

## Minutes of SG Emergency Session on SG's role in addressing New Building Issues

11/14/09 | 4:00 pm – 5:30pm

Room 320

Present: Bright Limm, Robin Gordon Leavitt, Steven Beard, Paula Segal, Jamaal Bailey, Marvin Posada, Patrick Foster, Ilana Landecker, Amy Hager, Cynthia Galik, David Eisenstein

The following action steps came out of this meeting:

1. Robin will draft resolution articulating SG's role in the ongoing building process - SG as info disseminator. SG will vote on resolution at next General Session.
2. Bright and David will draft a different resolution articulating SG's role as entity which exercises pressure on and demands accountability from the administration.
3. Robin will start draft for survey monkey referendum poll.
4. The referendum questions drafted by Robin will be discussed/reworked on TWEN and hopefully on the agenda of next SG Session.
5. Bright, Patrick and Marvin will ask faculty for donations for SG website.

Introductions

Reasons for Emergency Session

- a. This meeting arose out of discussion at the SG Retreat Session. The purpose of this sessions is to provide time dedicated to deliberation on and prioritization of actions taken by the SG with regard to the new building.
- b. Frame issues, prioritize and turn into action.
- c. Paula: Is this website related?
  - i. Bright and Steven summarize discussion of website from last SG meeting
    1. An obstacle to organizing is lack of centralization of information, availability and visibility of information.
    2. An effort to increase transparency about what SG does, and a chance for other students to see areas in which they feel more should be done.

Proposed Agenda:

- I. Rounds: issue spotting re: the move/the new building
- II. Prioritizing Issues
- III. Proposals for action...outreach?
- IV. Vote if necessary

Final Agenda (What actually happened):

- I. Rounds: Articulate issues re: the move/the new building;
- II. Clarify official decision-making structure/process;
- III. Prioritize among actions that the SG can take;
- IV. Identify specific tasks to advance those prioritized actions; and
- V. Delegate tasks among the Members.

**I. Issues and concerns around the move and the new building**

1. Pedagogy
2. Cubicles vs. lawyering seminar dialogue
  - a. Whether this was taken into account during decision making process
3. Process Issues
  - a. Lack of community input
  - b. Students, faculty and staff not given consistent, complete, timely information
  - c. Why have students been left out of the planning and decision making process?
  - d. To what extent will the Administration respond to student input? Do we matter?
4. SG's role
  - a. Concern of Redundancy/Overlap between committees and Student Government, reducing effectiveness of committees as well as SG
  - b. Concern about dissemination of info coming out of the committee meetings to SG and to student body as a whole
5. Shifting mission/focus of school
  - a. What we want as students/future alumni want CUNY Law to be about
6. Cost
  - a. Building – fair market value, good faith negotiations?
  - b. Renovations
7. Information Issues
  - a. Access to information, students at large/committees
  - b. Dissemination of information, who knows whats going on/ who is in charge, what ability do people have to make informed decision
  - c. Administration discouraging/interfering with dissemination of information
8. Part time program
  - a. Effects of increased student body on pedagogy, faculty and staff
9. Coordination of efforts
  - a. Different individuals and groups seem to be approaching the issues differently, and separately.
10. Balancing structural concerns about cost/process with ongoing need for student engagement
11. Physical space –
  - a. Student organization space

- b. Library?
- 12. Students /staff who need to drive – parking concerns
- 13. Staff Issues
  - a. Who's coming, who's not? Demotion to entry level pay for staff who don't come?

#### Overview of Decision making Process - Bright

Top down decision making process. Top: CUNY Board of Trustees – 17 Trustees (16 voting), nine of whom were appointed by Pataki and six by Bloomberg – have ultimate authority to approve or reject Chancellor Goldstein's recommendation. Goldstein in turn evaluates the recommendations of the CUNY Central (Iris Weinshall et al.), the selection committee, the architects, (KPF) and Dean Anderson. Dean Anderson can approve or reject recommendations from law school's committees and student government.

The process has been going on since last fall. The committees under Dean Anderson and have solely an advisory role. They are not subject to open meetings law. We do not have a legal entitlement to attend, see minutes, etc. Students need not be permitted to serve on them.

## **II. Prioritizing Issues for SG**

Discussion of role of SG versus the committees:

Ilana is concerned about overlap. These committees were appointed for a reason, and SG doesn't have a clear mandate for getting involved.

Paula suggests, and Ilana agrees, that the committees don't have clear aims, are unclear of their jurisdictions, and don't have clear agendas. At Community Space meeting, there was brainstorming, but no clear idea of how to take action. Sarah Valentine facilitated that meeting; Dean Anderson, and sometimes Dean Koster, run the Building Committee meetings.

Paula thinks Dean Anderson will consider recommendations from SG, Committees, and Forum, with equal weight.

Steven: We are a representative body, even though committees exist, we still need to represent the interests of the students, to the committees and to the administration.

Ilana: I am concerned that committees and SG come to different recommendations. That would be terrible (diluting everyone's efforts?)

Steven: we are student led voice, even though there are SG members, we represent the broader student body.

Bright: sees at least 2 possible approaches:

1. Committee reps act as delegates to advocate SG's position.

2. OR committee reps advocate their own positions, acting in accordance with their own conscience and beliefs, while also being mindful of the fact that they are at the same time representing the student body. SG is charged with disseminating the info that comes out of those meetings to the community at large (hopefully through website).

Amy would like to adopt the more disseminative approach.

Q: What happens if Dean Anderson decides not to go along with the purchase of 2 Court Square?

Bright: Her recommendation could be rejected, either by the Chancellor or by the Board of Trustees. If she decided she wanted to try to stop the proposed purchase, or contest some aspect of the current process of negotiations, her power to do so would depend mainly on the extent to which she uses her *de facto* power/influence (e.g., speaking out publicly against the current process).

David: If the whole school was mobilized, it would be harder for CUNY Central to go ahead with the decision.

Jamaal: How do we make the issue broader? How do we get on the editorial pages and NY1?

Paula: The “how” is actually relatively easy. It’s the “what” that we need to decide, i.e.: what do we want people to know about?

David: A third approach to SG’s role vis-à-vis the committees: committee members follow their conscience and are accountable to community. SG’s role is primarily to put pressure on administration to be more open, stop their anti-CUNY tactics, by publicizing these tactics.

Robin: Information from committees needs to be transmitted to SG in order to publicize it.

Patrick: We need to find out what students want.

**Robin will write up one option for official SG position on role of student gov’t w/r/t committees: information dissemination role.**

**Bright and David will write up option #2 – holding administration accountable role**

How do we get input on issues? Student body needs information before they can make informed decisions. Yet time is of the essence. Is it more important to disseminate information, or to get pulse on how larger cross section of student body feels?

General agreement that disseminating the information so that students can develop informed opinions must be done ASAP, but that there are certain issues/questions (e.g., reversion of staff’s pay grades to entry-level status if transferred to other CUNY campuses) on which we do not need to wait to ask the student body while this info is being compiled and disseminated.

1. Dissemination
  - a. Website
    - i. Bright: We need to raise \$2000 for website.

- ii. Paula: Can we pay someone to make a wiki? It will cost less and be quicker.
    - 1. It would be editable only by password
    - 2. Coordinate training with communications committee
    - 3. Make sure every student has an opportunity to get info about building
  - iii. **Bright, Patrick, and Marvin will approach faculty about raising money for website / wiki**
- 2. Represent
  - a. SG needs to take position, but needs poll information.
  - b. **Robin will start TWEN discussion on drafting electronic surveymonkey poll.**
  - c. Steven feels that polls are not the best way, sometimes elected representatives need to be out in front.
  - d. Paula feels confident that students will share concerns about staff being bumped down to entry level wages, for example.
- 3. Support
  - a. Patrick: SG should support other students and organizations that are lobbying and organizing.
- 4. Other strategies:
  - a. Dave Eisenstein requests that SG demands administration answer FOIL request.
    - i. Dean Koster said that it could ruin an ongoing business deal.
    - ii. Should we make this demand? Or wait until we have student input?