor Genty about coming to speak to the Senate and pass on senators' comments.

dd. Eric asked about how the revised university budget has affected Student Services. Dean MGK said that the law school was projected for an 8% increase in budget, but instead suffered a 8% loss, so 16% decrease in expected budget. Said it was still up in the air how things would work out. Hard to know because the university endowment is invested in so many different things, hard to value. Gifts have also gone down. 66% of the budget comes from tuition. Dean MGK said there will be more budget cuts, but not exactly sure where yet.

e. Miah asked about the exam schedule for 3Ls. Dean MGK said that there won't be a final on graduation, but not sure about that. Law school graduation usually on the third Thursday of May. University commencement was moved instead to Tuesday because of Muslim and Jewish religious holidays. Law school ended up with the prior Friday in the shuffling of the schedule. Dean MGK said that people might have exams on Thursday, the day before graduation. Asked if whether students preferred to finish on Wednesday, even if it meant one less day in exam week and senators said yes. Dean MGK said she would pass on those comments to the Registrar.

ff. Jean said that she had discovered that bar loans weren't covered by LRAP. Wanted to know the policy behind that given that public interest students probably wouldn't have summer employment, unlike private sector students.
gg. LDP asked about the balance between the faculty and administration, and where the balance of power lay. LDP said that he had the perception that the faculty had more power here than at peer schools. Michelle said that she didn't share his sense that it was difficult at peer schools, but a general academic balance. LDP clarified by saying there was a problem with getting an exam schedule early in the semester, and the response from the administration was that the faculty couldn't be forced to give information about their exams by a certain date.

hh. Chris asked about mentorship for transfer students. Also asked about possibility of other joint degree programs, like SIPA. Dean MGK said there could be discussions with other graduate schools to work on this. Chris said that the flu response hasn't been particularly great with vaccines and emphasizing that students shouldn't come to class sick. Dean MGK said that Dean Schizer sent emails to the faculty and students saying that students shouldn't come into class if they were sick. Asked for help from the Student Senate to get that point across to students. Chris suggested a higher volume of emails to drive the point home.

ii. Erik added that repetitive emails wouldn't work, but said that the underlying concern was that students were afraid to miss things. Erik said a more effective approach would be for professors to record their classes. Dean MGK said there was a discussion among the faculty about whether to record classes or not. Said that if students contacted Student Services, they could help get class recordings.

jj. Elisa asked about whether there might be mentorship or joint degree programs for the LLMs. Said that LLMs have a concern that their agenda lacks continuity because LLMs are here only for a year.

kk. Njoya said that he learned that JD and LLMs had different employment databases, and wondered what the policy was. Dean MGK said she wasn't aware that there were different restrictions on Symplicity and would check into that.

ll. Ravi said it was a big concern among the LLMs to get access to the database and being able to submit a CV, even if it would probably be rejected.

mm. Nona asked about the possibility of getting academic credit for serving on Senate. Asked if whether Student Services needed more help on certain issues from the Senate. Dean MGK said getting credit might be a reach, but getting a notation on your transcript might be possible. Would have to happen by faculty resolution, and could happen if there was market research saying that other schools did this.

nn. McCormick asked about whether peer schools had professional staff assistants to help with the workload, and Dean MGK said she wasn't aware of schools that did this.

oo. Elisa asked for follow up to her question. Dean MGK said that had not looking into joint degree programs for LLMS, and for mentoring, the faculty thought that the mentoring program should be a pilot one with JDs first and look into bringing in the LLMs later. Said for LLM continuity, should have talk about it among the Senators.

pp. Meredith asked about getting pro bono hours for Senate service, or working for a judge, or some larger community services. Dean MGK said it was a good idea and she would look into that. Asked if Meredith could help head that up.

qq. Lauren said the registration system was a source of anxiety for students, maybe a little earlier so that students aren't so confused during the first week and unsure what classes they would end up with. Dean MGK said she was aware of the concerns, and that IT was working on rolling out a new Lawnet by the end of the year, and then would focus on the registration system. Dean MGK said people were looking into other schools to see how their registration system works.

rr. Erik asked about the printed course catalog before registration closes. Dean MGK said that they were transitioning towards the online course catalogue, and mainly uses a limited supply of printed ones for admissions now.
3. Officer Reports.
   a. President.
      i. Thanks to Lauren and Aditi and Andrew for planning a great Halloween party.
      ii. Announced new committee heads, Eric and Art IT.
      iii. New Senator: Dan Blau replacing Dimia Fogam. On Housing and Budget committees.
      iv. Senators working with Alumni Office to raise money for class gift. Three JD co-chairs: Mia, LDP, and Lucy Caltagirone. LLM is Chiz.
      v. Privacy concerns about Senate picture with your name and email. Asked if people had issues about internet identity, if there was concern to contact Jessica. Working with IT on a solution.
      vi. Reported the Academic Committee met, talked about streamlined feedback process to the administration, like Career Services.
   b. Vice President.
      i. Talked about wildly successful Halloween event.
      ii. Said that this week, Open and Notorious hosted by EJ and Art, winter at the beach theme.
      iii. Christmas lights celebration, thinking about a social event to celebrate that.
      iv. Planning a 1L entering finals party and a Thanksgiving event.
      v. Said that the faculty has taken some exciting action into mentoring.
   c. Treasurer.
      i. Asked to see the Budget Committee after the meeting to talk about three ad hoc budget requests.
   d. Secretary.
      i. Thanked everyone for helping out with the Blood Drive! 79 people donated blood, 19 people turned away (for medical reasons), so a total of 98 people showed up to donate blood!
   e. Parliamentarian.
      i. IT committee met, and will elaborate during committee reports.

4. Committee Reports.
   a. Graduation Committee.
      i. Pub crawl starting at 9 pm, party open to 3Ls and LLMs. Selling t-shirts in the lobby and Open and Notorious. T-shirts would be admission tickets.
      ii. Foreign Affairs. Elisa and Soo working on JD/LLM buddy program to bring the classes together.
      iii. Ben said post-MPRE bar celebration. Thanked LDP for t-shirt design.
   b. IT committee.
      i. Worked on agenda and action items for the semester: working on the G and H drives, developing a wiki, getting better Mac compatibility.
      ii. Art talked about the faculty committee meeting. Said that they will be changing identity management, so that it would be consolidated to log in only once and access everything. Rolling out Echo360, video recording of classes, pushing for faculty to support this. Working on online process for take-home exams (instead of in-person). Blogs for faculty and student organizations that will be available soon. Wiki is currently up at http://wiki.law.columbia.edu. Log in with username and password. Already rolled out an online curriculum guide. Working on new registration system. Also functionality for student groups to go in and create websites, with three tiers: just server space, modifiable templates, or help in designed your website. Want to integrate current social networking sites with alumni networks. Using a program called MegaMeeting to get teleconferencing and classes online.
1. Meredith asked about outlines with finals coming up. Art said that he hoped that the Wiki would help with this. LDP suggested that an ad hoc committee be put together to look into uploading outlines and work on this. Maybe send out an email to the student body soliciting outlines.

2. Said that books will be put up on the course catalog.

3. Housing and Facilities.
   i. Ron talked about summer bar housing, said that most students like to stay in their housing, but facilities is worried about the turn around time to rent out places to new people. A quicker turnaround would require more money and staff. Ron said that Juliana Utley reported that the demand for subletting was actually under what was available last year.
   ii. Jean said it already currently happens on an ad hoc basis, students just take over when summer bar students leave, and rooms don't get cleaned or painted. Ron said he would look into that and work out a compromise.

4. "Discussion Storm"
   a. Jess wanted to discuss broader goals and have senators feel like they were engaged in a more active Senate project. Laid out eboard goals this year. Interfacing more with the administration. Getting cleaner bathrooms, better Lenfest deals, alumni networking. Asked for feedback and discussion.
      i. Soo asked whether she should email concerns to the eboard if she hears things from her friends and Jess said yes.
      ii. Shana asked about how things get translated into action items, and Jess said that the second part of the discussion would cover that.
      iii. Art said he had heard about the end of the year survey, but maybe making it more frequent.
      iv. Camilo said it would be great to get the Senate to work with other Student Senates around the country and world. Broaden people's mind and issues.
      v. Ben asked if anyone was writing all these great ideas down. Answer: YES!
      vi. Jess said in theory she would be all for bringing in people from other countries to discuss, but hard to fund and make it a practical reality. But the eboard could definitely look into it.
      vii. Eric said that it would be interesting to invite other New York law school senators to brainstorm and discuss.
      viii. Ron proposed getting Election Day as a law school holiday.
      ix. Njoya wanted to discuss about how the eboard was composed, and perhaps getting a LLM senator to represent LLM interests. Also, regarding student event facilities fees, wondering if that could be waived. Wanted to see a immigration asylum clinic created at Columbia.

b. Second phase. Veteran senators talked about how they accomplished things to give other senators a better sense of how to translate things into action items.
   i. Yael spoke about her Lenfest Café initiative. Said it started with grumbling in the student body, and the eboard decided to step in and make it a high priority. Made a committee to deal with it, put out a motion to get funding for the committee. Said that there was a lot of value in taking the lead on projects. And non-responsiveness shouldn't be taken as a lack of political will, things will get done if you put forth the effort. Also set up a timetable and system of accountability. Provided an example of something that didn't work out so well, with the surveillance cameras. But the key is to come up with projects you want to work on and take the initiative.
   ii. Meredith said that ad hoc committees are a meaningful way of getting things done, subcommittees are also very useful for getting involved (subcommittees of
social, graduation, etc.). Committee chairs always looking for people to take the
initiative to plan events and projects. Said that not being on the eboard wasn't an
impediment at all, served 3 years without being on eboard and still done a lot and felt
very fulfilled.

iii. Ben talked about past eboard experience and resolution process. Said that his
first year was a learning process, was a little lost at first, but learned a lot watching
veteran senators. Talked about working with LDP during 1L year, dealing with Mac
issues and dealing with IT, working on the computer lab, color printer, email aliases.
Approached the eboard and worked on a more informal process, dealt with IT head,
Frantz. By the end of the semester, had 4/5 items accomplished.

1. Shana asked about who was involved, and Ben said him and LDP along
with a number of members of the IT committee informally.

iv. Talked about the pushback about the mass amount of emails being sent to the
student body. Heard from student groups that their events were being drowned out by
every other event going on, just getting inundated by centers, groups, professors, etc.
Resulted in LawCal, policy calling for fewer emails, and the implementation of the
opt-in system. Resolution and more formal process was very helpful, in order to
present to a number of different offices saying that the students really wanted this.

v. Mia suggested that maybe an open forum at a senate meeting, 15 minutes at the
beginning, for students to come and voice their concerns.

vi. LDP said that Senate is a good platform to get people involved that you need
support from, like the administration and faculty members. Should use Senate as a
platform to achieve goals and gain legitimacy when working with others.


a. Lisa asked if it was possible to revisit the email policy, had heard a lot of dissatisfaction
from the public interest groups. Said a number of student leaders that were unhappy with the
change to opt-in. Concerns that attendance is down, students have been emailing saying that
they haven't been receiving emails about events and projects.

b. Christina said that something at Teacher's College, there's a board to put up post-its
instead of a suggestion box. Suggested that might be a better way to get a dialogue going if
people could see it.

c. Shana said she was interested in getting professors to work on getting exam feedback for
students.

d. Njoya asked about whether people would be willing to work with him on an immigration
asylum clinic.

6. Announcements.

a. Ron said that if anybody had Lenfest Café issues personally or heard from people, email
him for the Housing Committee.

b. Lauren won a free open bar for Pourhouse, plans to do it a week from today. Send her
your name and email address and she will let you know when the event will start.

c. Ben explained that New Business is an opportunity to (1) raise issues that come up after a
meeting agenda is distributed and (2) introduce business for discussion at the next regular
meeting. However, in order to consider the substance of a new business item immediately,
the Senate must first decide whether it wishes to do so. This prevents a minority of Senators
from substantially delaying adjournment without the Senate's consent.

d. Christina said that GradFest is having a trivia night next Tuesday, the 17th. All the grad
schools have been invited. Going to be at Teacher's College from 8 to 10 PM. Teams of 3
from each school, joining up with other schools for a total of 9 people. Kegs and snacks.

e. McCormick said Law Revue was coming up, and everyone should go.
f. Art said to contact him or Eric for another IT related. Asked for beach clothes.

7. Meeting adjourned at 11:24 pm.