

UA Council Meeting April 13th, 2016

Meeting Called to Order at 7:32 PM

Matthew Davis: "... I sent out a link with the document in a laid out way... so everyone is aware, there's only two things we're voting on... the elections code amendment, and the second one is the budget amendment. Everything else is discussion. The way that amendments to constitution and bylaws work is you discuss at one meeting, make any changes, and bring it back at the next meeting and vote on them... any questions? Ok. So, the changes I would like to make... one request from Jack was to bump the Elections Code Amendment to the top, after the amendment to the Good Samaritan's policy... after that one, I'd like to insert an amendment to the budget.

The first item is attendance."

Attendance:

Daniel, LGC
Sarah, New House
Trevor, IFC
Jack, IFC
Robert, IFC
David, IFC
Meredith, Panhel
Courtney, Panhel
Caitlin, Panhel
Mary, McCormick
Flora, BC
Piper, EC
Ki-Jana, MacGregor
Yuge, Simmons
Liz, Baker
Rob, Maseeh
Isaac, Random

Motion to Approve Minutes

Approved Unanimously

Update on Good Samaritan Policy

Matt: "After our last Council meeting, I had a meeting with a Chancellor and conveyed everything we had discussed... I think Yo, Kate, and Sarah were also part of that meeting... went over the fact that the Policy Review COmmittee decided not to do anything on the Good Samaritan Policy... she has asked the Committee on Student Life for another set of

recommendations. What the most effective way to get CSL to gain traction on this issue is to demonstrate that students are passionate about this issue... have students write emails to the CSL saying, 'this is what we want to see in the Good Samaritan policy'... in the next few days, you will get emails from me... to send to the CSL... I'm also going to be having lunch with Eric Mannes to see how we can strategically go ahead and work on CSL. I've let the Chancellor know, both herself... I said... I need a policy option that does not include students going in and sitting outside your office...

Budget Amendment

Next thing is the budget amendment. Alekhya would you like to talk about this?

Alekhya: Basically the situation is that some of our excess funds were budget to colleges against cancer to fund t-shirts for the people against psets campaign. However the treasurer at the time charged it to CAC which we have a negative balance against which is why we know them ~1000 dollars. We want to pay for this as a finboard expense. Now if you open up the finboard sheet that i sent ... Our plan is to take the 1600 dollars from there to pay it off.

Matthew: Some clarifications, this was done by the previous council and finboard allocations have already been done so we know this is money that we actually have.

Robert: So the numbers we are looking at are with the money already taken out?

Matthew: Yes. Any questions? [None] Ok do I hear a motion to vote [So motioned]

Motion to amend budget passes unanimously

Elections Code Amendment

Matthew: We had previously talked about whether to keep the signature requirement or modify it. People were passionate about keeping or reducing it. So the amendment is to go from ~20% to around 10-5% signatures required so decrease from 700 signatures to 400 signatures.

Yuge: So this only applies to UA president and vice president?

Matthew: Yes. Do I hear a motion to vote? [So motioned]

Motion to amend elections code passes unanimously

Bylaws Discussion

Matthew: Great now everything left is for discussions. This actually began developing last year between Mary, Malte, Olivia, Obasi, and I would look at these amendments and examine them one by one. I will read the entire amendment out.

Jack: Can we start with amendment 5?

Matthew: Sure. Changes are clearly delineated. Right now nothing outside of the committee bylaws dictates what a standing committee should have in its bylaws. It only describes this for adhoc committees. So we decided to add standing committees in. So it now reads "Adhoc AND standing committees can..." we also specified that standing committees do not have distinct periods of duration as adhoc committees would. In section 2 there is a ridiculous bureaucratic step to avoid this I amended it to make sure that standing committees dont have to be voted on and cause the constitution to be amended. I also removed a redundant section because anytime the principal officers vote on something its required to bring this forward to Council so that clause was removed. Any comments?

Isaac: I noticed the part about not being able to make a timely decision wasnt changed. This one remained adhoc only. Is there a reason for this?

Matthew: Why you would need to create a standing committee in a rush, by the definition it should not be established in a rush, if you needed it to you should make an adhoc committee. Mary?

Mary: The procedure in "subject to review" seems unclear.

Matthew: If you look into what it means is that it has to be approved by Council in the next meeting. The procedure and voting mechanism would be a majority vote.

Robert: So what we're getting rid of is a weaker mechanism?

Matthew: Yes you can think of it that way. These are also all in a google doc so you can currently view it and after the meeting we can change it to comment enabled.

Matthew: Ok back to amendment one, we are changing all instances of him/her to their.

Olivia: Would this apply to election code as well?

Matthew: Yes we can change it there as well. The next change is to the "powers of Council section" i removed the term limited reallocation and i don't see why it has to be limited. The next thing is changing what it currently reads to making it consistent with what we define later for what goes to reserve and goes to gets allocated to student groups. So unless you do some budget magic you will never be able to spend down your reserve unless it is actually a really huge balance. We also need to remember that if you have to spend down your reserve it is likely an emergency and it is very likely this will go under \$500 and it might be completely out of our control. The third part is an allocation of funds and i dont believe the restrictions placed upon council to do its job.

Jack: I do like that we have a rule to spend below a certain amount, but I do agree that we should have the ability to do so in certain cases. Could we just make it require a $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of Council? I understand that some of these require it to be spur of the moment since when we went in debt it was over the summer and we weren't here. So it would be good if this were subject to review.

Robert: Also increasing from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ is like a person and a half.

Olivia: Also if you increase it to a certain level you can't actually stop a vote.

Matthew: Jack, this also reminds me that outside of certain fringe cases and if we were to deplete funds beyond a certain amount, it would require an emergency council meeting.

Jack: I understand, i would still like to see some check in place because I wouldnt want to get rid of the entire clause.

Matthew: I also want to say that \$5000 seems very arbitrary to me, but i dont have a better alternative.

Jack: For reference, what is the normal size of this fund?

Matthew: For the past 5 years? \$83,000 but it increases by interest every year. However right now its \$0. After this year you're looking at anything from \$15,000 - 25,000 in the reserve.

Isaac: Currently it looks like a population vote for no reason, it would be nice if this was consistent with the earlier sections.

Matthew: Right. I agree. Ok amendment 3 introduces a new requirement for the Council. THis is about organizing a new spring training by the President for the Council. We did it for the first time this year and we would like this to become continuously done every year.

Matthew: Ok the 4th amendment is that we are adding requirements to the vice president to attend certain meetings as specified. Currently only the president is required to do so. We want to amend this for two reasons, one because the wording is clumsy, second is because we know the VP should be assisting the President with their duties and under current wording it means the VP and President would be forced to attend a large number of meetings and be in the same place at the same time which isnt the most efficient.

Matthew: We already covered amendment 5, so ammendment 6 concerns inspection of documents for the UA. It currently states that all information but sensitive information can be shared to all members. This is topical because we have a lot of sensitive information on all of our committee chairs as well as from student support and wellness a trove of sensitive information there. So we want to make sure this isnt released just willy-nilly.

Robert: Who determines what's sensitive?

Matthew: Great question, that's not actually specified here. The ultimate arbiter is the judboard and that is who defines what actually qualifies as sensitive information.

Isaac: If the existing mechanism is to go to judboard, it should be specified here, because if someone isn't familiar with the entire system then saying it explicitly doesn't hurt.

Olivia: That means the judboard will have access to the sensitive information.

Robert: Well someone has to see it to determine if it is actually sensitive.

Matthew: Right, I'll add in the appropriate language to reflect this.

Judicial Board Amendments

Olivia: So most of the language has been completely reworked, so if you want to compare both texts are in the google doc. So first of all do you have any specific questions about what you read?

Matthew: Does anyone need time to read? [heads nod in approval] Ok 5 minute break. I just wanted to let everyone know that I am actually not the best at responding to emails. So try to email ua-president@mit.edu and sophia can remind me. Also we need a new elections commission and officer applications have also gone out so if there is anyone you think may be a good fit, please let us know.

Olivia: So sections 1 and 2 are the same, but in section 3 we explicitly delineate that there must be 1 sophomore, 1 junior, and 1 senior so there will be a better transfer or knowledge and experience. It also allows the Council to approve the the incoming senior member to be the new chair. For context there are currently no checks on the judicial board.

Isaac: This seems that it might not work well if people take time off or if they started MIT spring semester.

Olivia: I see, I don't have an immediate answer, but we do plan to align it with the academic year.

Matthew: My immediate thought on this is that everyone is affiliated with a class, so we could replace them by class.

Mary: I'm concerned about there being one from each year, but I thought we want the best people possible on judboard and that should trump just a diversity of years. It really also means

we only get one new person every year and this is really confining the pool of who can participate.

Olivia: Two responses. It came as a surprise that all of us were going to graduate the same time. I don't think Council was aware of it so that's why I don't trust Council to do that. Additionally, there is a mechanism for Council to remove people at the end of each year when picking the new chair and there is a mechanism for removing people during their tenure. I think that if people lose interest they won't want to stay on as 3 years.

Mary: So if people are chairs as juniors, do you think you will get enthusiastic seniors to be part of this? I might be better to get an enthusiastic sophomore.

Olivia: I don't think this situation is any worse than the current one.

Yuge: I'm curious why the wait two years is a definite enforcement? Does the president not examine them every year?

Olivia: The current system is that as long as the person stays interested, they can stay for the next semester on judboard. Additionally because of the transition there will be a guaranteed spot every year.

Yuge: But what about if the one person from each class requirement is removed, what is to say that the UA president could look at a pool of candidates and determine who is the best fit?

Olivia: If we give the president the power to pick and choose judicial review board members, then this is a problem because they would be able to pack the court. Which is an issue because vacancies could appear at any time.

Matthew: Under the current system there is an option to fill vacancies at any time. The clause is that the president appoints a new member pending Council's approval. This is the current system.

Olivia: What matters is that the new vacancies are natural and not the just huge bursts.

IFC guy: Why do we only have 3 members on judboard?

Olivia: Because 2 is not enough and we couldn't fill up the 5 spots when it was still 5 in 1999. We are also the body that only intervenes when something goes wrong. If 5 people have a job where you don't really do much most of the time would be tough. Additionally those 5 could not be involved in any part of student government because we are supposed to be apolitical.

Will: On what basis do you want the majority vote of new members to be decided?

Olivia: In the case where an offense is egregious, then under the new policy Council can remove them immediately. Right now it is difficult for me to encourage other members to move quickly because there is no recourse. Forcing a confirmation vote at the end of every year forces them to actually put in effort.

Olivia: The next clause is the chair. Under the new system we would have a chair, post-chair, and chair-to-be. So we also wanted to clarify the role of the chair.

Yuge: What if a sophomore joined, decided it wasn't for them, and quit and you had to pick a new sophomore. Wouldn't it be better if you picked a new junior at that point in terms of experience.

Olivia: I started as a sophomore, I'll leave it up to you to decide how well I have done.

Yuge: If that's the case, there is no reason for the junior to be the chair.

Olivia: Agreed, but it is nice for the junior to be chair as it gives incentive for the sophomore.

Mary: If the chair is just an administrative role, then it might be a disincentive for the sophomore so I don't think it should be explicitly delineated as such in the bylaws.

Olivia: Noted. I would be willing to change this. The next part is mostly rearranging of official language. There are many cases like the last meeting of term or the last meeting before IAP, so we want to make sure that if you have $\frac{3}{4}$ approval and presidential approval then you don't have to keep an amendment on the table for a whole meeting.

Matthew: Let's be mindful of time.

Olivia: Noted. The last section is a final check on judicial board, we want to push for consensus, not for 2-1 votes. If only 1 person votes, it's powerless, if it's 2 people and they disagree it's also powerless. We also recognize that if the judicial review board is not completely filled then that is ground for removal of office for the president.

Matthew: Please be sure to comment on this amendment between now and the next Council meeting. Next are the bylaws amendment.

Bylaws Amendment

Matthew: We want to update the committees to reflect the current committees. The next modifies the budget process in a few ways. The first change is we are moving from a term by term budgeting process to a yearly budgeting process. This encourages long term planning versus short term semester planning. We also have a special budgetary committee now (clause 3), this was the first year we did this. We also wanted to decrease over allocation percentages because this is what can lead to crises. Any comments? [none]

Matthew: Next is there are 41 pages on the committee bylaws and please read them so we can vote on them in May. Does anyone have initial comments?

Isaac: What you sent out looks like the finished product. Is there a way to see the changes?

Matthew: Right now most committees don't have bylaws. So we want to make sure that we are in line with the constitution. We are also amending the nominations committee. One will be that the chair selects for at-large members so the amendment will be that the chair will select 4 or more members to be reviewed by Council. The next is to add COD and CAP to Group A committees instead of Group B.

Matthew: Any additional business? [none]

Matthew: Ok relevant email threads. One is a dorm security thread and if your dormitory is interested in changing your security policy, please talk to Yo. There is also an interesting thread on civil disobedience and student government. One recommendation I have is that we often times that we have to work within the confines of MIT, but we need to recognize that we have a large group of students that rely upon us. There are lots of people that have come to me and feel they cant make change because "this is how it is always been done." A few suggestions, please feel free to escalate. If they aren't responding to emails, call or email their boss. Another thing is if you arent making change on simple things, really think about how you can apply the necessary leverage to convince someone that this is an issue. It is much more effective to have administrators work with you if you have students start emailing and show they are concerned about this. A few examples are security cameras in New House, i talked to several administrators and even though they said they would remove this camera, but it didn't go down until 40+ students emailed out and complained about the cameras. Our fellow students can apply appropriate leverage to make sure this is addressed. The most effective change comes across when people work within the system and outside the system together.