

CUNY Law Student Government
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2012
5:00-6:15

5:05 Call meeting to order

Review and vote to accept this meeting's agenda
- Passed.

5:10 Discussion: Resolution for Accessibility to CUNY Law (Andrea & Mark)

- Upcoming Meeting on Thursday 9/13 re Accessibility (Stacey)
 - Decided not to vote on the proposed resolution today; will wait for additional information after the meeting on 9/13 with administration (see below) and the 1L SG members, who are being voted onto SG this week.
 - Three 2L students are meeting with Allie Robbins and Cheryl Howard (new Dean of Students) on Thursday (9/13) 1pm on Thursday in Dean Howard's office (5/107) to discuss accessibility in the building for people with disabilities. The meeting originally was requested with Dean Anderson, who referred the students to Allie and Cheryl.
 - Also Keriann, Greg, and Rami will join the meeting as well as SG reps, and perhaps the students will invite Mary Nevins, the new ADA Compliance Officer to join.
 - Aim of meeting is to understand level of awareness among the administration about the accessibility issues and get a commitment about when issues will be addressed. Also will inform administration that the students have SG's support and if the identified issues are not addressed within two weeks, we will create our own remedies. If necessary, students may file a formal complaint with DOJ.
 - Examples of non-compliance with ADA:
 - Doors are too heavy; ADA = no more than 5 lbs of force; bathroom doors are especially hazardous, but classroom doors as well (especially the auditorium)
 - Door access swipes at elevators are inaccessible to people with mobility issues
 - Doors on the stairs also re-lock quickly; similarly difficult for people with mobility limitations
 - "Accessible" door at front doesn't always work, doesn't open all the way, and security staff do not assist with opening it.
 - No direct elevator from the 1st floor to the upper floors (people have to switch elevators for 4-6 floors, which could be an issue for clinic clients and others)
 - Unresolved problems with remote captioning (the audio system in the new building is insufficient for remote captioning), which the school has known about for months but has failed to address.
 - Lighting in the auditorium makes it difficult to lip-read professors
 - Class notes are inconsistent and not always effective (other schools are required to hire professional note-takers)
 - Allie and Cheryl together are taking on the roles formerly held by Dean Valentine and Charles Johnson.

- Possible allies
 - Mary Nevins has been at CUNY Law for decades, but recently became the ADA compliance officer and is going through training. She's a key ally to students.
 - Pat Kennedy has been aware of accessibility concerns in the new building and has been working to ensure compliance but her efforts are not being heard
 - Confirmed that Franklin Siegel as the attorney for the school has a conflict and cannot discuss this with students, nor can most faculty (we think), who serve as agents of CUNY
 - Brief brainstorm of remedies to propose at the meeting as well as for after the meeting (if the administration continues to be unresponsive)
 - Finalize and distribute the SG resolution
 - Inform them that students have been raising needs since spring; unless changes are instituted in the next two weeks, students will start taking own action
 - Formal complaint with DOJ Office of Civil Rights against CUNY and Citibank
 - Outreach to alumni who work in disability rights
 - Kunal will raise accessibility issues in the clinic-wide meeting, too
 - Clinics v. Concentrations
 - As an aside, 3Ls raised concerns about the lack of building space and resource access that students in concentrations have compared to clinic students (e.g., no printer access on the 5th floor for concentration students)

Committees

- There's no building committee as of now; Dean Anderson is interested in knowing if there's a concern or need to renew it, but currently it's been disbanded
- Greg Koster supports having a building committee;
- Building Committee was ad hoc leading up to the new building
- SG could house Building Committee; it doesn't have to be formal.
 - To address ongoing concerns such as accessibility, clinic issues, ID requirements
 - Concerns raised that as a working group, there's less accountability, but maybe benefits to being less formal
 - Will invite faculty and staff, too (e.g., Dorothy Matthew, Paula Berg, others)
- Interested members: Kunal, Keriann, Greg
- Report back next week

5:30 Review open officer and internal/external committee positions (will be posted before or at meeting). Any missing? Should we hold off on elections until after 1Ls are elected?

- Agreed to hold off until the 1L elections and Milo gets the final committee assignments

5:40 Deans Forums & Student Forums: Decide on having 1 or 2 this semester

- Voted to request twice for the fall because there are so many issues with new building.
- Reminder: Deans Forums are meetings where all the deans are present
- Different from coffee with the Dean.
- Milo will tell Allie we would like two, and will request that they not be scheduled during midterms.

5:50 Academic Standing Issue: Discuss student letters and strategize

- Documents were distributed regarding an issue from Spring 2012
 - Instances of 3 rising 3Ls (now 3Ls) who received failing grades in one bar elective class; no comments on their final exams, now on academic probation and not able to participate in clinics or concentrations, have a 7th semester.
 - 2 students wrote letters about what happened, how it's affecting them
 - 1 student: Cumulative GPA is great, had been an A/B student.
 - No clear process of appealing grade. Faculty member was unavailable throughout summer. Valentine said there were no grounds to appeal, but it's unclear what the grounds would be. Must show bias or prejudice or mathematical miscalculation.
 - Faculty don't know this has happened, or what the impact of the new academic standing policy is that they voted on last year
 - No way to foresee this effect, especially regarding the lack of clinic/ concentration access.
 - Faculty need to be aware of it for future students, even if no recourse for these students
 - These three students can't be in clinic or concentration – so now they have no structure for this semester, and no clinic or concentration for the spring. It's senseless.
 - Will have to pay for their 7th semester
 - Faculty committee said they'd wave tuition for one class for 7th semester for other student(s), but these students will have to pay for the entire concentration next fall
- Proposals SG could develop
 - Base clinic or concentration placement on cumulative vs. per-semester GPA
 - Establish some kind of independent clinic concentration option for these students for spring semester (or externships)
 - Create a weighted process; if concern is about students' capacity to engage effectively with clients, then give additional consideration to grades in lawyering seminars
 - Push for a clear grievance policy so students know what to do if this happens
 - Present these narratives to the faculty
 - Students gave permission for them to be distributed
 - Put in faculty mailboxes the Monday before the October Faculty Meeting, with a cover memo from SG
- SG wants to proactively address bar passage rates with administration before they come out
 - Dean Anderson said at the faculty meeting that academic policy is not going to change
 - We know when the bar passage rates are published (e.g., right before finals); we need to anticipate this and create a plan for open, effective communication to avoid replicating last year's institutional response
 - Schedule a Dean's forum that week
- Sub-committee: Cristina, Kunal, Milo, Andrea, Greg, Stacey, Keriann

6:10 Call for volunteers to help schedule SG meetings this semester

- Kunal, Keriann, Lisa, Milo
- We need officers! 2 weeks from this week we'll have another meeting. Very important.

6:15 Adjourn meeting