

CMU Student Senate

Minutes of August 28, 2008

5:06 pm Roll Call

Senators Present: Cassandra Abernathy (CIT), Dorian Adeyemi (HSS, .5 absence), Mana Ameri (CIT), Steven Burton (CFA), Miriam Cha (CIT), Jason Deng (SCS), Christopher Franzi (HSS), Aaron Gross (HSS), Michael He (CIT), Jayesh Kapoor (TSB), Barbara Kasbergen (CFA), Chansaly Ritchi Ker (CIT), Ranjit Korah (CFA), Diane Lee (CIT), Kush Mangal (MCS), Bassem Mikhael (BHA/BSA/SHS), Daniel O'Toole (CIT), Marcela Partida (CIT), Dina Patel (MCS), Robert Piston Jr. (MCS), Vivake Prasad (HSS), Sonali Shah (MCS), Prashanth Swamy (MCS), Benjamin Trump (BHA/BSA/SHS), Thomas Tuttle (SCS), Damian Valdes (TSB), Carolina Velez (HSS), Brian Wade (TSB), Lingshui Wang (CFA), Nik White (CIT),

Senators Absent: Hemant Bothra (CIT, 1 absence) Jonathan Wigdortz (CFA, 1 absence)

5:06 pm Call to Order

5:06 Agenda Approved

5:09 Audience Participation

5:09 pm Ex-Officio Reports (Jared Itkowitz and Pooja Godbole)

- Introduction of projects:
 - Host football games—provide free food and giveaways to raise attendance. Also, student senate members should wear student senate shirts at the games.
 - Screen on the green. Late Sept. early Oct.
- Safety and dining issues are priority.
- December trip Washington D.C. to meet Qatar students.
- Pittsburgh student government dinner.

5:12 Introduce non members at large

5:12 President of Graduate Student Assembly

- Graduate Student Association (GSA) proposes to work on student safety and dining.
- Marketing campaign to promote advocacy work for graduate students.
 - Healthcare plan with HighMark health insurance.
- Meetings are on first Wednesday of the month at 5:00 pm.

5:14 Vice president of Student Finance (Evan)

- Discusses increased interest in meetings.
- Roll over budgets are low and some groups are in debt.
- What is JFC?
 - Gives money to organizations

5:16 By-law changes (Jared Itkowitz)

- Creation of a president's cabinet.
 - By-laws would state what that cabinet is (will vote on it next week).
- Intention is to involve more students in student government.
 - Increase executive branch to facilitate this.

- Structure: small cabinet. Chief of staff, publications secretary (make student government more visible), attorney general (provide opinions on the legality of legislation), and applications engineer. No senate members are allowed on cabinet.

5:21 Questions

- (Christian Taylor) Description? Application engineer?
 - Web Master works closely with Student Senate, not appointed by the president of the student body but by the student election board.
- (Carolina Velez) Who so you want to appoint? Can senate vote?
 - Try to be as nonlimiting as possible. Have an interview process.
- (RJ) Any formal requirement?
 - They are chosen at the discretion of the student body president.
- (Thomas Tuttle) Is this competing with Senate?
 - It would only challenge Senate to be more aggressive. Senate cannot be deterred by empty Senate seats.
- (Benjamin Trump) Do you have a rough deadline?
 - Second week of October. 6 weeks as a rough projected timeline. The PR secretary must be selected by the second week of Oct.
- (Nik White) Is there any though behind a senator that would be absolutely perfect for the job?
 - If the person wanted the position they must resign. They would have to also talk with the chair to validate that they have a good reason to leave their post and that they would enhance student government.
- (Marni) Do cabinet members have voting rights in senate?
 - No
- (Mana Ameri) Is there a timeline for training?
 - It's a team working together on larger goals. Roles are not completely definite. They work together for the long term vision. Do senators have to resign to run for a position? No, President does not
- (Kush Mangal) If it doesn't run efficiently, is there a way of renewing it? Such as with a system of Checks and balances?
 - The by-laws say that if a cabinet is no longer wanted, they don't have to have it. A 2/3 vote could null the by-laws. Introduce amendments for this.
- (Diane Lee) Are you going to find people or will there be an application process?
 - First have PR chosen but we don't want it to be limiting. A stipulation isn't necessary.
 - Why is it only the president?
 - Because it is the president's cabinet. Senate and GSA for approval power is enough power. They don't need removal power; they would be notified.
- (Stuti) Would there be overlap between cabinet and senate?
 - No, there may be a bit of overlap. Senate is, however, more powerful.
- (Vivake Prasad) Would senators sit in on interviews and review applications?
 - Yes.
 - Have legislation to remove a person?

- We should write the by-laws with future governments in mind. We should not be opposed to giving senate jurisdiction to have removal power; we just feel it not necessary.
- (Chistian) What if senators don't approve anyone?
 - Then there would not be a cabinet.
- (Sonali Shah) How well would we know the cabinets?
 - By name. Have a week to introduce the candidates. However, in general we should trust the student body president because they are not a governing power so there really shouldn't be much opposition.
- (Dan O'Toole) Are we paying the application engineer?
 - Yes

5:40 Discussion

- (Brian Wade) This is an interesting proposal but I am worried having it so early in the year. It would be more prudent to have a sample test. There should be a deadline for filling the cabinet and not have a reach around tactic. This would help future presidents hit the ground running.
- (Carolina Velez) What if we had a 2/3 vote for the removal and approval.
- (Mana Ameri) We voted for the president because we trust his opinion; we don't need to have so much say in the by-laws.
- (Diane Lee) They are his cabinet members; senate doesn't need so much say.
- This could be the trial year for the cabinet.
- (Ben) Trial period would be unnecessary but is nervous about the recruitment of senators.
- (Dorian) Believes it's the president's prerogative to appoint people to help him, removal power of Senate is a legitimate concern. We need a system of checks and balances. A 2/3 vote for removal is not absurd.
- (Eric) They are just advisers; the President has the prerogative to appoint them.
- (Cassandra Abernathy) We should trust Jared's judgment. They will be helping him make his decision.
- (Jake) Not in the best interest of student government to not allow senators to join the cabinet. We don't have an obligation as senate to monitor Jared's cabinet.
- (Jason Deng) Trial period is unnecessary. If it doesn't work out we can just remove it.
- (Thomas Tuttle) Getting rid of cabinet will not affect his power. Removal power will have no effect. We should have a review of the cabinet after awhile.
- Removal power will do nothing. Friends can get assistance from friends. Perhaps have removal power for the applications engineers because they are paid out of our budget. Hesitant to make it a physical structure in the by-laws.
- (Mana Ameri) We already have a position similar to applications engineer that senate does not have power over, so why should senate have removal power over the applications engineer?

5:53 Committee Reports

- **Internal Development:** (Vivake Prasad) 10-3 Orientation event—training on what to know to become a good senator.
- **Academic Affairs:** no report.
- **Business affairs:** after.

- **Campus life:** not present to provide report.
- **Communications:** no report.
- **Finance:**
 - (Marcela Partida) Overview for next week. Will explain vote for allocation—simple majority and three-fourths (transportation or tax expenses, reimbursements). Type of vote will be identified on the agenda. Have a finance agenda attached to the agenda that will provide a description of the allocation and include a budget.

6:00 Announcements

- Vacant seat by Jake in CFA. Another possible seat to be open. 3 vacancies in SCS. One in H&SS.
- Chair elections for sergeant of arms (has multiple duties) and campus life chair, next meeting. Can make a decision to become a member at large or to have a seat.
- Will have a member at large caucus.

6:04 Questions

- What is the laptop policy?
 - (Chair, Rotimi Abimbola) Laptops are distracting and counterproductive. Only allowed if it really is necessary.
 - Also, no homework or readings allowed.

6:05 Finance (Evan)

- Student government viability committee from GSA, executive body or student senate. Removal by president and chair.
- Will have a PR chair appointed by Jared. Interim chair appointed by mid October.
- Publicize what student government is doing and raise awareness.

6:08 Questions

- (Michael He) Was it successful?
 - It was successful last year. Last year had a lot of ideas how to make Senate better.
- (Diane Lee) Do they have to get together to decide appointment and removal?
 - They all must agree.

6:09 Points of Discussion

Laptop Policy

- Support of laptop ban because it will encourage senators to pay attention to what is going on.
- Chair decision: no laptops.

Senators should make a contribution to maximize potential to give to other organizations.

Senators can subsidize food to help this.

6:14 Announcements

- Attend committee meetings. If you do not attend it will count toward an absence
- Orientation is required for all senators. Not coming counts as an absence.
- Activities fair next Wednesday. Help is welcomed.

6:18 Adjourn