

Undergraduate Student Government

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Meeting 19

Meeting Date:	March 9, 2021	Meeting Time:	5:31PM - 6:38M
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
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
[Absent] Cindy Chen Chair of Graphic Design	Christine Gajdos Chair of Marketing
Osvaldo Garcia Chair of Philanthropy	[Absent] Laiba Hussain Chair of Public Opinion
Tomasz Horczak Representative Senator	Raphael Berdugo Representative Senator
[Absent] Alex Cuanal Representative Senator	[Absent] Erika Cumbe Representative Senator
Zariana Gonzalez Representative Senator	Mayer Estinville Representative Senator
Matthew Sanchez Representative Senator	

Trigger Warning

1. To those reading these minutes,

Please note the first report is from a College Mental Health/Suicide Prevention Specialist from the “I’m Possible” Project on a proposed event discussing mental health and illness and available resources. Some topics discussed may be sensitive to some readers.

Topics discussed include, but not limited to:

- suicide and suicide ideation
- clinical depression and generalized anxiety disorder
- mental health and mental illness
- additional resources

For more information or additional aid, please visit

<https://www.baruch.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/counselingCenter.htm>

Passing of the Minutes

1. Motion to pass Senate Meeting #18 minutes. Motion passes, 11-0-3

Reports

1. Yam-Yu Li and Joshua Rivedal | VP of Student Affairs and Guest Speaker (College Mental Health/Suicide Prevention Specialist)

- a. Yam-Yu: Our guest speaker today is Joshua, who's from the "I'm Possible Project." He'll be speaking about a potential event that we hope to host sometime this semester, and wanted to get the table's input. We have been working closely with the Counseling Center, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to have Joshua come and talk to us about mental health, suicide prevention, and more.
- b. Joshua: Hello everyone. I have been working in this field of mental health and suicide prevention for the past 9 years. Part of it is based on experience, my academic research, and things of that nature. Since 2011, I've given almost 400 presentations in 4 countries on this topic. Since March 2020, I've done 45 virtual presentations and I just realized that people are struggling so much during this time, myself included. Talking about your own mental health struggles is important, and will certainly be part of the event because as leaders ourselves, it's important to be vulnerable and to show others it's okay, to reach out and ask for help and it's okay to not be okay because then it gives other people permission to have those experiences. The event that I'm proposing is an hour-long zoom event, 45 minutes of a talk, 15 minutes of a Q&A. Different from what traditional speakers do, we'll record the event and make it available 4 weeks after the live stream so it allows students more time to really grasp all this information. I'll start with some housekeeping, and especially now talking about COVID alongside discussions on mental health and suicide prevention. It's been a difficult time for all of our mental health and how we're grieving and mourning and reframing the time period. So allowing us to certainly grieve and mourn but also offer some hope and that we have an opportunity to reframe and pay more attention to our mental health and wellness. Then I go into some story-telling, talking about how I grew up in a more private culture where we don't talk about that stuff and so it was very much to my detriment because I discovered a secret that my grandfather, who died in 1996, died by suicide. This was very harmful because that led me to start keeping secrets of my own mental illnesses and mental health challenges, with my 2 mental illnesses being clinical depression and generalized anxiety disorder. I take a well-placed tangent on that and I talk about what that looks like and how that shows up in my life and how they're not just liabilities but they can also be assets as well. I do talk about the struggle but I also make sure that people realize the mental health and mental illness are not synonymous. They can certainly cover the same ground but people who have mental health don't all have mental illness. They're not one of the same. It's really important and opens up the floor to allow us to have these kinds of conversations internally and externally. I also talk about losing my father to suicide at age 25 and how I struggled for the next 2 years with everything I was dealing with. Fortunately I reached out for help and so I gave a picture of what recovery looks like and how it was a 9-month process for me. I talk about 7 to 10 coping mechanisms I used in that recovery process, the Baruch College Counseling Center being one of them because I was a student here at the time. I think it's a real treat to be able to come back and talk to Baruch students. Then I go into a more traditional slideshare about suicide prevention and why people think of suicide as hopelessness in the box that we live in. I make sure to cover that ground, the symptoms, how to look for someone, and spotting those signs online and offline and then talking about how to frame that conversation with someone experiencing suicidal ideation and how to be present for them. I frame it very much like CPR in that nobody is expecting you to fix that person. You are triaging

emotionally in a sense and then seeking professional help. This conversation is structured in that the framework can also be used for lower-level crazies, like for the friend who's just not getting help or having some bad days. I provide resources at the end, including Baruch, New York City and National US resources but also BIPOC resources because we live in a very diverse city and not everybody speaks English as a first language so we need to honor people how they feel most comfortable showing up when they feel most comfortable receiving and asking for help. It's proven that most often people are going to seek out those who look and sound like them. It's important in all fields for sure, but for this field in particular representation matters so much. At the end, we filter those resources through the Q&A session. 2 things I also emphasize is that I know not everybody feels comfortable being seen and heard around this topic so they can ask me a question anonymously and I will answer it without revealing any identifying features around who you are, and that I will be there for as long as the questions come in so if we go over time, I'll still be there until we're done. My in person fee is usually \$4500 but for this I've lowered it to \$1500. Budgets at universities are all over the place so I thought it was flexible and the second piece to the funding is that my company is a small scholarship fund so we can't offer full scholarships, but we can with partial scholarships. I want to leave the barrier of entry open so you can contact me with any questions or concerns, because topics and conversations are so essential. This is something that I make sure I've done my research on to speak in a safe language. One element of that is I would never talk about the methodology of how my dad and granddad died, or saying things that are very common in our vernacular, like "someone committed suicide." Safe language is, "they died by suicide" and there's a lot of reasons for that. We're not here to get the definition of why but I'm just explaining that safe language is very important, as well as an inclusive and first person language.

- c. Briana: Yam-Yu, when would you want to have this event?
- d. Yam-Yu: I would still need to talk with Joshua for his availability. Currently, Student Affairs is going to have another "Let's Talk About It" Session with the Counseling Center on April 8th. So any time from now until April, or even after if availability is limited.
- e. Damali: Joshua, do you have a background in mental health training?
- f. Joshua: Yes, I have a background in social and emotional learning, and 3 peer review journal entries I co-authored. One on suicide prevention, one on health and chronic illness, and one on surviving it.
- g. Damali: Yam-Yu, the segments with the Counseling Center will need to be private in case anything comes up for participating students. Whatever scheduling you do, make sure you coordinate that with someone from the Counseling Center.
- h. Yam-Yu: Yes, I will. I have a proposal. I did speak with Nancy offline about the budgeting and she gave the okay. Could we do a soft vote for anyone who would be interested in helping out?
- i. Joshua: Would everyone be more comfortable if I left for this part? I just want to be respectful.
- j. Damali: I think that would be helpful.
- k. Joshua: Okay, I will take off now. Thank you Yam-Yu and everyone for your time.
- l. Briana: You can soft vote on the sheet if you're able to help, attend, and can market it as well.

2. Briana Staten | EVP

- a. Briana: Last week, Leslie Hunt came to talk to us about the diversity, equity, and inclusion listening sessions they will be hosting. Currently, the listening session for USG is March 25th and no one has signed up yet so just wondering if that time works for people and if not wo, what would be the best alternative for another USG session.

- b. Damali: Okay, do you guys even want to do this? I just want to know because it seems like for all of the student sessions, there's a lack of response and I just give them some feedback on why. I'm not in this particular subgroup so I wasn't included in the planning of this. But if it doesn't work for you, you're not interested in it, the timing doesn't work, just let me know. I don't want to make you do something or add something else to your plate or make it feel like a burden. I just want some feedback.
- c. Richard: I would sign up because the message they're portraying is super important. My advice is in terms of their structure, it may seem too rigid and not optimizing for engagement. It's only limited to 3 questions, which I can see why they do it like that, but it can be daunting and not give people more time to elaborate on their experiences. I would say to structure it more as sort of a student forum, so it doesn't just feel like it's an interview or collecting data, but so people can express themselves.
- d. Damali: I saw a lot of heads nod at the interview portion. Is that a general feeling?
- e. Osvaldo: I brought up that concern last time as well, in terms of the listening sessions' structure potentially being too confusing or not as open for students. The questions may help guide the session, but it could also throw off or limit students. It may not be the intent, but that's the way students may perceive that. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I also know that these dates conflict with midterms dates and could be the reason why students are less prone to sign up. I also haven't seen much marketing on my end as well, so that could be improved.
- f. Damali: Thank you guys for being honest. I appreciate it and will share your feedback with them. If you can, please sign up for the March 25th session, and I know there will be another OSJ member there.
- g. Briana: The moratorium upon Greek Life will be ending in May. For next week's senate, for about the first 30 minutes of next week's senate, we will be having an open forum alongside Dean King where anyone can come in and state their opinions. I've also reached out to a prior USG member, Dan, who was in office when the moratorium was first passed, to see if he or his team members would like to come and speak as well. The marketing for this forum will be released this week, and of course our senate meeting's minutes will record it so students can check them out at a later time.
- h. Official nomination and voting for USS Alternate
 - i. Briana: As an E-Board, we selected Yehuda Wexler, our previous USS alternate, as the next USS Delegate. He has been attending USS meetings and acknowledged by other CUNY campuses for all his hard work throughout the USS. With that, the position was open and we discussed it and would like to nominate Richard Reyes for the position of USS Alternate Delegate.
 - ii. Richard: E-board reached out to confirm the details. Throughout our tenure, you've seen my passion and advocating for students and I've worked with our USS delegates in the past to enact change within the student body through several projects, and make sure they're being well represented throughout Baruch and CUNY.
 - iii. Osvaldo: So a table member could also be elected as an USS alternate?
 - iv. Briana: Yes, and anyone who ran and got elected for a USG position for the 2020-2021 year.
 - 1. Richard Reyes, USS Alternate Delegate, 14-0-1

3. Osvaldo Garcia | Chair of Philanthropy

- a. Osvaldo: When the Provost came to talk to us about alternatives for the proctoring system, I reached out to Taji and went to a faculty senate meeting with him. I wanted to provide a survey and connect with professors to discuss alternatives that would be equitable for students. I'm also working with the Associate Provost and want to get some table input on what should be included in the survey, and alternatives that could be put in place.

- b. Richard: What is your timeline for this, with midterms coming up and all?
- c. Osvaldo: We are trying to get this set up before the next faculty senate meeting. I would like to complete it before midterms, but since that's underway already, we would like to have it done before finals week.
- d. Richard: Have you heard anything about students' interaction with professors about them implementing any other alternatives to the proctoring system that haven't been spoken about, since we heard a lot about this last semester?
- e. Osvaldo: Recently I haven't heard anything regarding it, and from what I know, the associate Provost hasn't been made aware of any new cases, but I can talk with him about it as well.
- f. Briana: Alison Larsmuels, who is the Director for Baruch's Teaching and Learning Center, and last year when we first went online, she was against proctoring and released a 20 page document shared with the faculty about her proposed alternatives and getting more of the students' perspective. I can definitely connect you with her, and also as an USG, we could also release an infographic form where students could report to us any concerns or cases they have, so I could put in a request to Cindy.

4. Richard Reyes and Janet Rossbach | VP of Legislative Affairs and Director of Alumni Relations and Volunteer Engagement

- a. Janet: Hello, I'm the Director of Alumni Relations and Volunteer Engagement here at Baruch. I manage the alumni office, which is like a post graduation office of student life. We host over 100 programs a year for alumni to connect with one another and to mentor and participate in student related events. We often help student clubs source alumni for different programs and events, and Richard and I were talking about a possible alumni student event to take place this Spring.
- b. Richard: Thanks for coming, Janet, we really appreciate it. Looking back towards 2020, we're in this different situation that we've been accustomed to, with students graduating during the pandemic and traversing through the job market as a Baruch College graduate. Janet and I have been talking about hosting a panel sometime in late April or May consisting of 5 alumni students hosting breakout rooms from all schools, Zicklin, Marxe, and Weissman, so that we can get a conversation going and sharing experiences between alumni and current students. For those table members graduating this semester, it would be really great for you to attend. Janet can provide us with the alumni connections from the Class of 2020 and 2019, so that we can host a very interactive event so that we're well-prepared.
- c. Janet: To clarify, we would have 5 members of the Class of 2020 on the panel. I would be happy to host, but also have your senate members be a part of it, go into breakout rooms. We could do 30-45 minutes with that panel, and then go into breakout rooms for additional conversations. We would like to invite the Class of 2020 to attend, and 2019 as well. Those who are graduating this year, we're very excited to welcome you to your alumni network. You should have been receiving emails from us about our 100 days initiative which is the countdown to the last day of the semester.
- d. Alison: This is a great idea, especially with the way the pandemic has affected the work community. I know you mentioned having 5 panelists from the Class of 2020, but I also think it would be beneficial to have some from the Class of 2019, seeing as they were able to graduate in person and entered a different market than the virtual one that exists today.
- e. Janet: Definitely, and in terms of identifying who those folks would be, I would ask Richard to be the point person and if any of you know of someone, invite them to participate. We'd be happy to do that. We also have a number of alumni from those two classes that we can reach out to, so I think we could work together, in terms of creating a master list of people to invite and then take it from there. We would love for this to turn into an annual partnership with USG.

- f. Briana: When are you looking to host this event?
- g. Richard: Around early May or late April to give us a timeline to plan it out and for students to attend.
- h. Janet: My thought was to host it Around 4:30p.m. because, from our understanding, it's a nice sweet spot between when students are finishing up with class or work.
- i. Briana: If you're saying that it seems to be a good time, I would agree, too. For our graduating seniors on the table, do you have any additional insights?
- j. Irine: This is a great idea, and I can't wait to see all the alumni give their input on how the world has been treating them since the pandemic, and how they were able to transition into a more virtual work environment and prosper in it.
- k. Janet: I agree, Irine. Sticking on that suggestion, we could have 3 or 4 breakout rooms run for 15 minutes and ensure that there's an equal ratio of Class of 2019 and 2020 graduates in the rooms.
- l. Genesis: This event sounds like a great idea. I have one recommendation regarding the structure of the event. I know you had proposed having a 30 to 45 minute panel session first, then end it off with breakout rooms. I actually think breaking up both activities into a 15 to 20 minute panel at the start, then moving to breakout rooms, and having everyone come back at the end with 15 minutes to share their thoughts on the conversations would work best. I know by this point, not too many people enjoy sitting through an hour long panel discussion where they can't really talk, so the structure I'm proposing would definitely help keep students and your panelists engaged, and help the discussion flow as well and give people more room to talk and connect with each other.
- m. Janet: I think that's a really good idea, and we could make it work.
- n. Alison: If possible, we could create a Google Doc for the process of getting the alumni so they could list whether or not they're employed before the pandemic, currently, or not yet.
- o. Janet: Our hope was also to have a diversity of industries represented, from each one of the schools, so we can engage students from across the 3 schools.
- p. Richard: Thank you all for your suggestions and input. It would also be great for the graduating seniors of 2021 to be engaged in it, but also let us know if this is something you would like to attend.
- q. Janet: For all of you graduating seniors, please feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn. I would be more than happy to help you out. Thanks Richard, and I look forward to working with you all.

Recess starts at 6:24p.m.

Recess ends at 6:26p.m.

5. Joel De La Cruz | USS Delegate

- a. Joel: I'm here to give you the February USS report. First we have the Resolution Demanding a Safe Vessel at the NYC Hudson Yards. To explain the purpose for this, there were a number of suicides that happened at the vessel, which also involved 2 CUNY students, and because of that, the Vice-Chair Graduate Affairs decided to make a resolution that demanded that Hudson Yards company and the real estate project be taxed for mental health services and funding towards CUNY, and the resolution was passed. We had a speaker from the CUNY FoodNavigator program speak at a USS meeting to explain what their program is and what they do. In response to COVID-19, there've been a lot of policy changes and legislation passed to help certain groups in need, like students or small businesses. One of these changes is that now students that previously weren't eligible for SNAP and other nutritional benefits now do qualify and the CUNY FoodNavigator your program is a group of CUNY student employees that work to help other CUNY students apply for SNAP and other programs like that, and interested students

can seek their help if needed. Next, I'll talk about the Tuition Hike Rally that happened this morning, which was hosted by USS and the SUNYSA. We had a number of politicians partake in the rally.

- b. Yam-Yu: Do you have a direct link that can be shared about the CUNY FoodNavigator program.
- c. Joel: Yes, I'll send [the link](#) in the chat.

6. Steven Le | VP of Campus Affairs

- a. Steven: The last day for the Big Sibs Mentorship program will be on March 23rd, from 7:00 to 8:00p.m. On that day, the mentors and mentees will be collaborating with one another to create an event. It would be great to have USG representation there for support. They have been on this incredible journey learning about the different resources on campus through the workshops and conversations we've had and with their mentors. I'd really much appreciate it if we can show up to congratulate them on this amazing journey.

Unfinished Business

- 1. No Unfinished Business.

New Business

- 1. No New Business.

Adjournment

- 1. Motion to adjourn Senate Meeting #19 at 6:38 PM. Motion passes, 15-0-0