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URI STUDENT SENATE – GENERAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES November 16, 2022

A. CALL TO ORDER - Speaker Bove called the meeting to order at 6:33pm.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Bailey, Barbosa, Bose, Bove, Breene, Buono, Chadronet, Collins, Cronan, Del Bonis, Gibson, Hernandez, Johnson N, Johnson V, Mehorter, Mayers, Milner, Montoya, Palmer, Peckham, Piacentini, Rathbun, Reyes, Rudolph, Stahl, Summerson, Sutton, Tyson, Waryas.

Absent: Breese, Broccoli (excused), Confessore (excused), Galliano, Goswami (excused), James (excused), Oydele, Perrone (excused), Scotti.

Guests: Kiernan, Gamache, Njeru, Stiles, Reynolds, St-Germain

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Senator Montoya motioned to approve the agenda. Seconded by Chair Summeron.

Motion Passes.

D. READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Speaker Bove motioned to amend the last line of the November 2, 2022 meeting minutes to read "Speaker Bove adjourned the meeting at 7:27pm". Seconded by Chair Summerson.

Motion Passes.

Senator Montoya motioned to approve the minutes as amended. Seconded by Senator Peckham.

Motion Passes.

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Speaker Bove congratulated Vice President Gamache on a fantastic new senator orientation.

President Kiernan announced that Vice President Gamache's 21st birthday is on Friday.

Speaker Bove praised Chair Summerson and Senator Peckham for their work with Vice President Reynolds to address the issue of student attendance policy, and stated that if all underclassmen senators were like Senator Peckham, he knows that the Senate will be in good hands after he graduates.

F. PUBLIC FORUM

Pierre St-Germain, Director of Dining Services

Dr. Ellen Reynolds, Interim Vice President of Student Affairs

Vice President Reynolds thanked Chair Summerson, Senator Peckham, and Speaker Bove for meeting with her before the General Assembly meeting. She then reported that at the November meeting of the URI Board of Trustees, the board approved the URI Budget for the 2023 - 2024 academic year. Due to inflation this budget will include an increase in the price of dining plans, but in an effort to mitigate the cost burden for students she reported that other auxiliary fees such as the Health Services fee and the Memorial Union's student activities fee will be reduced.

Director St-Germain reported that he is working with Chair Tyson to implement certain provisions of her recent resolution relating to multicultural representation in dining hall offerings. He shared that Dining Services is currently conducting a survey of the URI community to gather feedback on all aspects of the department, and encouraged everyone to fill it out.

Speaker Bove opened the floor for questions and discussion.

Chair Chadronet stated that while he was initially on the fence about this year's dining plans and that he wanted to give them a chance before criticizing the; however, he has come to dislike them, as have most students that he has spoken to in regards to this issue. He stated that one of the most consistent complaints he has heard from students is that most dining plans do not offer a Ram Account allotment, especially for campus resident plans which only include \$20 in Ram Account funds as part of the most premium plan. He asked if Dining Services might be open to including more Ram Account funds as part of next year's dining plans.

Director St-Germain replied that commuter plans will definitely include Ram Account funds, and stated that he would look into increasing them for campus resident plans as well. St Germain: That is out of my control. Unless we make a bid for everything in the store. But that could gravely inhibit what we could purchase for the store.

Chair Chadronet asked if Dining Services could work to make more items in the Corner Store available for purchase with dining dollars.

Director St-Germain replied that it is out of his control, and that the university can only allow for goods which are brought in from providers under contract to be purchased with dining dollars.

Senator V. Johnson pointed out that Director St-Germain sighted a rise in the cost of labor as one of the causes of next year's dining fee increase, and asked if this means that Dining Services has increased wages for its employees, including student workers.

Director St-Germain replied that yes, most employees have seen an increase in their wages, and explained that as student wages increase mainly owing to an annual increase in Rhode Island's minimum wage, state employees will also need to be paid more so that they are not receiving the same pay as students.

Senator Montoya stated that the most frequent complaint he has heard from students relating to the current dining plans is that unused dining dollars expire rather than rolling over to the next week. He asked if Dining Services might consider allowing unused dining dollars to roll over.

Director St-Germain replied that it is something Dining Services will look into, but said that if all students were to use every single one of their dining dollars it would bankrupt the department, so there are some budget hurdles to figure out before such a thing could be done.

Senator Bailey asked what Dining Services can do to mitigate the crowding of the Corner Store which can be a

major issue on Thursday evenings due to students rushing to spend the last of their dining dollars before they expire.

Director St-Germain replied that there is little he can do, as no matter what day dining dollars expire, crowding would still be an issue, just on a different day.

Vice President Reynolds stated that she will look into getting additional staff in the Corner Store on Thursday evenings.

Senator Mayers asked if Dining Services tracks what products are being purchased by students, and try to expand dining dollars to cover those products.

Director St-Germain said that while Dining Services does track which products are purchased, he feels that if he were to try to use the tracking system for that purpose the data may be skewed due to some items already being covered by dining dollars while others are not.

Speaker Bove spoke about his concerns that the current dining plans cost more in comparison to last year's plans and yet they appear to have less spending power. Additionally, he expressed his concerns about students being charged for basic things like cheese and condiments in the Rams Den, despite the fact that these toppings used to be included in the price of a meal. He commented that the Senate has conducted surveys in which students overwhelmingly expressed dissatisfaction with the dining dollars system, and that the Senate has also passed two resolutions opposing the changes which were made this year. He stated that despite this, Dining Services has refused to act, and he asked what exactly it would take for the department to accept that the plans are not popular, nor will they ever be.

Director St-Germain replied that due to inflation being at around 8%, and because he could only raise the cost of the meal plan by 3.5%, he had to make cuts in the purchasing power of this year's dining plans in order to balance the Dining Services budget. He also stated that students should not be charged for basic condiments and toppings, and asked senators to let him know if this continues to be an issue going forward. He also asked the Senate to share any of its dining survey data, and encouraged senators to fill out the current Dining Services survey.

Senator Montoya stated that he feels many students do not donate their dining dollars on Meaningful Mondays because they do not know if they will need those dining dollars later in the week. He asked if Dining Services might consider moving the donation days to Wednesdays as they are closer to the expiration date of weekly dining dollar allotments.

Director St-Germain replied that it is certainly something to consider.

Senator Piacentini commented that the dining halls seem to be the primary focus of Dining Service, and asked that if that is going to continue, might Dining Services institute a to go box program to improve the dining experience for students.

Director St-Germain said that it is something he would like to do, and he has been struggling with it for the last two years trying to figure out some of the more complicated logistical issues. He said that to go boxes will be coming to dining halls at some point in the near future.

Director Njeru asked if it would be possible to reduce the amount of items that can be purchased with dining dollars in order to increase their purchasing power.

Director St-Germain said that there is always room for logistical maneuvering, although most of the planning for next year is already completed.

Senator Bailey asked if it would be possible to let students use their own to go boxes instead of Dining Services boxes which are more logistically complicated.

Director St-Germain replied that he cannot allow that because it is against the Rhode Island Health Code.

Chair Chadronet expressed concern about the cost of bacon, saying that two slices of bacon on a sandwich costs two dollars, and he asked if there is a specific reason bacon costs so much more than other toppings.

Director St-Germain replied that the cost of bacon has gone up tremendously in the last year and that Dining Service has to pay approximately \$0.75 per slice.

Speaker Bove stated that he knows that Director St-Germain is just as passionate about his work as the Senate is about theirs, and that he knows conversations like this are not always easy to have. He thanked Director St-Germain for hearing what everyone had to say.

Director St-Germain replied that he understands that senators have a responsibility to their peers, and that he has thick skin and does not mind having these sorts of conversations. He stated that he is readily accessible and encouraged any senator to reach out to him with questions, comments, or concerns.

Vice President Reynolds reminded everyone to complete the dining survey.

Dr. Stiles thanked Director St-Germain and Vice President Reynolds for coming and expressed his hope that Director St-Germain will return to the Senate with the results of the dining survey, and to present his proposals for next year's dining plans.

Director St-Germain thanked Chair Tyson for the work she did to collect feedback relating to Dining Services' multicultural offerings. He stated that the data was easy to understand and was very helpful to his team.

Speaker Bove thanked Director St-Germain and Vice President Reynolds for their time.

G. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Student Organization Committee

Chair Gibson reported that she has a bill on the floor tonight and asked everyone to support it. She also recognized and thanked her committee members for all of their hard work.

- Academic Affairs Committee

Chair Summerson stated that she knows this time in the semester is very difficult for most students, and reminded everyone that there are mental health resources on the Student Senate's website. She also complimented Senator Peckham for her work on the student attendance issue and her conduct in their meeting with Speaker Bove and Vice President Reynolds. She encouraged everyone to attend Senator Del Bonis' narcan training being held on Monday, November 28, from 2-3pm. Finally, she reported that her committee is working to set up a school supplies drive to benefit students in the Providence Public Schools.

- External Affairs Committee

Senator Montoya reported that the Narragansett Housing Ordinance has been voided by a judge, and that any leases signed while the ordinance is voided will remain unaffected even if it becomes reinstated. He also asked all senators to sign up for the committee's planned neighborhood clean ups in Narragansett. He also stated that both he and Chair Scotti are graduating in May, and that anyone interested in becoming the next External Affairs Chair should contact one of them.

- Cultural Affairs Committee

Chair Tyson reminded everyone to attend Senator Del Bonis' narcan training. She also urged everyone to attend Senator Bailey's dance competition on Tuesday, November 29th from 5-7pm. Finally she reported that Hillel will be holding their fashion show tomorrow in the Memorial Union.

- Campus Affairs

Chair Chadronet asked anyone who uses the womens or gender neutral bathroom to keep an eye on the Aunt Flow supplies and refill them if needed.

- Executive Committee

President Kiernan wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

Vice President Gamache reminded everyone that no committee's will be meeting next week, there is no senate meeting, and office hours will not be required.

H. REPORT OF THE COURT

I. REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

J. SPECIAL ORDERS

K. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

SS-22/23-26 Bill Calling for the Allocation of \$3,660 to the Northwoods Challenge Course to Provide for the Completion of Deferred Maintenance Projects

Whereas, on April 20, 2022, the University of Rhode Island Student Senate passed Senate Bill **SS-22/23-03** which provided for the allocation of \$20,000 from the Student Senate's Tax Apportionment Account to fund repairs and much needed maintenance at the Northwoods Challenge Course, and

Whereas, due to the rising cost of building material being seen across the country, the total cost for the maintenance projects is set to exceed the Senate's original allocation by \$3,660, and

Whereas, it is more cost effective to complete the needed repairs as part of one large project rather than continuing to defer maintenance to keep costs bellow \$20,000, now therefore be it,

Resolved, that an additional allocation shall be made from the Student Senate's Tax Apportionment Accounts to cover the remaining costs of the Northwoods Challenge Course's maintenance project in an amount not to exceed \$3,660.

SPONSORS: Speaker Bove, Chairs Summersonn, Gibson, Senators Peckham, and Palmer

BILL HANDLER: Speaker Bove

DATE: November 2, 2022

RECOMMENDATION: (5 – 0 – 0)

EXPIRATION: Valid Until Reviewed

ACTION: Vote Tonight

Speaker Bove stated that this bill was already discussed last week, and urged everyone to support it.
Bill Passes.

M. NEW BUSINESS

SS-22/23-30 – BILL CALLING FOR THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF “Chinese Student Association” AS A SENATE-RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATION

Whereas, the “Chinese Student Association” mission statement is, “to provide Chinese students with a sense of belonging here at the university and connect them with other students interested in exploring and learning about Chinese culture through events, and ultimately promote diversity at URI”, and

Whereas, the Chinese Student Association meets the requirements to be a senate-recognized student organization, and

Whereas, it is custom for the senate to do so, now therefore be it,

Resolved, that the University of Rhode Island Student Senate acknowledges the Chinese Student Association as a recognized organization, and be it further,

Resolved, that the Chinese Student Association is provided with the first-year financial benefits package of \$75 which is to be paid out over the course of the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

SPONSOR:	Student Organizations Committee
BILL HANDLER:	Chairwoman Gibson
DATE:	November 16, 2022
RECOMMENDATION:	(6-0-0)
EXPIRATION:	Valid Until Next Re-Recognition
ACTION:	Vote Next Week

Chair Gibson motioned to immediately consider. Seconded by Senator N. Johnson.
Motion Passes.
Bill Passes.

M. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND OPEN FORUM

Speaker Bove gave a final reminder that no senate related meetings will be happening next week and stated that he looks forward to seeing everyone on November 30th.

N. ADJOURNMENT - Speaker Bove adjourned the meeting at 8:01pm.