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URI STUDENT SENATE – GENERAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES

February 15, 2023

A. CALL TO ORDER - Speaker Bove called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Bailey, Barbosa, Bose, Bove, Breene, Confessore, Cronan, DeLorenzo, Dumas, Galliano, Goswami, N Johnson, V Johnson, Mehorter, Mayers, Montoya, Newman, Palmer, Peckham, Reyes, Rudolph, Small, Summerson

Absent: Buono, Chadronet (excused), Collins, James, Milner, Piacentini (excused), Rathbun (excused), Sama, Scotti, Stahl (excused), Sutton

Guests: Kiernen, Gamache, Njeru, Stiles, Rice

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Summerson motioned to approve the agenda. Seconded by Senator Rudolph.

Motion Passes.

D. READING AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chair Summerson motioned to approve the minutes. Seconded by Senator Peckham.

Motion Passes.

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice President Gamache thanked everyone who attended last week's Student Organizations Fair, especially Senator Barbosa who stayed the entire time, and also bought munchkin's for the Senate's table. She also reminded everyone that all Declaration Packet's are due by 4:00pm on February 22, 2023.

F. PUBLIC FORUM

Faculty Senate President Michael Rice

President Rice discussed the potential of Faculty Senate action on the Student Senate's resolution relating to the adoption of a universal attendance policy at URI. He reported that the Academic Affairs Chair, or their designee are full non-voting ex-officio members of the Faculty Senate, and encouraged the Senate to send a representative to the next Faculty Senate meeting to make a motion that the Faculty Senate consider the Senate's resolution.

Chair Summerson reminded the chamber of the details of the resolution that President Rice was referring to.

Speaker Bove expressed his concern that the Faculty Senate meeting frequently fails to complete all business on their meeting agendas due to their fixed adjournment time, and asked President Rice if he thought it was likely that the Faculty Senate would make it to the “New Business” section of their agenda if the Senate were to send a representative to their next meeting.

President Rice responded that he will try to speed up debate to ensure that the Senate’s representative may make their motion.

Speaker Bove asked if multiple student senators can make and second motions, or if a member of the Faculty Senate will need to second the Student Senate’s motion.

President Rice said he is not sure, but that he would ensure that it was seconded.

Senator Peckham asked if Faculty Senate meetings are always Thursdays from 3:00pm - 5:00PM and if there was an openness to change the time due to most students being in class when the Faculty Senate currently meets.

President Rice responded that meetings are always held at that time and it is unlikely to change.

Senator Peckham asked if there is a better communication chain that can be set up between that Student and Faculty Senates, as emails often go unanswered for weeks at a time.

President Rice expressed that the best communication channel is speaking directly with Lisa Bourbonnais, the Faculty Senate Coordinator.

Senator Peckham asked, in reference to the attendance policy, if the Faculty Senate abides by the University Manual, or if the manual was more of a suggestion.

President Rice said that the University Manual is the governing document of the university, and that professors must adhere to it, although they may establish any attendance policies they’d like as long as they are not explicitly forbidden by the University Manual.

Chair Summerson said that the next Faculty Senate meeting will be held on February 23rd in the Higgins Welcome Center, and that she is looking for a volunteer to attend and make the Senate’s motion in her stead as she will be in class.

Speaker Bove volunteered to go in her place.

G. REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

- Student Organization Committee

Chair Johnson asked everyone who is involved in clubs to spread the word that budget requests need to be turned in as soon as possible.

- Academic Affairs Committee

Chair Summerson announced that there are several members of her committee that have not been attending committee meetings, and she reminded all senators that they are required to attend meetings of their assignment committees. She further reported that this week her committee did not meet, and members instead attended club meetings to increase the Senate’s visibility on campus. She concluded by reporting that the Senate’s first Women’s Summit will be held on April 30th from 3:00 pm - 5:00pm, and that she will be looking for help with planning the event. She also added that all female-identifying members of the Senate will be invited to attend.

- External Affairs Committee

Chair Montoya said that he will be meeting with local state representatives to discuss student issues, and that the committee is continuing to work on organizing a voter registration drive.

- Cultural Affairs Committee

Chair Bailey reported that she and Senator Reyes are working on a Town Hall for Multicultural Organizations to ask Senate Leadership their questions, and bridge some of the gaps between the Senate and student organizations. She reported that this Town Hall will be run in a formal manner, and that clubs will be asked to submit their questions in advance.

Senator Reyes stated that she'd like as many senators to attend as possible.

- Campus Affairs Committee

No report

- Executive Committee

Director Njeru reported that he is continuing to work on a collection drive for move out week.

H. REPORT OF THE COURT

I. REPORTS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEES

-Elections Committee

Chair Summerson reported that all Declaration Packets are due at 4:00pm on February 22, 2023. She further reported that candidates for President and Vice President are required to each collect 50 signatures each (100 for the entire ticket), while candidates for all other positions are required to collect 25 signatures.

J. SPECIAL ORDERS

Nominations and Elections for Off Campus Representative (6)

Nominations and Elections for On Campus Representative (1)

Nominations and Elections for At-Large Representative (1)

Nominations and Elections for College of Nursing Representative (1)

Nominations and Elections for College of Health Sciences Representative (1)

K. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

SS-22/23-37 Bill Calling for the Fourth Amendment to the University of Rhode Island Student Senate Constitution

Whereas, the Constitution of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate requires that students must pay the Student Activities Tax in order to serve as a member of any branch of the Student Senate, and

Whereas, because students who are enrolled part time pay a pro-rated Student Activities Tax based on the number of credits they are taking in a given semester, part time students have been deemed ineligible to serve in the Student Senate, and

Whereas, the University Registrars Office estimates that there are a total of 778 degree seeking part time undergraduate students enrolled in at least six credits for the Spring 2023 semester, and

Whereas, part time students are disproportionately Pell Grant recipients, first generation college students, students with children, etc., and

Whereas, the Student Senate recognizes that these groups are underrepresented and deserve a voice in student government, and

Whereas, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Speaker of the Assembly took on a much larger role in the functions of the Senate and the legislative process, and

Whereas, the constitution of the Student Senate currently allows for the Speaker of the Assembly to be a non member of the Assembly, and

Whereas, given the Speaker's expanded role in the legislative process, it would be beneficial to the Student Senate to ensure that the Speaker is elected from amongst the voting members of the General Assembly, and

Whereas, it is unlikely that anyone from outside of the Assembly would be elected to the Speakership in its current form, now therefore be it,

Resolved, that the following text be added to Article IV of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate Constitution, "Degree-seeking undergraduate students who are enrolled part time in at least six credits, who have paid a pro-rated Student Activities Tax, may serve as representatives from that at-large and college constituencies, or in any office of the cabinet or court provided that they meet all other eligibility requirements outlined in this document.", and be it further,

Resolved, that the text within Article V, Section D, Part 5, of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate Constitution be amended to read as follows, "The Speaker of the Assembly chairs all meetings of the Assembly. The Speaker also appoints and removes the members of the Assembly's standing committees; removals are subject to the approval of the committee's chair. The Speaker of the Assembly is nominated and elected by and from the Assembly. Any officials duly appointed by The Speaker will serve as ex-officio non-voting members of the Assembly. The Speaker shall clearly communicate the instructions of the Assembly to the Cabinet. The Speaker may speak on behalf of the Assembly.", and be it further,

Resolved, that Article V, Section D, Part 2 of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate Constitution be struck in its entirety and that remaining sections of Section D be renumbered accordingly, and be it further,

Resolved, that the text within Article V, Section D, Part 1 be amended to read as follows, "The Director of Communications facilitates open communication and dialogue between the Senate and its constituents. The Director of Communications also maintains the Senate's instruments of organization, records and reports, and responds to requests for information regarding the proceedings and history of the Senate."

Resolved, that Article V, Section D, Part 3 of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate Constitution be struck in its entirety, and that all remaining parts of Section D be renumbered accordingly, and be it further,

Resolved, that the text within Article V, Section D, Part 4 of the University of Rhode Island Student Senate Constitution be amended to read as follows, "The Director of Treasury maintains and is a signatory of monies and

assets controlled by the Senate, as well as its internal accounts, and ensures the enforcement of the Senate’s financial policy.”, and be it further,

Resolved, that the Elections Committee is instructed to place a referendum question on the adoption of this amendment on the ballots as part of the Spring 2023 General Elections.

SPONSORS: Speaker Bove, Chairs Montoya and Chadronet, Senators Cronan and Barbosa.
BILL HANDLER: Speaker Bove
DATE: February 1, 2023
RECOMMENDATION: (5 – 0 – 0)
EXPIRATION: Valid Until Reviewed
ACTION: Vote Next Week

Chair Johnson asked what amendments have been made to this bill off of the floor.

Speaker Bove replied that it has been amended to eliminate the Director of Operations and the Director of Information positions, with the latter being merged with the Director of Communications.

Chair Johnson asked why changes were being made off of the floor, and if the sponsors were made aware.

Speaker Bove replied that amendments were made to the bill instead of introducing new legislation because all constitutional amendment bills are required to sit on the senate floor for four weeks, and that this would prevent changes from being passed prior to elections, where amendments will need to be voted on by the student body.

President Kiernan asked if further amendments will be made to this bill.

Speaker Bove replied that no further changes will be made, and that this is the final version of the bill.

Senator V. Johnson asked if the stipends of these positions will be combined or eliminated

Speaker Bove replied that a determination will be made during stipend review.

President Kiernan expressed her support for the bill.

L. NEW BUSINESS

SS-22/23-41 – BILL CALLING FOR THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF “ Engineers Without Borders ” AS A SENATE-RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATION

Whereas, the “ Engineers Without Borders ” mission statement is, “The purpose of this organization will provide students the opportunity to apply engineering skills in real-life situations and learn about different cultures while providing necessary aid and resources to those in need in lesser developed countries.”, and

Whereas, Engineers Without Borders 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 Engineers Without Borders as a recognized organization, and be it further,

Resolved, that Engineers Without Borders 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: Chairman Johnson
DATE: February 15, 2023
RECOMMENDATION: (5 - 0 - 0)
EXPIRATION: Valid Until Next Re-Recognition
ACTION: Vote Next Week

Chair Johnson motioned to immediately consider. Seconded by Chair Montoya.

Motions Passes.

Bill Passes.

M. GENERAL DISCUSSION AND OPEN FORUM

Senator Peckham gave a shout out to Senator Barbosa, and expressed that Senator Barbosa always knows how to cheer her and everyone else up when they need it.

Chair Summerson expressed her thanks to all who attended the vigil held in honor for the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria

President Kiernan apologized for arriving late today, and encouraged anyone thinking about pursuing a cabinet position next year to speak with her.

Chair Summerson reminded anyone interested in helping with the Women's Summit to speak with her after adjournment.

Senator Small reported that he was recently made aware of asbestos in the Will Theater, and expressed his concern for student safety. He reported that the Will Theater is not currently expected to be renovated as part of the current renovation of the Fine Arts Center. He concluded by stating he would like to invite one of the theater's stage directors to speak to the Senate.

N. ADJOURNMENT - Speaker Bove adjourned the meeting at 7:30pm.