

CMU Student Senate

Minutes of January 17, 2008

5:04 pm Call to Order

5:04 pm Roll Call

Senators Present: Sudeep Paul (TSB), Rohit Kabra (TSB), Jared Itkowitz (TSB), Evan Osherooff (TSB), Rotimi Abimbola (HSS), Alan Eaton (HSS), Dorian Adeyemi (HSS), Amanda Reapsummer (HSS), Helen Lam (HSS), Brian Wade (HSS), Vivake Prasad (HSS), Daniel O'Toole (CIT), Lauren Walch (CIT), Robert Bethea (CIT), Mauricio Garduno (CIT), Matthew Maurice (CIT), Marcela Partida (CIT), Ioannis Goutakis (CIT), Chansaly Ker (CIT), Edward Oh (MCS, Proxy), Prashanth Swamy (MCS), Steven Reilly (MCS), Guangzu Gao (MCS), Joonho Hwang (MCS), Jenny Han (SCS), Hao Su (SCS), Benjamin Johnston (SCS), Kwasi Mensah (SCS), Nara Kasbergen (CFA), Ranjit Korah (CFA), Steven Burton (CFA), Jerry Wang (CFA), Joey Cordes (CFA), Cyrus Larijani (BHA), Conor Flanagan (BHA)

Senators Absent: Luis Balceda (CIT, 1 absence), Hemant Bothra (CIT, 1 absence),

5:06 pm Approval of Minutes from 12/6/2007

5:06 pm Audience Participation

5:06 pm Ex Officio Reports

5:06 pm **GSA President** (Patrick Kelley)

- I was elected and started office this week.
- Contact me if you need anything.

5:06 pm Committee Reports

5:06 pm **Academic Affairs** (Evan Osherooff)

- We're working on a proposal with the university to have pass/fail grades for freshmen.
- The Faculty Senate brought up the subject of +/- grades.

5:07 Questions

- Do they want to implement the pass/fail grades this fall?
- It probably won't happen until fall 2009.
- Would we have to approve the +/- grades?

- They probably want feed back from us, but I don't think we'll vote on it.
- What I heard in the Faculty Senate meetings is that they will be ghost grading for a time and if it helps most students, as they think it will, they will implement +/- grades.
- Will this be school wide or just for certain colleges?
- It will be school wide.

5:09 pm Questions

5:09 pm **Business Affairs** (Timi Abimbola)

- The kiosk construction will begin in February

5:09 pm Questions

5:10 pm **Campus Life** (Sudeep Paul)

- No Report.

5:10 pm Questions

5:10 pm **Communications** (Nara Kasbergen)

- We will talk about the Open Forum in Points of Discussion.
- We want to get people not in Senate interested in Senate meetings.
- Hopefully, we'll have an open forum in the beginning of February.

5:11 pm Questions

5:11 pm **Finance** (Lauren Walch)

- We have a new adjusted budget and a couple allocations for next meeting.

5:11 pm Questions

5:11 pm **Internal Development** (Vivake Prasad)

- ID has changed its focus for this year. We will focus on administrative aspects.

5:11 pm Questions

5:12 pm **Chair** (Jared Itkowitz)

- Pick up a sweatshirt.
- Senate Visibility meetings will start next Wednesday, following ex-comm. I want to have a rotational group of senators along with a core group of senators.
- Committee assignments will be sent out tonight.
- The idea of an open forum came out of the Visibility Committee. Pass/fail and +/- grades could be a topic for the upcoming Open Forum. We want to have three of them; one each at the beginning of February, March, and April.

5:43 pm Points of Discussion

- I fixed up the Senate website. The roster is updated. You can change the information about you. I ask that everyone add a picture and update your information by next week.
- Activities fair is next Wednesday. We'll need people to help out.

5:46 pm **Grading Policy**

- +/- grades or pass/fail grades for freshmen could be a possible topic for the open forum. Senate should have a stance set before having the forum.
- Faculty Senate will shadow grade us for a while and get back to us?
- Yes.
- I know that when you go to law school, your GPA gets recalculated. CMU grades usually go up, but most schools with +/- grading systems don't have a significant rise in their GPA's.
- Pass/fail grades can help freshmen adjust to college life, but people might do just enough to pass. They won't have solid foundations for more difficult classes. Maybe we can do something to guard against that.
- Pass/fail for freshmen is a good idea. We could make Gen Ed classes pass/fail, since they usually don't directly relate to your major.
- I wonder if professors would grade harder if grades were pass/fail.
- If you are going to implement +/- grades, we should only have plusses. It would work to our advantage.
- MIT and Johns Hopkins are the two examples we're looking at. You get a grade, but the grades are internal grades. On the transcript, it shows up as a pass or fail.
- If you start off with a really low GPA your freshmen year, it's really hard to bring back up.
- We could limit the number of classes a freshman can take pass/fail.
- MIT did a study before they implemented the pass/fail grades. I can direct you to the report if you want.

6:02 pm **Possible Senate Open Forum Discussion Topics**

- +/- grading or pass/fail grades
- School spirit
- There was something potentially offensive on the fence and the administration covered it up. We could talk about that.

- Campus awareness in general, how to improve everything from campus media to activities
- Tuition
- Upcoming elections
- There will be an ad in the Tartan that will introduce the open forum discussions.

5:15 pm New Business from Committee

5:15 pm 0708-042 Introduction of Student Government Election Rules

Amendments

- Since elections were off last year, we decided to change some things. We had to make some amendments to the election rules.
- Hopefully we can vote on this next week.
- We're making our election rules specific to the Pittsburgh campus.
- We made changes to the elections board. We're figuring out how to nominate the elections board. An idea right now is to have a nominations committee.
- Look at your copy of the elections rules. We'll go over what it is now and what we want it to be.

5:28 pm Questions

- In point 9, about vacancy, what is a vacancy?
- You get a vacancy when someone resigns.
- We made changes to the timeline. We want to set specific dates and bounding dates to make sure certain things are done on time. We also set some hard deadlines.

5:35 pm Discussion

- There used to be a monthly meeting for all the media related groups on campus. I think they are pretty unbiased; they could be a resource you could look at to nominate the board.
- In the past, there have been situations where people in the campus media endorsed a candidate. They are allowed to have a biased stance.
- I understand having a fewer number of people nominating an elections board would expedite the process, but I still think Senate and GSA should have some type of veto power.
- If we could implement an override power rather than a ratification power, it would be more efficient.
- We're looking to get this passed the first week of February.

6:05 pm New Business from the Floor

6:05 pm Announcements

- All Committee Meetings Will Begin Next Week
- Please meet with your Committee Chair after the meeting
- Student Government Visibility Committee will meet next Wednesday at 9:30 in 318G
- Activities fair next Wednesday. Update your profile.

6:06 pm Motion to Adjourn (Kwasi Mensah)

6:06 pm Adjourn