

Undergraduate Student Government

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Meeting 17

Meeting Date:	February 23, 2021	Meeting Time:	5:31PM - 7:14PM
Location:	Zoom Call	Note Taker:	Genesis Calle

Attendees:	
Tony Chen President	Briana Staten Executive Vice President
Nancy Sea Executive Treasurer	Genesis Calle Executive Secretary
Taji Sanders VP of Academic Affairs	Richard Reyes VP of Legislative Affairs
[Absent] Steven Le VP of Campus Affairs	Yam-Yu Li VP of Student Affairs
Irine Thomas Chair of Appeals	Kristina Khabarov Chair of Arts
Alison Lee Chair of Clubs and Orgs	Lesli Cuamani Chair of Finance
Cindy Chen Chair of Graphic Design	Christine Gajdos Chair of Marketing
[Late] Osvaldo Garcia Chair of Philanthropy	Laiba Hussain Chair of Public Opinion
[Late] Tomasz Horeczak Representative Senator	[Late] Raphael Berdugo Representative Senator
Alex Cuanal Representative Senator	Erika Cumbe Representative Senator
Zariana Gonzalez Representative Senator	Mayer Estinville Representative Senator
[Late] Matthew Sanchez Representative Senator	

Passing of the Minutes

1. Motion to pass Senate Meeting #16 minutes. Motion passes, 14-0-0

Reports

1. Nancy Sea | Treasurer
 - a. Nancy: We have late payment vouchers from Spring 2020 from 2 clubs. The first one is from Woman in Islam. They are requesting \$149.60 for an event that was unpaid for. There is no club representation.
 - i. Motion to allocate \$149.60 to Women in Islam for their late payment voucher.
 1. Motion passes, 14-1-2
 - b. Nancy: Next club is BSA, and they are requesting \$243.79 for their Spring 2020 event, Bosheki night.
 - i. Motion to allocate \$243.79 to BSA for their late payment voucher.
 1. Motion passes, 14-1-2
 - c. Nancy: I'm going to update you on the clubs that are inactive for the Spring 2021 semester. They are the United Sikh Association, College Entrepreneurial Organization, Student Veterans Association, Residence Hall Council, Baruch Traders Club, and College Democrats. I will email this information to Lesli, Irine, and Ally as well. For the VPs and table members that have reached out to me regarding

ordering merch or giveaways, you know there's going to be restrictions in a sense that you want to realistically prepare for the number of items that you are able to give out and also keep in mind of the previous attendance trends you've had. For giveaways, there will only be one student per giveaway, so just be mindful when you're planning for the date and the amount you requested.

- d. Briana: Question for Savanna; if we order 50 merch for an event but only give out 30 and there's another event the week after, would it be okay to give out that remaining merch?
- e. Savanna: Yes, it's just a matter of making sure it's within a timely manner. Otherwise the vendor can't be paid until everything is sent out.
- f. Nancy: For everyone who had a meeting with me, I'll send you the budget proposal link after senate.
- g. Yam-Yu: Do we know the reason why these clubs are inactive?
- h. Nancy: Most are due to not completing BOLT training and/or failure to register their club in MyBaruch.

2. Osvaldo Garcia & Laiba Hussain | Chair of Philanthropy and Chair of Public Opinion

- a. Laiba: USG has been given the opportunity to use our platform to host an event for our Sikh community. I think it's important to give some background context to educate the table on the importance behind the event. The current situation that's happening in India right now in regards to farmers' protest. Essentially there were 3 laws that were put in place by India's prime minister which threatened the livelihoods of agricultural laborers in the country as these laws enabled private investors to have a larger role within the agricultural system in India, leaving room for farmers to be possibly stripped of state protection and taken advantage of through these corporations. In response to this, farmers have been on the front lines since August 2020 in which many of them have protested and voiced their concerns over the implementation of these laws. However these efforts are more or less being left unnoticed by not only the Indian government itself but globally as well. I think it's important to note that the Indian government has had a very long history of oppressing religious minorities, whether it be Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, and, in this situation specifically, Sikhs. These laws directly affect the states Punjab as well as Haryana, in which Punjab specifically is a state where the majority of the Sikh community resides, next to it also being an agricultural hotspot. Not only has the Indian government actively used police brutality to silence the farmers' protest but they have censored them through all forms of media. International news across the world has also failed to properly document the severity of the circumstances of the protestors. In regards to broadcasting the atrocities of the Indian government, this is a critical time for the Sikh community, not only within India itself but globally as well. As USG, I believe that it's important that we use our platform as a way of elevating voices that are currently being silenced, and advocate and show our support for the Sikh community. This event will focus on the farmers' protest and will have guest speakers to further explain the situation and raise awareness.
- b. Osvaldo: We're planning on having this event take place next Thursday, March 4th. Marketing and graphics will be shared soon. If you could share it within your committees, it would be great.
- c. Irine: According to Nancy, the United Sikh Association (USA) is inactive. It is their population that's being affected. Would they not be able to take part in the event or show their representation?
- d. Osvaldo: Even though the USA is not active, they can still take part in the event, speak up about their experiences, and participate. They're still part of the Sikh community. I know a lot of them have family members in India who are experiencing this first hand so to hear from them will be vital.

3. Dean Art King and Provost Lee | Guest Speakers

- a. Dean King: Glad to see everyone and thank you for doing all you can as part of the leadership of the institution. We are hoping to answer any questions and have a discussion with you all on the matter.
- b. Provost Lee: Hello everyone. I have been at Baruch for 31 years. I taught business 1011 and the bulk of marketing classes during my teaching career. On top of your academics, you as student leaders have been developing yourselves so much, so I commend your dedication and hard work. The first question I received is, “Will students be mandated to use proctoring software. If so, are there other options and alternatives?” In fact this morning, I received an email from the University Provost, Jose Luis Cruz, who is my boss at CUNY Central, announcing that CUNY signed a contract with the Respondus software. It is a lockdown browser software so when you are taking exams through Blackboard, your screen will be lockdowned so you can only answer your exam questions. You cannot open any other browsers. Professors may not mandate you to take this exam with the software show up but the alternatives if you choose not to comply with that the lockdown browser is you have to work with a professor to take an alternative form of the exam, such as an oral exam or an additional paper or other means of being tested to pass the course.
- c. Richard: It’s a pleasure to meet you Provost. My main question is about the alternatives because since it’s been proposed last Spring, professors have been given a broad guideline as to what kinds of alternatives they could use. Some have tried to enforce an alternative where you’re required to take an exam in person at Baruch and I don’t think that’s an equitable solution. How will you be streamlining the process of specific examples of how professors per department will be using these alternatives?
- d. Provost Lee: I appreciate the comment. I did start this job as of February 1st, so I don’t exactly know what had happened with the prior cases, but my duty as a Provost is to ensure students are being treated fairly within the guidelines of the policy. I encourage you to report any situations to Dean King and so we are kept in the known. I don’t believe professors have any bad intentions when it comes to these variations of the alternatives, but sometimes for the sake of students’ learning and performance, they tend to interpret policies in their own way.
- e. Dean King: We also have to maintain the academic integrity of the institution so future employers can be certain that the academic rigors of Baruch are top notch and so you have the competitive edge. Since we’ve gone online, we’ve got more academic integrity cases than ever before. We used to get 30 to 40 a year, but now we are getting more than 150 cases a month. For your sake, we want to maintain the integrity of your learning and your degree. We do not stand for academic dishonesty. It’s important that if you hear of students having problems with faculty or with their academics, please report it to us. We are here to support in whatever way we can.
- f. Provost Lee: The second question I received is, “Is privacy something we should respect for the students? How will the Provost address this issue?” We respect students’ privacy at all costs because that’s what the CUNY policy looks to honor. If you have any specific concerns relating to the privacy issue, please report to Dean King so we know how to handle it. We all are committed to respecting your privacy, and that’s what CUNY legal always emphasizes.
- g. Laiba: I wanted to refer back to Dean King’s mention of academic dishonesty. I think it’s really important to note that this is a year like no other. We are living through a global pandemic and going through personal situations and hardships of our own. I believe it can be the reason for this academic dishonesty, because it does affect our academics and a lot of students may sometimes feel forced into doing what they can do to secure that A in their class and graduate. We aren’t exactly equipped with enough resources to handle this pandemic on our own as students at the moment. I also conducted a

survey last semester in regards to Credit/No Credit situation as well in which we surveyed students based on their mental, physical, and financial health. There were a good percentage of students that were severely affected by the pandemic and I think it's extremely important to note that when we look at the increase of academic dishonesty.

- h. Provost Lee: Thank you for that, and be sure to email the results of that survey to Dean King and myself.
- i. Dean King: Through the CARES act, we've been able to get funds to hire additional counselors in the counseling center to be able to help students work through the stress and anxiety they're going through. We are well aware of the different circumstances our students are living through, some not even equipped with the proper environment in which to do their schooling from. We want to make sure that those who are going through all this hardship know that we have these resources available for them, and there is a place for them to get that support and help they need, especially from the emergency fund we have for students who are in need of extra financial support.
- j. Osvaldo: Provost Lee, you mentioned you want equity for all students, and thank you for that. I was wondering if it would be possible to work alongside USG to create specific guidelines in terms of what alternatives students can receive in terms of proctoring. It's vital that professors have a guideline in what's acceptable and not. It would help prevent miscommunication and conflicts moving forward. Students have reached out to us, and Laiba put out that survey so we do have that information and the context to help however we can. I just want your opinion on that.
- k. Provost Lee: My philosophy has always centered around effective communication between interpersonal relationships. Students and faculty greatly need that from both parties. Often we can argue that we fully understand what you're going through, but it's not always the case. It's a good segway to the next question we have, which is "How will there be open and clear communication between USG and Baruch administration?" As long as I am Provost, I will reach out to you and listen to you and your voice and relay it to President Wu and other cabinet members. We will try to put ourselves in your shoes and your circumstances to listen to your point of view.
- l. Richard: Thank you Provost and Dean King for this forum and allowing us to communicate these matters with you. I would also like to address another thing in terms of how Baruch tries to engage with the students as much as possible with the information. However, personally most of the information regarding these updates from CUNY that Baruch received was put on Blogs by Baruch if I'm not mistaken or something of the sorts. In my opinion it's not the correct medium and instead should be some sort of an email blast with any updates on that front because there was a lot of confusion concerning the matter. Students were getting confused hearing different things from professors, and this would help ensure more clear communication.
- m. Provost Lee: I can relay this to the administration and communications office as a recommendation from the students. Next question I received is: "Do you believe that the needs of our students outweigh the expectations of the administration? If so, will we see a different outcome for the Credit/No Credit policy this semester, specifically with the Zicklin school not having taken the best interests of their students into account?" The faculty and administration is always keeping the best interests of students in mind and want you all to succeed. In terms of the Credit/No Credit policy, and keeping students' feedback in mind, the academic council of the college is actively engaging in that conversation of what should be the long term policy. We will get back to you fairly soon, and because of the rather chaotic timeline from last semester, I will promise that we will communicate all the information in a prompt and timely manner.
- n. Briana: Will students representatives be allowed to be on the committee?

- o. Provost Lee: If we form a sub-committee, I will be sure to invite student representation and leadership to that discussion. Again, we did just commence these discussions. I apologize I keep saying that I just started but from day one that I signed into this job, I knew this was of top priority so I hear you all and trust that we will incorporate student feedback to that policy and keep you all in the loop.
- p. Dean King: Right now, the various schools are still having discussions on what is best for students in terms of Credit/No Credit. Last semester, there was a lot of fall out because students didn't know in advance about the rules of the policy. Committees are in meetings and ideas are being formulated to see what will be best and we will ask students for their input as well. Each academic institution is different. We are willing to come back to share more information once it is ready.
- q. Mayer: I think it's very important that, as long as we're holding students accountable, that we hold professors at a certain standard as well. From my experience, my classes are operating differently in that some of them offer recordings of lectures or other tools, but a majority don't. We need to keep in mind that a lot of our students are tuning in from different locations, or even abroad. When certain standards aren't set and established that professors can follow, it makes it even harder for students to perform to the best of their ability, and that resources are available for students who may miss some material due to unforeseen circumstances.
- r. Provost Lee: I hear you loud and clear, and will keep that in mind to relay to the faculty. Thank you very much to the USG for having myself and Dean King here tonight. I look forward to coming back soon.
- s. Tomasz: I know that they left already, but I was going to ask about the cameras that take over your computer as part of the software.
- t. Raphael: Right after he mentioned Respondus, I looked it up and they don't mention anything about using the cameras.
- u. Tomasz: Oh okay. I had read a blogpost that professors could force you to have then on, if they include a mention of it in their syllabus. I just wanted some clarification on it.
- v. Damali: If you still have any issues or concerns, I'd say send a follow up email to Dean King and Provost Lee. I would suggest sending Briana your questions and she could reach out to them.

Unfinished Business

1. Richard Reyes | VP of Legislative Affairs

- a. Richard: The Small Business spotlight initiative has officially launched and we have a survey out for it. Thank you so much to those for sharing the post and helping raise awareness for this and our volunteers, I really appreciate it. We have a good amount of responses ready for our first post.
- b. Briana: We have an alumni relations office at Baruch that I think would be helpful to connect with, if you're trying to get in touch with Baruch-alumni owned businesses.
- c. Richard: Yes, I had a meeting with Savanna about that and spoke with Tony about it as well.

New Business

1. Yam-Yu Li | VP of Student Affairs

- a. Yam-Yu: Last week, we had our Resources event and the powerpoint has been distributed with the students, faculty, and offices. Also, I have been talking with the Registrar's office and there's been a lot of questions concerning graduation and diplomas. The reason for the delay in the diplomas is because of delays in the process. Within 2 to 3 weeks after grades are due, the reason

for the delays is some faculty members don't meet that deadline and can't have all the grades in. Those grades have to be audited for the students to check their credits and verify their graduation. After, it will go through a new system. We signed a contract with a vendor called Parchment, which handles electronic and digital copies of diplomas and will be shipped off to the respective students' home addresses. This entire process takes about 5 to 6 weeks, which has been shortened since last semester when it took 2 to 3 months to process. On students' end, one thing we should push for is to get professors to submit their grades on time so that we can start the auditing process and get those diplomas shipped out. You will also receive a digital copy of your diploma. I believe the registration dates for summer and fall term will begin around April 5th.

2. Damali Tolson | Student Life Advisor

- a. Damali: Spring 2021 Commencement will be on May 27th at 10:00am through a virtual ceremony, as well as individual school ceremonies. I will be talking with Briana about how USG can participate in it. Last year we only had about 3 weeks to plan, but this year we will have more time to prepare for it. This year, there are about 5,000 students eligible to graduate. Students can go on the commencement website now and order their caps and gowns. We can talk more about it. It will be in the same format as last year, but we're trying to get more speakers, student voices on our social media outreach.
- b. Cindy: I know there was only one slot to take senior portraits back in November. Do you know if there will be more slots this Spring, and how the yearbook will look like?
- c. Damali: The vendor was initially going to have students go out to Long Island to take pictures, which I and other faculty members were not comfortable with. We're looking to see if we could get another hotel to book. We're not allowed to do it on campus because it will affect the reopening plan. The yearbook is still in production and will be mailed to your home so you won't get it by graduation but that does give us a little bit more time to see if there is any opportunity to have another space where you guys can take pictures.
- d. Briana: Question from the chat; is it possible to have students submit their own pictures in the caps and gowns?
- e. Damali: No, because they get such different quality of photos that's not consistent, but we are trying to do something social media related for caps and gowns since you can order those ahead of time.

Executive Session

1. Motion to enter into Executive Session passes at 6:44PM.

Adjournment

1. Motion to adjourn Senate Meeting #17 at 7:14 PM. Motion passes, 17-0-0