

## Undergraduate Student Government

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📷 @USGBARUCH



### Meeting 18

Meeting Date:	March 2, 2021	Meeting Time:	5:31PM - 6:59PM
Location:	Zoom Call	Note Taker:	Genesis Calle

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

### Passing of the Minutes

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1. Motion to pass Senate Meeting #17 minutes. Motion passes, 14-0-0

### Reports

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1. Cindy Chen | Chair of Graphics
  - a. Cindy: I decided to do a new initiative for the graphics committee. I am planning to host an educational event, a guide to “how to graphic design.” This entails providing resources, materials, and programs towards students with an interest in graphic design. The event will be on March 18th from 12:30p.m. to 2:20p.m. and we’ll also be having a giveaway for some merch, so definitely come through if you can.
  - b. Richard: Is the date for this event set in stone?
  - c. Cindy: Yes, it is. I talked it out with Briana.
  - d. Richard: Erika and I had mentioned that we were going to be hosting an immigration resources event that day during club hours, and it’s on the calendar.
  - e. Cindy: Okay, I could move around the time for later at night, possibly 5:00p.m.
2. Provost Lee and Dean Art King | Guest Speakers

- a. Provost Lee: Good evening. I'm back after last week's meeting to communicate with you all on updates pertaining to Baruch's Credit/No Credit Policy moving forward. As the USG student leaders, I'm here to seek your advice and wisdom hearing what it is we have resolved. As you recall, back in Spring 2020, CUNY adopted a Credit/No Credit flexible grading policy under the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and with 100% online instruction. In December 2020, in light of the continuing challenges for students under the lockdown and with online instruction, CUNY adopted a restricted version of the Credit/No Credit Policy. For the Spring 2021 semester, CUNY declared that the system-wide Credit/No Credit Policy would not be extended but that each campus could deliberate the policy in consultation with its own academic community and adopt its own policy. The Baruch College Academic Council discussed the pros and cons of the Credit/No Credit flexible grading policy for students and during the last meeting on February 25th, the ACademic Council decided on the logistics behind the Credit/No Credit Policy for Spring 2021 and beyond. The ultimate decision is that Baruch College will not extend the Credit/No Credit flexible grading policy for the Spring 2021 semester. In consultation with the faculty, staff, and students, Baruch College will begin the process of developing a Pass/No Credit policy to be adopted for the undergraduate programs as part of the College's official grading policy. The deliberation process consisted of the members of the college's administration, faculty, the staff, and the Provost's office examining this issue with care and compassion, taking into account the needs and interests of all our students from the 3 schools. The Academic Council carefully debated the emirates as well as the potential pitfalls of the Credit/No Credit Policy at Baruch. There were 3 main ideas surrounding the rationale for this decision. The first is in terms of protecting the academic integrity of the institution and our students. The Council acknowledged the possibility of the Credit/No Credit flexible grading policy undermining the integrity of the Baruch college degree, transcript, and overall learning process, including the undermining of academic sanctions for academic dishonesty. Council members fully understand the need to balance such possibilities with the hardships that many of our students have gone through under the current unprecedented situations. In terms of registering for required upper-level courses, students need to be advised that Credit/No Credit grades in lower-level courses may significantly impact the student's preparation for upper-level courses. The council also took into consideration the post-graduate harm the Credit/No Credit option could have and the negative immediate and long-term effects it could have on the students' success. The Council's wishes are for the ability to apply for scholarships, fellowships, and internships to remain competitive for our graduates, that their chances of entering the job market are ever in their favor with a valid and accredited degree, and the protection of clinical and professional opportunities in graduate degree programs. While some institutions makes the case for continued temporary implementation of the Credit/No Credit option, as the pandemic is slowly start to end, and as many other institutions veer away from implementing similar grading policies, Baruch students will be penalized for having transcripts with 3 semesters of Credit/No Credit grades. The council also saw that the Withdrawal (W grade) policy that CUNY revised in Spring 2020 meets the needs for a more flexible grading system. Students may now withdraw from a course up until the last day of classes. The W grade, like the No Credit option, does not impact GPA. Similar to a No Credit grade, a W grade may have financial aid implications and students are encouraged to seek additional support from the appropriate offices. In terms of next steps with this decision, the members of the Academic Council agree that they will engage with students and faculty in explaining the police we have adopted and the rationale behind it, and in developing student support services to offer relief from recognized hardships due to the pandemic. In accomplishing this communications campaign, the 3 deans and vice presidents will immediately engage with students and faculty in collaboration with the Office of

Communications, Marketing, and Public Affairs (OMCPA) in the next several weeks. Concurrently, the Schools will begin the process of Designing and establishing an undergraduate Pass/No Credit policy comparable to that of the schools' graduate programs. The new Pass/No Credit policy in each school will undergo review through the appropriate governance approval processes in order to be permanently added to the schools' grading policies.

- b. Dean King: Aside from the Withdrawal policy for students, we also have the Medical Withdrawal policy set in place for students going through medical or health related hardships, and the Medical Withdrawal option doesn't impact their academics. Take advantage of the emergency fund as well, SACC, all other offices and resources, and when in doubt reach out to the dean's office for support.
- c. Tomasz: We get questions from students about this issue all the time, and we never have a concrete answer for them. Is this policy finalized to the point we can announce it to the students, about Credit/No Credit not being passed through this semester?
- d. Provost Lee: I intentionally came here tonight to communicate this decision with the USG before our public announcement, which will happen next week at the latest. You may share this information, but the reason why I said I need your help as students leaders is so when you address this issue, I would encourage you to frame the message in a lighter tone, and then to get the feedback from the student body. Once the information has been shared with them, the students are more than welcome to voice their opinions to us, and we hope that they understand that all the decisions that were made were done so for the benefit of their future success and academic well being.
- e. Tomasz: I just wanted to make sure that we as a USG don't have to get anymore student input and that this is the policy that's been decided.
- f. Provost Lee: Yes, and to repeat myself, all the aforementioned factors I mentioned, the academic integrity of the institution and maintaining the validation and upholding the standard of your education and your degree is of utmost importance. Given that we give that authority to faculty, we also give it to the student representative of the undergraduate curriculum committee council as well, because you have voting rights that should be protected. This is where you have another chance to voice your concerns about anything at Baruch, whether academic related, faculty related, or more.
- g. Cindy: What is the difference between the Credit/No Credit policy and a Pass/No Credit policy, and when will it be enacted?
- h. Provost Lee: The difference is that, with the Credit/No Credit policy, after you receive your grades, you can opt in to convert it into a Credit or No Credit option. With the Pass/No Credit policy, you have to opt in before you see the grade. Once you choose either a Pass or No Credit option, it can not be reversed. We still have to get the policy reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees, so it will not be in effect for Spring 2021, but possible for the next academic year. The Pass/No Credit policy will also have a few more restrictions than the previous Credit/No Credit flexible grading policy.
- i. Laiba: My question is in regard to a separate issue, the email that Briana sent out this week about student issues with Professor Shulamith Gross. I wanted to get an elaboration on what's going on.
- j. Provost Lee: I responded to Briana's email. Basically saying that all those issues were brought up to the President's office, the Chair Dean, and myself. The appropriate actions have been set, and the situation has been taken care of. For privacy reasons, I can not get into much detail of the issues, but actions were taken to protect the students and ensure that something like this won't happen again.
- k. Dean King: Absolutely, and so you know, we are very sympathetic with the ongoing issues in Myanmar and are working to ensure that all of our students studying there have the right counsel and resources.
- l. Steven: Is USG able to know what exactly those appropriate actions were?

- m. Provost Lee: I will need to consult with our legal counsel on this. Don't forget we are all protected by certain legal rights put in place to protect our privacy and individual rights. I am more than happy to email Briana with the information I can share with you. Does that seem fair?
- n. Steven: Yes, it does. It's just because I felt like before when you just said "appropriate actions" some students may interpret that in a wrong way, and having a more sustainable answer is beneficial.
- o. Provost Lee: I understand, and I want to emphasize that we are here to support students and faculty throughout any hardships.
- p. Dean King: It's similar to when students come to me for their own personal matters. I can not go around sharing details about it, to protect your privacy.
- q. Provost Lee: Thank you so much, Dean King. I really appreciate his support and cooperation. The same goes for Damali Tolson and all the great work she does. I really appreciate it.

### 3. Leslie Hunt | Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Baruch

- a. Leslie: Good afternoon. I feel so humbled and honored that you gave me a few minutes to talk to you. I was once a Baruch student myself. On campus, I'm the director of graduate programs in the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, and I've also been appointed as the co-chair of the Presidential Advisory Council of Diversity, Equity, and inclusion. That council is a consultant for the president on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We're charged with supporting the Baruch College Community in assessing and enhancing a diverse and respectful campus. You may have received an email from the president last Thursday announcing that the Presidential Advisory Council, of which Damali is also a member, are initiating 40 listening sessions with our campus community. 20 sessions have been set aside specifically for students. What's important to the council is to inform our plans and the advice that we give to the President, and we want to have the voices of the community included in this process. I'm here to ask for your help to spread the word and engage students in registering using the [registration link](#). We started sessions yesterday. Each session is scheduled to have up to 8 people, and the information gathered at these sessions will be incorporated directly into the future plans and policy of the college as it relates to equity and inclusion matters. At the sessions, you'll be asked 3 questions specifically about equity and inclusion. The council is aware that our campus has issues and concerns on those fronts, and we want to hear your stories and share this information with us so that we can start to develop priorities for the campus to move forward on issues of equity and inclusion.
- b. Damali: In all seriousness, you have a lot to say offline about these matters. This time, the school is actually asking for your input. They've gone through a lot of trouble to set up these sessions and moderate it by administrators who are considered a safe space. They have done it in a way that is not intrusive where it will allow students speak up. There will be sessions for faculty and staff as well, so please have students sign up because when I go into the room to say, "this is what students are facing" this helps me advocate and everyone on the council to advocate for you. It's not just something that I heard, but it's being documented and shared with your experience, not your individual names, so don't worry that if you say something about a faculty member that it will get back to them.
- c. Leslie: The facilitators have been trained, and all have counseling backgrounds, so that they're there to listen to you. Part of the reason I'm so touched is that I also had some terrible experiences when I attended Baruch, and I'm privileged to be part of a group that is doing something about the matter to ensure student voices are being heard and protected. We've organized the sessions by affinity and identity group so you can be in a safe space to have these types of conversations. A social media post has been created for these sessions, and we will share it out this week with USG and GSA.

- d. Osvaldo: I was looking at the website, and I was just a bit concerned because with the questions, it seems like there's a certain way the conversations are being led where it doesn't seem to be too open for a student to speak about their frustrations.
- e. Leslie: The questions are published on the website so it's not a secret of what we're asking. These conversations are intentionally focused on trying to understand your experiences with equity, or inequity, and inclusion or not feel included. We also ask if you were a person in power and looking to create a change in what action you would take. These questions are intended to be general so that we are asking about the specific categories of equity and inclusion in terms of our campus climate. We understand that there's a lot more topics and issues to be discussed on the matter, and there are other opportunities to engage with the council, like our Meet and Greets. We are also planning on having a second set of listening sessions focused on a possible list of intervention methods and solutions to solve these problems in the long term. We do strive to explore other topics moving further in future conversations. I invite you to reach out to me for questions or concerns, at [Leslie.hunt@baruch.CUNY.edu](mailto:Leslie.hunt@baruch.CUNY.edu).
- f. Yam-Yu: I think this is a really great initiative. I was looking through the form and I see in the top part it says whoever is filling this application can select all the respective groups that they identify with and the second part is selecting a listening session. Is this only limited to one session per student?
- g. Leslie: We are hoping students will only register for one session, the one which is of the greater importance to them, so that we can hear for the largest number of voices possible. If the session that you wanted to participate in has passed or full, we ask that you contact us with this inquiry so that we can look into holding more sessions. There may be people who can attend more than one session, such as a student who is also a staff member on campus. Again, thank you for your time, I appreciate you all.

#### 4. Joel De La Cruz | USS Rep

- a. Joel: I'm here to give the USS report for January 2021. I will share statistics from the 2020 Fiscal and Financial Budget Overview, and our budget for the 2021 year as well. Based on enrollment numbers, and whatever number we're given, we adjust it to 11% and subtract that, it is our total for our operating budgets and total USS budget. We collect a student activity fee of \$1.45 from every student on every CUNY campus. Some student programs don't pay it, but generally we do. Last year's budget totaled at around \$750,000. We have a partnership with CUNY where they handle our banking and take a 7% administrative fee. USS grants 4 scholarships every year to every campus. It includes the Merit Award, the award for students with disabilities, the award for international students, and the award for graduate students. We also allocate about 30% of our budget to CUNY athletics, and the CUNY wide sports team. Our operating budget includes the USS standing committee line, and this is where we get the money used for our operations, lobbying efforts, programs, and co-sponsorships. Currently online, we are still awarding co-sponsorships to clubs that apply. For this year's budget that was passed in January, our numbers have gone down, which has affected how we allocate funds. We can still pay our staff, but we haven't been able to spend more on lobbying efforts. Enrollment has gone down, and we're still collecting a student activity fee. The total USS budget for this year is \$670,000. We are still doing co-sponsorships and money is still being allocated to CUNY athletics. With the USS standing committee line, it is controlled by the Chancellor of Student affairs who works at CUNY central. We do work alongside the CUNY Vice Chancellor on this, but the budget is not as flexible. My final point will be regarding updates on the Credit/No Credit policy.
- b. Taji: Before you continue, in case you weren't here when it was discussed, the Provost just informed us that the Credit/No Credit policy will not be put into effect for this semester.

- c. Joel: Yes, that's correct. The Board of Trustees has communicated to all of CUNY that it's up to each respective school what they want to do regarding the Credit/No Credit policy, and for it to be implemented on their campus level.

## Unfinished Business

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1. Taji Sanders | President Pro Tempore
  - a. Taji: We started the USG "Freaky Friday" takeovers. I was the first one up last week, and it was really fun. Thank you Christine for setting it up. I believe next up is Genesis' takeover this Friday. I can not wait for people that were pushing for this and really wanted this to [sign up](#) for their own takeovers as well.
2. Laiba Hussain | Chair of Public Opinion
  - a. Laiba: The Farmers' Protest event will take place this Thursday, March 4th, at 12:30p.m. Make sure to market it on your social media and come through if you can.
3. Yam- Yu Li | VP of Student Affairs
  - a. Yam-Yu: We are having an event this Friday, March 5th at 4:00p.m. in collaboration with the Counseling Center. It's been posted on the USG page, so please share it and come if you can.

## New Business

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1. Taji Sanders | President Pro Tempore
  - a. Taji: I was checking the event calendar, and the next event I see is a Big Sibs event for this Thursday, shoutout to that. There's nothing after March 5th, so if you do have any other events, please add it and update the calendar.
  - b. Yam-Yu: The calendar should be up to date at the moment. I know student affairs has 2 events there, one for this Friday and one in April.
  - c. Cindy: Do you have the link for the events calendar?
  - d. Genesis: Yes, I'll add it [here](#).

## Adjournment

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1. Motion to adjourn Senate Meeting #18 at 6:59 PM. Motion passes, 15-0-0