I. Attendance


Members Absent: Senator Parikh

II. Acceptance of Minutes

Senator Sohn: Motion to accept last week’s minutes?

Senator Chen: Seconded.

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of accepting last week’s minutes? (11 votes)
All those abstaining: Co-Chair Chang

Senator Gogineni: Moving on to announcements.

III. Announcements

President Gratch: Thank you all for coming! I was hoping to have a bigger turn out but what can you do. We technically have 7 people of next year’s Senate here today. So we can do some transition talk later, there are a few people who said they would come next week. I don’t have any other announcements.

Senator Gogineni: We will be discussing bus funding.

Senator Aaron: I met with Michael Roy, the Dean of the Library. I will be sending a survey on library hours to see if there is interest in extending them.

Co-Chair Chang: A few of my constituents did not understand why it was necessary to get so many signatures to run for positions. Also the bike fix station is broken. I’ve emailed the SGA and CC’ed the Institutional Affairs Committee and the Environmental Affairs Committee but haven’t gotten a response.

Senator Toy: Can you expand on what that is?

Co-Chair Chang: There’s a bike fix-it station outside of bike shop. It has a pump and has a lot of tools. It’s a 24-7 thing and a place where you can get your tires pumped without having to have the bike shop be open. The pump head is broken so all we have to do is order one.

President Gratch: Who would be the contact in the bike shop?
Co-Chair Chang: Probably Parker. The students want a new pump. It’s technically the SGA’s station.

Senator Raber: Should we just order it?

Senator Gogineni: So new bike pump. Let’s do it.

Co-Chair Chang: It’s been broken since the middle of the fall and has SGA’s name there.

Senator Gogineni: Do you want to start discussing your first point about signatures?

Co-Chair Chang: They also had another complaint. It was the voting system. A couple people wanted to know why we had switched because they felt if two people both run they will split the same voting pool. So a couple people expressed frustration with it. It would have helped supporting certain students on campus. I thought it was interesting that they brought it up and noticed the change.

Senator Edwards: Which is good.

Senator Gogineni: Does anyone want to propose changes we should be making?

Senator Sohn: I have a point of clarification. The people with the signatures are they confused or frustrated?

Co-Chair Chang: I think they were surprised and thought it was unnecessary. Shouldn’t someone who wants to run just be able to run? It’s a lot of hours to collect that many signatures.

Senator Toy: I get what you’re saying. If you want to represent the students though you should be able to talk to them. It took me 2 hours to collect that many signatures. I think it’s still important to have a mechanism that’s not just a button to click to run.

Co-Chair Chang: It’s not just me saying it it’s multiple other people. And having tried to collect signatures in person it took three of us at least 3 hours to get 100-125 signatures. It doesn’t take everyone 2 hours.

Senator Aaron: One thought would be if there are a lot of people asking the same question there could be something for frequently asked questions on the SGA site or something. It seems if you understand they would understand unless you disagree with it.

Senator Chen: I wonder if it would be helpful to address this. It received a positive response but not everyone was happy about it. I think there if there is some clarity from the SGA “saying hey we heard it this is why we implemented this policy” would be important. And this is probably not why they expressed concern but I wonder if that type of communication would help.
Senator Raber: On the topic of changes to voting system. I think that’s where us as yearly senators have a role. If a big change is made that needs to be conferred to your constituencies. That’s a very clear role of our position: to communicate what we’re passing that is going to affect everyone. So maybe that is something that they did not get an email or didn’t read it. Or there’s a chance that they weren’t told. It’s a lot to change the whole voting system. I think having a Q and A on SGA website would be important.

Senator Boyle: I think that a Q and A addressing issues is key - we did a good job of that on our FB page in the fall but seems to have phased out a little. I think if we posted on it the same as 4 o’clock Proc would be good.

Senator Edwards: I want to echo that when things come up we need to address them publicly. Transparency is important. Maybe moving more towards that would be important.

Senator Grandas: Do you think it would be a good idea to have a role be update the FB page?

Senator Gogineni: It’s the Director of Publicity.

President Gratch: That’s the tough thing with cabinet and senate being separate.

Senator Gogineni: Other announcements? Ok, moving on to the Bus Funding discussion.

President Gratch: I was waiting for the numbers from the Director of Transportation. He hasn’t sent me them yet. I’m hoping Doug will help fill in holes but from what I understand we’ve had some losses with the break bus. The SGA funds the break busses and subsidizes them. We usually end up making enough to offset the cost. Daniel and Debby were hoping that the SGA will consider covering losses they had on busses. And if prices were further subsidized in future it could mitigate from future losses.

Doug: Typically, the SGA allocates 5K a year to offset the potential loss of break busses. There could be no loss while some busses lose others make money. There’s fluidity with adding busses etc. This year it could be they had to tap into transportation money. We changed transportation providers because the old business went out of business. They were charging too little and they weren’t sustainable. We picked a new vendor mid-season. This year we have a standard price but his prices will go up next year. We don’t need to sell out a bus currently: you need to sell 48 out of 55. Under new numbers it’s going to be more like 50-52 which is a tight margin to make even on a bus. If you subsidize prices you might sell more tickets. You can lower price and make it more likely students will buy bus tickets. If you don’t you will loose money. You’re lowering price and making it more accessible but it is a potential. They are working on laying this out in chart form.
President Gratch: So I’m meeting with Daniel this week to talk about next steps but wanted to consult you on your thoughts first.

Senator Gogineni: Options are we take over remaining loss cost?

President Gratch: Going forward we could continue to have back up 5K. But it’s not being spent it’s just on reserve or we could allocate that money spending it and further subsidizing meaning more people will buy them.

Senator Gogineni: Maybe it’s that I haven’t been on the free and for sale group for long but after being on it, it seemslike people are taking a spear at the free market and they advertise that it’s cheaper than the break bus. I think those things should be considered by our future Director of Transportation. Maybe we could have a system in place so that those things are more organized. There are breaks where people will be driving down more often than other breaks. Maybe considering those smaller things – having a system where Midd can have a page for getting places.

Senator Boyle: I think it’s interesting to be on a break bus. I think that it’s really easy and convenient for underclassmen who don’t have access to cars. I don’t know who’s buying break bus tickets but I would assume it’s more underclassmen. That being said I think lowering prices is nice but I’m not sure how much more attractive that would make the break bus. Personal rides leave at a times when the break bus is not leaving. I can’t see how lowering price would make more people want to take it.

Co-Chair Chang: It sounds more of a fun experiment to lower price and see if we make it up. Maybe we could try for one round and then see how it works out? I think we would have to market it well and pose it as a big price reduction even if it seems small. We could also do a survey and see at what price point would you get to Boston etc.

Senator Edwards: I was going to say survey as well. I’m wondering what happened to that app for ride sharing. I don’t know what has happened with that but if that’s to continue I don’t know if we should put as much effort into busses.

Senator Rainey: I think it’s important to look at competitors in terms of Greyhound etc. There was a time I needed to get to Burlington /cities and a greyhound was significantly cheaper. I know a lot of people that opt out for other services.

Doug: Just for clarification. These funds don’t come out of student activities. These are from money that needs to be spent on green travel allocations. It’s not coming out of activities fee it’s money for transportation. And that something in separate funds.

President Gratch: Is there a lot of money sitting in there?

Aaron: We can’t allocate it in any way.
President Gratch: It’s for transportation initiatives. Yes. JJ was working on a bike share that would pull from those same funds.

Doug: That money can be kept by you. If it’s not spent in any given year you keep it. So if you don’t spend the offset and if you make enough money on the busses that money will sit in an account and continue to gain revenue. And you’re reducing money allocated to the bike shop because the bike shop makes money now. You give some but not as much. It’s funds you have to work with.

Senator Raber: I was going to say that as an international student I relied a lot on the break busses. I didn’t know anyone with a car for two years. I want to advocate how important they are for students with no access to cars. I feel like the longer busses should be cheaper – if we do have extra money why not try to cut them down to the lowest cost we can. It’s hard to make this without info on break even per person but maybe that’s something Daniel could give us.

Senator Aaron: If not that many people want to go to Burlington, why not have a student drive a Middrides van or something?

Doug: there’s a licensing problem. You need to be a contracted provider to go to the airport. If you take money for it or spend money you need to have a taxi or bus license. So you hire a contractor.

Senator Gogineni: If we do have to spend money I can see how lowering the price of break bus you would have to compare it to competitors. Why don’t we have a bus to Portland, Maine or New Hampshire? If most of the competition we face is to New York or Boston. What if you want to go to Maine or Mew Hampshire? Why don’t we fund busses to these places?

President Gratch: We decided to do a Montreal bus and it was very successful.

Co-Chair Chang: I think that’s an interesting idea. It sounds like a good way to lose money. I think the Montreal bus is good but maybe we should take a survey. My comment was I like Senator Raber’s comment but I want it in the minutes. I can afford the $15 to the airport but some people can’t. It’s $30 total and that’s more than 3 hours of work if you work for the college. I want to position myself and that’s why I said that but I think it would make the busses more accessible. We could have a sliding scale. If you’re on financial aid maybe its $5 maybe it’s $10.

Doug: On the multiple stops thing: they started doing that. There’s one outside of Boston. I think expanding that would work but with surveys.

Senator Sohn: If we were to expand the stops would the price change for that?
Doug: The current model is there is no change in price if you get off early. Because we don’t have a good ticketing service on board. Right now it’s just one price but we could try a way to differentiate.

Senator Sohn: If anyone knows statistics wise, do break busses sell more during certain breaks?

President Gratch: Spring and fall break generally.

Doug: And Thanksgiving.

Senator Boyle: Feb break most likely break for people to be here.

Doug: One of the challenging ones is the ways for students to leave at the end of the year. The busses can’t leave till exams have been completed. You could renegotiate that and have busses leave at multiple times. It’s hard to wait 6 extra days to catch a bus home and that’s come back from the box office a lot.

Senator Rainey: I’m with what the Co-Chair said. We should consider financial aid for break busses. A lot of members of my constituency have expressed problems with how expensive they are.

Senator Gogineni: Let’s take a straw poll of two options:
1. We put it on reserve with the intention that if there are losses we will compensate.
2. We subsidize it further.

Senator Edwards: can we survey first?

Senator Singh: We’re not making decisions on how to subsidize?

Senator Gogineni: We don’t have enough info for that right now.

President Gratch: What would the survey be asking?

Senator Boyle: Would you consider buying at a lower price?

President Gratch: I think we should do that regardless. It would be helpful to vote for general sense of room.

Senator Gogineni: Ok.
1. All those in favor of 5000 as reserve: No one
2. All those for subsidizing? Everyone
3. All those abstaining: No one

Senator Gogineni: Ok so the official vote is to subsidize.
Co-Chair Chang: Could we take a straw poll on investigating option for sliding scale?

Senator Gogineni: In terms of the information you need to have? Currently the break bus is run by the box office. How would they get access to financial information and how would it be private enough?

Co-Chair Chang: Those are good questions and we could request someone in the cabinet to look into it.

President Gratch: I can ask Daniel at our meeting.

Senator Aaron: I would be curious. We need to keep in mind it cost me $48 with Midd transit to get from Burlington to Midd. When I took a break bus it was $15. It’s already pretty cheap and how many more would buy it if it was cheaper? Should we spend energy on this rather than other bus rides?

Co-Chair Chang: I don’t think comparing our price to Midd transit is good. I think the whole point is making it more accessible.

Senator Aaron: I just don’t know if it’s worth it.

Co-Chair Chang: I think it would be worth it. Getting to the airport and back is one of the hardest parts of getting to school and back. More busses or making it cheaper. It would make it easier to know that one is significantly cheaper. We’re trying to see how the SGA can help students who feel the SGA hasn’t done anything for them.

Senator Rainey: I think it’s a matter of making the rides more accessible to people with lower socioeconomic status.

Senator Raber: I didn’t know this was an SGA initiative, we should publicize that. Burlington is infamously bad with delays especially if you’re traveling internationally. I’ve spoken with the box office before to put me on a later bus but providing contact info with bus driver would be good. I might be 10 min late and ask for them to wait instead of waiting 2 hours for the next bus.

Doug: Having Daniel come in. I think it’s helpful to know. They’ve tried a number of things and have good data. They had a $5 tickets but people didn’t show up. And people that wanted the bus couldn’t take it because it was technically sold out. They had to find a happy medium in cost and make people actually be there. At the same time how to you provide an offset for students that need it? There’s really great data out there.

Co-Chair Chang: Decreasing the cost decreases people’s accountability, I respect that point. Maybe if you miss your bus you can’t take it for the next round. If you miss bus but don’t tell us.

Senator Grandas: Or you get charged extra if you don’t get on the bus.
Senator Chen: I would caution that it’s not punitive but rather a matter of accountability.

Senator Gogineni: Any other comments? Ok moving on to a debrief of the Posse retreat.

Senator Toy: Can I have an announcement?

Senator Toy: We spend $17,000 on newspapers every year. I think that’s ridiculous. The college has an online subscription to NY Times. I think it’s a waste of paper and not everyone reads it. I would be fine getting the Sunday times or just massively reducing the amount of newspapers we get.

President Gratch: Yeah it’s pertinent. Motion to limit to 5 minutes?

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of limiting: Everyone.

Senator Raber: Does this include our newspapers?

Senator Toy: No the NY Times, USA Today, WSJ but not the campus.

Senator Raber: I think that we can only realistically assess if we have more numbers: how many are we getting on a daily basis?

Aaron: Doug can step in. We don’t get charged for newspapers that are not read. But it makes it tremendously frustrating to project cost. One month it’s $430 the next it’s $1120 and the next is lower. Our best guess for this year is $17000. That’s what we can work with as an estimate but it doesn’t tell us anything about how many are being read.

Doug: We pay delivery for WSJ and NY Times Sunday editions.

Senator Raber: So we’re not wasting money on newspapers that are not being read.

President Gratch: That’s NY Times and USA Today. We end up returning 8 per day.

Senator Raber: I think if they’re being read keeping up with current affairs is really important. I think this is something to be taken up with the students.

Senator Singh: I assume that getting school subscription is cheaper. But only NY Times. So if you could expand and have more online subscriptions.

Senator Chen: To Senator Raber’s point. It’s really nice to be able to sit down with your newspaper. Every Monday there are no NY Times because of the crossword. And you have to pay additional money for that on the online. I think figuring out why people take them is important. I can imagine a subset of students getting annoyed at you for getting rid of newspapers.
Senator Gogineni: This might get too arbitrary. But I think that the dining halls seem like such an obvious important places to have newspapers. But sometimes there’s a lot in Voter in the front hallway. That doesn’t make sense.

President Gratch: That’s not the SGA.

Senator Gogineni: Some sort idea as to where newspapers go.

Co-Chair Chang: If people want to do games. We could print crossword puzzles.

President Gratch: Someone requested that we use the account for SGA for that.

Senator Chen: That’s not how the account works.
President Gratch: The Addison Independent contacted me and asked if we want to subscribe.

Senator Chen: The delivery of newspapers is not consistent. Sundays are there but not delivered. I think we need a more reliable system.

Senator Gogineni: Does anyone else have any announcements?

Senator Rainey: President Gratch you submitted a bill to see if we could get SGA and cabinet merged. I don’t have a bill for this but just wanted to poll the group. Can we see if we want the Senate and SGA to meet twice. Meaning the Senate meet once separately (a total of twice a week). If we’re uncomfortable doing so I would like to see what people think.

Senator Toy: I’m going to make structural changes next year. I want each senator to have 1 min and 30 seconds to talk about work they are doing outside of meeting here. This will increase accountability. I want to have a cabinet member come in in each meeting and hear what the cabinet is doing. I hope to create a better situation. It’s hard to get 40 people to meet again.

Senator Gogineni: But if you want to do straw poll you can.

Senator Rainey: I just want to see ideas.

Senator Gogineni: Moving on to the debrief of the Posse retreat. All incoming SGA was there.

Senator Toy: It was good!

Senator Sohn: I came a bit late but it was good!

Senator Toy: It was very well attended. 50 students were there. I wouldn’t say it was accurate of what the Midd student body looks like. There were 3 football players, 4
hockey players, res life, the Campus, SGA, Chromatic, Tavern, Evolution dance and more. It was a good mixture of students. We did activities based on identity and diversity. Similar to the ones at The Posse retreat. It was really nice to meet new people and have everyone discussing and talking. I’m very excited moving forward. I’m planning a similar retreat next fall and then in the spring. I want to keep having conversations like this. It was great to have student athletes there.

Senator Sohn: We did group work similar to what we did here in the fall with mini groups. We came up with issues that have occurred in the past, are currently occurring and those we foresee to occur in the future. We talked about what students are doing now, not doing now and should be doing. We can contact Miguel Fernandez for what issues were covered.

Senator Toy: Some issues were Athlete/non athlete relationship, Op-eds, perceived barriers to entering student orgs. They also sent out thing 10 tips on how to be a leader which were interesting. Reach out, listen etc. It was good.

President Gratch: Was there anything that could be applied to SGA?

Senator Sohn: The working groups were really helpful. Getting the list of issues we came up with with students from other orgs is helpful for us as SGA members.

Senator Toy: I’m not sure if there’s anything specific but reaching out would be important. Personally reaching out not just sending an email. They honed in on that a lot. Creating those connections.

Senator Sohn: I brought this up last meeting and it was about the SGAliaison to the Trustee Board.

President Gratch: Which one. The SLSCA or Board of Overseers?

Aaron: SLSCA, Nate Cleveland?

Senator Sohn: Yes, him.

President Gratch: He has answered zero of my emails this year.

Senator Sohn: Correct me if I’m wrong but that’s one of our main contacts right?

President Gratch: His role is to sit in on the Endowment Affairs Committee. I’ve been sitting on the Board of Overseers. It’s tough because no one has given me the green light to share what has been discussed in the same way he may be? It’s still a problem.

Senator Sohn: When do we choose someone else?

President Gratch: This spring.
Senator Raber: So next week is the last time someone could present a bill?

Senator Toy: If it’s not a bylaws change.

President Gratch: The next 2 meetings will be heavily focused on the budget.

Senator Gogineni: We need to approve anything above 8K I believe?

Aaron: Next week I will present the whole budget. And anything over 10K needs to be approved and will be reaching out to invite anyone over 10k to come in for clarification questions. The following week will be when we approve the budget and that’s because we want to give you a week to think.

President Gratch: Do you have an idea of the 10K ones?

Aaron: Yes. One thing to think about I will be presenting a very work in progress SGA budget because most of the stuff happening is more in the Cabinet or Senate and should be you guys deciding on it. I will present a shell of last year’s etc. but beyond that it’s up to you to make those decisions. Orgs over 10K we can control (i.e. not yearbook) are men’s rugby, religious life, equestrian crew, SCB, ICC, sailing, MCAB, Dolci, Midd intercultural leadership coalition, WRMC, women’s rugby, The Campus and senior committee.

Senator Boyle: SCB – each of those clubs requested x amount of money.

Aaron: Yes, a cluster board is one org that represents a group of orgs. We don’t adjust individual budgets within the whole but adjust the whole. And they then allocate it themselves. This allows clubs a lot more autonomy.

Senator Rainey: How do we define cultural orgs?

Aaron: Every org that has chosen to be considered a cultural orgs under student activities and has Jennifer Herrera as org. manager is considered a cultural org.

Senator Rainey: So self identifying.

Aaron: You would have to go through the process but I believe you’re free to reclassify yourself as well.

Senator Rainey: I only ask because it was a concern of some orgs that were straying the line between cultural and language orgs. Because it could change with funding?

Aaron: That hasn’t been a problem in the past. It only affects by designation of the cluster.
Senator Gogineni: For example, HSA has taken on role of SASA. It happens very frequently and there is that fine line so maybe we should redefine what a cultural org is versus a religious org.

Aaron: If someone wants to take that up go ahead.

IV. Adjournment

Senator Toy: Motion to adjourn

Senator Boyle: Seconded

Senator Gogineni: All those in favor of adjournment: Everyone

Senator Gogineni: Meeting adjourned. Meeting end 8:04 PM.