



University Student Senate
555 West 57th Street, 1420
New York, NY 10019
Tel: (646) 664-8844
Fax: (646) 664-8863

**MINUTES OF THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE**

HELD ON ZOOM

MARCH 14TH, 2021 AT 12:10 PM

I. ROLLCALL

Present Steering Committee Members:

Juwanie Piquant: Chairperson
Joel De La Cruz: Vice-Chair for Fiscal Affairs
Sara Ortiz: Vice-Chair for Graduate Student Affairs
Amber Rivero: Vice-Chair for Senior Colleges
Alexia Christopher: Vice-Chair for Community Colleges
Brandee Simmons: Vice-Chair for Part-time and Evening Students
Brooke Lugo Smith: Vice-Chair for Disability Affairs
Vanella Douglas: Vice-Chair for International Affairs
Aharon Grama: Vice-Chair for Technology Fee Affairs

Present Delegates & Alternates:

Joel De La Cruz (Delegate, Baruch College);
Lizbeth Luna (First Alternate, Baruch College);
Yehuda Wexler (Second Alternate, Baruch College);
Nicholas Ali (Graduate Alternate, Baruch College);
Josiah Ramesar (Delegate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Quintasia Harris (Delegate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Brandee Simmons (Second Alternate, Borough of Manhattan Community College);
Gabriel Morillo (Delegate, Bronx Community College);
Jazmin Ramirez (Delegate, Bronx Community College);
Christopher Soto (First Alternate, Bronx Community College);
Aharon Grama (CLAS Delegate, Brooklyn College);
Elmi Jimenez (Delegate, City College of New York);
Shza Zaki (Delegate, City College of New York);
Sofina Tanni (First Alternate, City College of New York);
Andrew Salmieri (Second Alternate, City College of New York);

Nicole Agu (Delegate, College of Staten Island);
Seamus Hughes (Delegate, College of Staten Island);
Shawn Abraham (Second Alternate, College of Staten Island);
Sara Ortiz (Graduate Delegate, CUNY Graduate Center);
Nerdeen Mohsen (Graduate Alternate, CUNY School of Law);
Bonaparte Pierre (Delegate, CUNY School of Professional Studies);
George Athanassiou (Grad Delegate, CUNY School of Professional Studies);
Justin Sanchez (Delegate, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies);
Eriam Lopez (Graduate Alternate, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies);
Muhammed Tekanyi (Graduate Delegate, CUNY School of Public Health);
Kayla Benjamin (Delegate, Hunter College);
Alexis Fisher (Delegate, Hunter College);
Devashish Basnet (First Alternate, Hunter College);
Hannah Kavanagh (Second Alternate, Hunter College);
Amber Rivero (Delegate, John Jay College);
Tayvhon Pierce (Delegate, John Jay College);
Avijit Roy (First Alternate, John Jay College);
Andrew Berezhansky (Second Alternate, John Jay College);
Saaif Alam (Graduate Delegate, John Jay College);
Sharon Solomon (Graduate Alternate, John Jay College);
Alexia Christopher (Delegate, Kingsborough Community College);
Michael DeMartino (Delegate, Kingsborough Community College);
Chelsea Lliguichuzhca (Second Alternate, Kingsborough Community College);
Annette Cruz Gonzalez (Delegate, LaGuardia Community College);
Jainee Carrasco (Delegate, Lehman College);
Cristian Valdovinos (Delegate, Lehman College);
Gugeeta Cheetram (First Alternate, Lehman College);
Brooke Lugo-Smith (Delegate, Medgar Evers);
Juvanie Piquant (Delegate, NYCCT);
Ngozi Okonkwo (Delegate, NYCCT);

Vanella Douglas (First Alternate, NYCCT);
Frankie Lachapelle (Second Alternate, NYCCT);
Alihaider Hassan (Delegate, Queens College);
Enrique Peña (Second Alternate, Queens College);
Tiandra Thompson (Delegate, York College);
Deanna St Hillaire (First Alternate, York College);
Aarionna McGlashing (Second Alternate, York College);

University Student Senate Staff:

Jasper Diaz, Legislative Director

CUNY Central Office of Student Affairs:

Joseph Awadje, University Liaison to the University Student Senate

University Faculty Senate:

Professor Kimora, Member of the Executive Committee (EC) of the CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS)

Professor Hugo Fernandez, CUNY University Faculty Senate (UFS)

Guests:

Richard Reyes, Baruch College
Piebo Koumamo, John Jay College
Velvet Brown, School of Public Health
Mark Ogbuehi, York College

Call to order:

Chairperson Piquant called the meeting to order at 12:10 PM.

AGENDA

- I. ROLL CALL
- II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
- III. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS
 - A. CONDEMNING ANTI-SEMITISM AND SUPPORTING THE CUNY JEWISH COMMUNITY
 - B. REDUCTION OF TUITION OR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
 - C. ACCOMODATING MUSLIM STUDENTS FOR EID-AL-FTR, THURSDAY 13TH
 - D. FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT
 - E. REDUCING LASTIC USAGE AND UTILIZING COMPOSTING

- IV. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT
- V. OPEN TABLE
- VI. ADJOURNMENT

I. ROLL CALL

43 Voting Members and Alternates Present (later updated to 52), 52 Voting Members and Alternates Absent (later updated to 43). Quorum reached to proceed and for voting purposes.

II. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Sen. Alihaider Hassan from Queens College moved a motion to approve the agenda. Sen. Saaif Alam from John Jay College, second, and the motion passed unanimously.

III. CONFIRMATION OF USS ETHICS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ethics Committee: Fidel Rosario from John Jay College, Michael DeMartino from Kingsborough Community College, Sharon Solomon from John Jay College, Rose Rong from John Jay College, Alihaider Hassan from Queens College, and Jainee Carrasco from Lehman College. Audit: Koumamo Piebo from John Jay College, Lucy Lao from School of Professional Studies, Yehuda Wexler from Baruch College and Michael DeMartino from Kingsborough Community College. Alihaider Hassan from Queens College moved a motion to confirm Ethics and Audit Committee Members, Seamus Hughes from College of Staten Island, second, and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS

A. CONDEMNING ANTI-SEMITISM AND SUPPORTING THE CUNY JEWISH COMMUNITY

Sen. Alihaider Hassan from Queens College moved a motion to discuss the resolution, Sen. Shawn Abraham from College of Staten Island, second. Motion advances for discussion.

VC Joel De La Cruz presents on the resolution, stating this bill aims to support the Jewish community at CUNY by adopting the International definition of Anti-Semitism defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Association.

After much deliberation, Sen. Justin Sanchez from CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies motions to table the resolution to the next Plenary Meeting. Sen. Alihaider Hassan from Queens College seconded. Vice Chair Aharon Grama from City Tech calls for Division of the House roll call vote. Motion passed 29-9.

B. REDUCTION OF TUITION OR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Vice Chair of International Student Affairs Vanella Douglas introduces the resolution calling on the CUNY Board of Trustees to reduce financial burdens and provide better financial resources for International Students, in addition to implementing a 20% reduction of tuition cost for

International students enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, and PhD programs at CUNY. Sen. Justin Sanchez from CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies motions to approve the resolution. Sen. Jianee Carrasco from Lehman College seconded. Resolution passed unanimously.

C. ACCOMODATING MUSLIM STUDENTS FOR EID-AL-FTR, THURSDAY 13TH

Vice Chair of Senior Colleges Amber Rivero introduces the resolution affirming that USS stands in solidarity with Muslim Student Associations across CUNY in calling on the university to recognize Thursday, May 13th as a religious holiday starting in the 2020-2021 academic year and every year following and institute a blanket protection policy for the 2021 academic year protecting all observant students. Vice Chair Aaron Grama motions to approve resolution, Vice Chair Vanella Douglas seconded. Resolution passes unanimously.

D. FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT

Sen. Andrew Berezhansky from John Jay College introduces the resolution. The resolution calls on the CUNY Board of Trustees to create a policy directing the Administration to develop a three year plan to divest CUNY's investment funds from the top 200 carbon and methane polluting fossil fuel companies, and to charge the Fund Advisors with developing strategies for investments in instruments that focus on mitigating Climate Change; full divestment of the university from fossil fuels within 4 years of the resolution passing the Board of Trustees; and exercising fiscal responsibility in protecting university funds and investing wisely. The resolution also calls on the CUNY Board of Trustees to engage in creating a bold and effective strategic plan to address the university's sustainability concerns, keep track of its carbon emissions, keep track and fully disclose all investments and divestments, incentivize the university' and campus's investments in clean, renewable and sustainable energy, and incentivize scholarship investment. Sen. Justin Sanchez from CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies motions to approve the resolution, Vice-Chair Aharon Grama seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

E. REDUCING LASTIC USAGE AND UTILIZING COMPOSTING

Sen. Andrew Berezhansky from John Jay College introduces the resolution. The resolution calls on the CUNY Board of Trustees to direct the Administration to develop and promulgate plans to eliminate plastic bottles and unnecessary plastics on campuses, develop a three year plan for implementation by utilizing the outlined proposals, keep statistics on plastic pollution and its impacts and usage on campus, utilize the new CUNY food vendor to use clean alternative and biodegradable materials or compostable vendors as well as potential investments in the sale of reusable bottles and meal kits that CUNY students can use and receive for discounts, and start investing in vendors for vending machines that also utilize clean alternative and biodegradable materials. The resolution also calls on the CUNY Board of Trustees to direct the administration to establish an advisory committee to oversee, support and advise the university and campus dining contractor and waste collection facilities in establishing a clean and single use plastic free university, an effective compost collection program, and a campus based composting facility to serve the University and surrounding communities; to create a policy statement for each CUNY

campus to utilize only vendors that promote and sell compostable materials for food distribution and garbage disposal; to transition its vendors in a year to clean alternative and biodegradable materials upon the signing of the contract with the new food vendor Culinart,; and to direct the Administration to develop plans and promulgate funds that do not fall on the Student Governments of each campus to provide for these necessities. Sen. Saaif Alam from John Jay College motions to approve the resolution, Vice Chair Sara Ortiz seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

V. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairwoman Piquant starts with a moment of silence for lives lost during the pandemic and acknowledges the challenges students have been facing during the pandemic. Chairwoman Piquant states tomorrow, on Monday, March 15th, the CUNY Board of Trustees will be accepting public testimony. The New York State Assembly released its One House Bill rejecting the Governor's proposed tuition hikes and raising the TAP Award. Therefore, USS will continue its coalition building and legislative advocacy efforts.

VI. OPEN TABLE

Sen. Saaif Alam from John Jay College makes announcement on appointment to the CUNY Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee. Will be working to address mental health awareness, and tackling related issues with distance learning, and for students with disabilities. Sen. Alam recently presented to his Community Board on issues impacting students with disabilities.

Seamus Hughes encourages students to join the USS Committee or LGBTQ and Gender Equity Issues.

Sara Or from CUNY Graduate Center moved a motion to approve the minutes and Alexia Christopher from KCC second. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. APPROVAL OF THE USS BUDGET

Vice-Chair of Fiscal Affairs, Joel De La Cruz gives presentation on USS Budget Proposal 2021 Fiscal Year. Begins first with Overview of the 2020 Fiscal Year.

VC De La Cruz reviews 2020 budget and 2019 enrollment numbers, with enrollment adjustment at 11% (which is what we normally use in working and deciding USS budgets for fiscal

responsibility purposes and based off estimates from the university). USS Collects a \$1.45 Student Activity Fee per enrollment. Total USS Budget is around 800,000 (\$806,832). In partnership with the university handling our fiscal and transaction affairs, they collect a 7% administrative fee (net from total) which was recently worked out a few years ago. The adjusted total USS budget as a result was \$750,300.

USS Budget is broken down into USS Scholarship, CUNY Athletics, and the USS Standing Committee. Obligations that have to be paid. Scholarship and Athletics usually combine around 30% of adjusted budget (with subtracted administrative fee). USS Budget and USS Standing Committee makes up the Operating Budget even though the latter is separate and is funded by the university. Operating Budget is what we use throughout the year and last year that was \$458,000 (2020). During the year we would cosponsor events, sometimes in partnership with other Colleges and other times with university-wide events. This year, we won't be doing that because everything is online.

VC De La Cruz proceeds into providing an overview of the 2021 Fiscal Year Budget Breakdown. For 2021, total enrollment is estimated at 621,896 (lower than previous year). Total USS Budget is estimated at \$721,399 (far lower than previous year of around \$800,000). Once administrative fee removed, Total USS Budget is around \$670,000 (\$670,901) consisting of Operating Budget (\$409,719 or 61.1%), USS Scholarship (\$108,686 or 16.2%), CUNY Athletics (\$96,945 or 14.4%) and USS Standing Committee (\$55,551 or 8.3%). In the past the latter was used to help create the COVID Relief Fund (access must be requested from the university).

VC De La Cruz provides analysis of past annual USS Operating Budgets from FY 2011-2021, 2020 Enrollment Data (including visual analysis breakdown for Community Colleges and Senior Colleges), and Budget Summaries for FY 2020 and FY 2021 (Total and Operating Budgets). This portion of the presentation is followed by Q&A.

Aharon Grama from Brooklyn College moved a motion to approve the FY 2021 USS Proposed Budget, Saaif Alam from John Jay College second. Motion passes unanimously and FY 2021 Budget is enacted.

VIII. VICE-CHAIR REPORTS

Vice-Chair of Tech Fee

VC Aharon Grama mentions his report has been shared to the USS Website. Discussion of past meetings with Vice Chancellor Brian Cohen. First meeting discussed 1 minute guides on YouTube that were created, social media groups instead of pages, sub-domain, tech fee duplicates, options for personal emails on Blackboard, proctoring for the next semester, G suite from Brooklyn College students, and emails for alumni. Later on, discussions centered around APIs for CUNY, internships for computer science, sub domain and adobe licenses. Another meeting was with former VC of Tech Fee Rejwoan Matubbar who is currently an Academic

Applications Technician at CUNY Central (discussed Blackboard API, domain and YouTube video guides). Lastly, VC Grama said he is no longer on the admin panel.

Vice-Chair of Graduate Affairs

VC Sara Ortiz proceeds with overview of recent Legislative Committee meeting and elected official outreach in relation to importance of upcoming 2021 elections.

Upcoming collaborative project with DGSC at the Graduate Center in partnership with CUNY Votes/CUNY Civics “Political Education and CUNY Votes/CUNY Civics” Student Voter Awareness and Political Education Campaign.

Upcoming meetings with Kings County AD 53 Democratic District Leader Samy Nemir-Olivares and Isabel Anreus (both staffers for State Senator Julia Salazar), and meeting with Katharine Diaz, Campaign Manager for City Council Candidate Angela Hernandez who’s running in CD 10 (Inwood, Washington Heights, and Marble Hill).

Also looking to build out CUNY Citizenship Now campaign aimed at international and undocumented students. Finally, Met Council on Housing’s “Cancel Rent and House the Homeless” Campaign. Legislative bills consist of Rent Cancellation A10826 (Niou)/S8802 (Salazar), Eviction Moratorium A10827 (Reyes)/S8667 (Myrie), and Housing Access Voucher Program A9657 (Cymbrowitz)/S7628A (Kavanagh).

Finally there’s an informal Taskforce on Mental Health Awareness meeting due to the tragic passing of a Brooklyn College alumni and second suicide at Hudson Yards. A recent memorial at Brooklyn College was held.

IX. CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT

Board of Trustees Meeting tomorrow on Monday, February 1st. Chair will be sharing a notice on this via email to see where students can stream it live, as CUNY will be voting on their budget request. Chair shares copy of FY2022 Budget Request on screen. Every year CUNY votes on a budget request. This year it is delayed due to the funding from the state and federal government, and uncertainty over how much funding we will receive. Governor Andrew Cuomo released his Executive Budget Proposal (where he shares all the details of what he intends to cut or keep). Budget must be passed by April 1 (to be on time). CUNY created its own Budget Proposal in response to the Governor’s Executive Budget Proposal. CUNY Board of Trustees Fiscal Affairs Committee was called to meet on Friday, January 29, where the committee needs to vote on this budget request. In past years it’s been very extensive. This year it’s short and simple. For this year, the BOT must approve this budget request which is later used for lobbying, to ask for more funding, and when people from the university meet with the Governor’s office, legislators and other stakeholders to ask for more funding. Chair states for her, budgets are moral documents. Chair feels it is inadequate and there are a lot more things we should be putting in there. Important to consider city vs state politics, how some feel the city or the state should pay more of

their fair share etc. Chair doesn't think the CUNY Proposed Budget Request is an accurate depiction of what we need for our university to stay afloat. The NYS Legislature will hold a hearing on February 4th in response to the Governor's Proposed Executive Budget and impact on CUNY. Possibility of TAP cuts. Majority of CUNY students are on TAP which helps students get through their educational career. Cutting TAP or opportunity programs is not the way to go and higher education should not be on the chopping block. Spoke to the CUNY Chancellor and said we cannot balance the budget on the backs of students. We need revenue and tuition hikes are not the way to go. Last year, we had a tuition freeze (after tuition hikes were proposed). The CUNY Proposed Budget Request, outlines the "Predictable Tuition Policy" on page 3 or possibility for tuition hikes, although right now there is no proposal coming from CUNY. Need to examine federal and state funding first. On page 4, the document talks about "Prioritizing Mental Health Services." Currently the services at CUNY are inadequate. Spoken about at the beginning of our term. Expansion commitment has not hit students yet. Nursing Pipeline Program is proposed on Page 6. Workforce development is on page 7 (only mentions partnering with privatized companies, should include others that are not privatized). Chair will be sharing the document via email.

We have a very, very long road of student advocacy ahead of us. The months ahead we are going to be experiencing in terms of budget requests will be severe. Not just about the numbers but the actual students who will be affected consequently. Support services for students are on the chopping block. About how we show up in terms of our advocacy to advocate for our peers. Chair states she knows how she will be voting tomorrow and that everyone should be watching. Importance of listening to what Board of Trustee members are saying in regards to students. CUNY is the epitome of working class individuals striving to achieve the American Dream. We must show up in every single way we can. Vice-Chair of Legislative Affairs in partnership with our Legislative Director will be putting together a Lobby Calendar with lobby meetings. As a former Vice-Chair of Legislative Affairs, Chair feels we have never faced similar cuts under her watch. Budget hearings will be coming up. Should be everyone's business to keep up with what's happening and advocate for the expansion of mental health resources, support programs for our students, opportunity programs and expanding that and funding for CUNY (not just restoring funding). CUNY students are in survival mode, and as we vow to fight for CUNY students we must figure out how to do that as effectively as possible.

On Friday February 5, there will be a New Deal for CUNY Press Conference. Piece of legislation that will be sponsored and introduced in the NYS Legislature. VC of Legislative Affairs will be discussing further and setting the Legislative Agenda with the Legislative Director. VC of Legislative Affairs will be sending details.

Invest in Our New York Campaign. Several pieces of progressive legislation to increase revenue are being rolled out.

Higher Education Action Day will be virtual at the end of February. VC of Legislative Affairs will be sending out the dates.

All links and documents will be sent out. Chair thanks everyone for all the calls, emails and texts in support while she was recovering. Despite being in trying times it is important that we do not lose face of our human dignity and human decency, and it is so important to be kind to one another as these are hard times. We must continue to show up not only for ourselves but for others. Chair sees all the work everyone is putting in which doesn't go unnoticed.

X. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Saaif Alam from John Jay College thanks Chair for the update. Feels it is essential for every student to transition back in person. Many challenges due to the pandemic regarding enrollment, support services and food insecurity. Question is how can we engage our students more as it takes students and student leaders to lobby and take action on behalf of CUNY students, with our other student leaders.

Chair states in response, that we will be reaching out to the CUNY Council of Presidents who will be helping to disseminate information.

Saaif Alam from John Jay College states there is a Special Election for City Council District 24 in Queens and reminds everyone to run.

Joel De La Cruz from Baruch College gives a brief announcement on COVID Relief Grant. Main focus now that the budget is passed, is going to be the COVID Relief Grant. Predecessor was able to raise over \$100,000 and this was money from USS and three other CUNY schools. Those four entities raised around over \$100,000. Last minute effort. This time most student governments haven't used their budget at all. Opportunity to do a lot more than last time. Encourages delegates to advocate for their local student governments to help allocate money to this grant. Create a motion or resolution to amend allocated your school's budget to allocate a portion of funding to the grant. Only need to worry about advertising this to students. All the other infrastructure is being set into place by USS.

Sen. Seamus Hughes from College of Staten Island provides update on LGBTQ and Gender Equity Committee. Encourages people to join.

Sen. Hannah Kavanagh from Hunter College provides update regarding an upcoming panel regarding student voter rights looking to feature a student on the panel.

Sen. Andrew Berezhansky from John Jay College provides updates on the USS Sustainability Committee. Meetings are weekly on Thursday from 4:15PM-5:15PM.

Prof. Hugo Hernandez from University Faculty Senate congratulates Chairwoman Piquant on her recent accomplishments and work regarding USS's legislative advocacy efforts and resolutions passed.

Vice-Chair Sara Ortiz announces updates on the Vessel Resolution and work with past Vice Chair Roderick Hurley. Meeting on Thursday from 5PM-6PM.

Sen. Jiannee Carrasco from Lehman provides updates on leadership development on campus and encourages students to reach out.

Sen. Yehuda Wexler from Baruch College encourages students to reach out via email regarding Anti-Semitism resolution.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Justin Sanchez from CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies moved a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Seamus Hughes from CUNY College of Staten Island second. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 PM.