

UA Senate: Monday, February 23, 2009

7pm: Daniel Hastings and Diana Henderson as guest speakers

- Daniel Hastings:
 - Faculty considered motion to make changes to the GIRs—did not pass with the necessary 60% majority, now reflecting on how to move forward
 - Large Institute Task Force, I'm co-chairing the one on education, looking for any good ideas to cut costs, use the idea bank
- Diana Henderson:
 - Looking at two levels of innovation: online course evaluations and how scheduling has been an inhibition to student choice
 - Looking into condensing science core times to the morning to free up more afternoon HASS choices
 - Double major change went through, which removed of extra credit hours needed to get a double major
 - Wanted GIR's change to go through as a package and for people to look at the whole
 - Now looking on holding on to some of those arguments/parts
 - Really want to look into building on the CI-H and HASS distribution class quality, want to improve clarity in understanding
 - Still doing experiments with the elements of design class
- Daniel Hastings:
 - Budget cuts
 - For the next fiscal year, need to take out 5% of the budget from academic units
 - Looking at departments and how salaries are distributed: bulk is in faculty salaries; this was not touched in this reduction
 - Material services will be reduced
 - Number of TA's being reduced
 - Probably will raise some fees a bit
 - Ultimately, 15% of the budget needs to be taken out—this will require much more significant changes
- Daniel Hastings:
 - We need to look into costs of supporting variance in systems like computers: it would be cheaper to support only one
 - Advising
 - In terms of undergraduate experience, advising is rated lower than other things—about 60% say advising is acceptable right now
 - Dining also stands out as something people are unhappy with
 - Freshman advising
 - Majority of advisors are not faculty
 - Faculty are less motivated to do freshman advising

- Departmental advising
 - Most advising done by faculty, often we know more about the courses than the faculty
 - There are ongoing processes/efforts going on about the importance of doing advising well
- Diana Henderson:
 - The Committee on Undergraduate Programs has been handling advising-related things for a while now—there are different perspectives on going through MIT, people should have mentors as well, and no one person can give you all the perspectives you need
 - There has been major cultural change since the communication requirement was first implemented
 - Moved from just getting checked-off on the communication requirement to being more of a process
 - Community believes we should be doing this in the classroom
 - Communication requirement is paced to encourage regularity of that process
 - People thought it was natural to combine HASS-D's and CI-H's
 - However, now we want to refine that program and remove contradictions
 - Oral components varied through CI's—we need clarity on expectations
 - More clarity with oral component for CI-M's, more clarity with writing component for CI-H's
 - HASS-D's go through peer review of faculty committee but more lenient criteria than CI-H's but you may still write that much
- Eleni Orphanides: Is there any initiatives to decrease the size of HASS-D classes?
- Diana Henderson: HASS-D's have a built in audience because people need to take them, whereas people aren't required to take the HASS-E's. People are still very active in moving forward on the GIR's and giving attention to these issues.
- Noah Jessop: Are there plans for creating a singular guide for having something like the Course VI underground guide?
- Diana Henderson: It's very hard to do subject by subject, but there's a lot of data available on classes. We're working on online subject evaluations. Word of mouth and talking to professors are useful.
- Catherine Olsson: Can we publicize these resources to incoming freshman? That would be really useful.
- Daniel Hastings: We want you to be able to get your books wherever and seek to make the ISBN and other relevant information available. Courses on Stellar now have a textbooks section. We're not sure what to do about courses not on Stellar, and also we need to work on getting faculty to buy into it.
- Noah Jessop: We're trying to synchronize the Libraries reserves collections with the COOPs holding process.

- Vrajesh Modi: Why does the COOP know which books are going to be required before anyone else?
- Daniel Hastings: We submit it to the COOP.
- Diana Henderson: Historically, they were the college bookstore.
- Daniel Hawkins: Are there any efforts to make it possible for freshman to switch advisors?
- Diana Henderson: It's almost impossible right now. Donna Friedman is there for students with this problem.
- Daniel Hastings: We also currently have issues getting enough people to do freshman advisors.
- Diana Henderson: We're also working as fast as we can to build the online midterm evaluations system. We still need to build it and figure out how to advertise to make it as productive as possible.

8pm: Senate Meeting

Call to Order: 8:19

Roll Call

- Late: Hongyou Xiong
- Absent: Bill Near, Anila Sinha, Zachary Tribbett, Vinay Tripuraneni (excused to be late)

Approval of Minutes from 40UAS6, the special budget session, and 40UASE1

- 40UAS6
 - Alex Dehnert: Move to postpone approval of these minutes until next week, Vrajesh Modi: Second
 - 10 for, 7 opposed, 3 abstentions: Postponed to next meeting
- Special Budget Session
 - Minor amendments regarding athletics budget
 - Approved as amended
- 40UASE1
 - Minor amendments, some names fixed
 - Approved as amended

Legislation

- 40 U.A.S. 7.1: Bill to Fund NSBE 35th Annual National Convention
 - Jarrell Johnson: We've done a lot of running around to get the funding.
 - Jason Forte: There are documents and summaries of conversations
 - Mike Bennie: Normally, I'm really against supplying funding for a small number of people to go travel. Every person that would be going to this needs to be there, and they've really done their work to make this happen. I really support their receiving this funding.

- Alex Dehnert: I think we should allocate more money to Finboard instead of allocating money ourselves from discretionary because they are better-suited for it in the future. However, because the Finboard and were told to contact us instead, I have no objections to this bill.
- Paul Baranay: Did you apply to LEF or Arcade?
- Jarell/Rachel Meyer: LEF/Arcade funding doesn't apply to this.
- Bill passes.
- 40 U.A.S. 7.2: Bill to Transfer the Enumeration of the Senate Standing Committees to the Senate Bylaws, Modify the Requirements to be an Officer, Change the Senator Constituencies, and Other Changes
 - Mike Bennie: Currently, the hierarchy of some of the other student governments are enumerated in the constitution; we should include the rest of them. We should not have to deal with the constitution to change or add committees, so I want it to get moved to the Senate Bylaws. Decisions about committees are historically well thought out before the meeting they are brought up to Senate, so having them stay tabled for two weeks is inefficient.
 - Alex Dehnert: Some of the wording in the current version is awkward. Senate bylaws don't recognize off-campus constituency; they are not listed. The UA president should not have the power to fill in for a senator. I'm not sure if it should say which has "at least ten members."
 - Vrajesh Modi: This defines the off-campus group.
 - Alex Dehnert: These two changes are meant to kill a graduate residence hall with a small number of undergraduates from getting a vote.
 - Mike Bennie: This will have to sit on the table until the next meeting, no matter what.
 - Cody Daniel: This is so that, say, ten friends living together in an apartment would not get a seat in Senate?
 - Alex Dehnert: Right. They're not deemed an undergraduate residence hall by MIT.
 - Tim Stumbaugh: Who appoints senators when they leave?
 - Mike Bennie: The appropriate government appoints, eg. dorm presidents, but nothing is in place for the off-campus senator.
 - Nelson Elhage: Why is there just one giant bill encompassing all of these changes?
 - Mike Bennie: Most of them are housekeeping. Initially, no real power shifted.
 - Nelson Elhage: It bothers me that the UA president can appoint the senator is here because it doesn't seem to fit in with housekeeping changes.
 - Alex Dehnert: The status quo is that the president does not need approval. This does not allow the president to do anything he could otherwise do.
 - Nelson Elhage: We should un-clump these changes.
 - Sun Kim: Because we have to table this, clumping the changes together makes things expedient.
 - Sarah Dee: If you're opposed to it, don't vote for it.

- Richard Dahan: It should be about whether or not we agree with these things, not the clumping.
- Nelson Elhage: There's awkward wording in section 3. I move to amend this to "but neither action shall be required to lie upon the table." Friendly.
- Vrajesh Modi: Ad-hoc committees don't take two meetings to create. What's the motivation to be able to create and destroy regular committees rapidly?
- Mike Bennie: We don't usually form ad-hoc committees. People have already made decisions about committees once it comes to Senate. It just prolongs the process.
- Sarah Dee: Destroying a standing committee before the meeting is a bad thing. We should decide based on senate discussion. The two week response gives the committee the chance to justify its existence.
- Mike Bennie: It's Senate's job to check if they shouldn't destroy it.
- Richard Dahan: What if there's a misunderstanding about the committee and that the committee can't come to that Senate meeting? I thought this was the reason for the two week period.
- Mike Bennie: The idea is to give Senate more power. If people think it will be abused, we can get rid of this clause.
- Eleni Orphanides: Is this something appropriate for the Senate bylaws?
- Mike Bennie: Yes. Senate charges the committees, charges them, creates them, and funds them, while exec just makes sure they do the work.
- Sun Kim: I motion we delete: "Section 3: Creation and Destruction of Standing Committees 1. The creation and destruction of standing committees will be governed by the procedures outlined in the UA Constitution, but neither action shall not be required to lie upon the table"
 - Ye Yao: Can I have clarification as to why you wanted this clause?
 - Mike Bennie: It's based on history. The decision that the committee should exist has already been decided at this point.
 - 10 for, 9 against—section removed
 - Mike Bennie: If there's an ambiguous clause, we should get rid of it.
 - Paul Baranay: It needs to lie on the table because it is about modifying bylaws which requires it to be tabled.
- Vrajesh Modi: Motion to amend the entire bill by striking the second that clause. This is a contradiction now. Friendly. Should we delete either the first or second that clause?
- Mike Bennie: It's a bit redundant but one states the intent and the other does it.
- Vrajesh Modi: Motion to remove first that clause. Friendly.
- Alex Dehnert: Motion to amend the bill by adding "that Article IV, Section 1, Subsection 7 of the Constitution shall be deleted." Friendly.
- Ye Yao: We should move on and deal with other issues so that we can better serve the students.
- Vrajesh Modi: Still must sit until next meeting. We can amend it then. Motion to table.
- Bill tabled.

- 40 U.A.S. 7.2: Resolution to Return Financial Oversight of the Class Councils to the UA Senate
 - Mike Bennie: I hope we can amend the double that typo. We used to approve class council budget; we don't anymore. We should because it's senate's power to be a funding source. This year, it's more symbolic. Next year, we will actually get to approve their budgets if this passes. The point is to create institutional memory.
 - Paul Baranay: In the third that clause, what would happen to funds unspent by senior class council?
 - Mike Bennie: It would still run over into their alumni fund.
 - Paul Baranay: It would be nice if it could go back into the UA.
 - Vrajesh Modi: Do we not approve budget of the senior class council because they get their funding elsewhere?
 - Mike Bennie: Correct. They get all their funding from the career fair.
 - Sarah Dee: Motion to vote.
 - Bill passed.
- 2012 Class Council Spring 2009 Budget
 - Mike Bennie: Point of information: 2010's got passed last fall for the entire year, so we only need to look at the 2012 and 2011 budget.
 - Sun Kim: Does it get more detailed?
 - Mike Bennie: No.
 - Vrajesh Modi: Do we have the power to change it?
 - Mike Bennie: Money is in their account, but they can choose to listen to us or not.
 - Vrajesh Modi: Motion to vote.
 - Budget passed.
- 2011 Class Council Spring 2009 Budget
 - Budget passed.
- Resolution to Hire an Office Secretary
 - Mike Bennie: This can wait until next meeting.
- Resolution to Perform UA Website Maintenance Through the Student Activities Office
 - Mike Bennie: We should use the IT resource in the SAO. This would help prevent rebuilding the website every year. In the past three years, we haven't found a student who will consistently maintain the website.
 - Iman Fayyad: In the third that clause, who do you mean by anyone?
 - Mike Bennie: Anyone who should be updating the website. We should create tools so that anyone should be able to update the website
 - Alex Dehnert: Motion to amend by fixing the spelling. Friendly. Motion to amend by adding "that no money shall be allocated for this task, unless the Senate shall pass a bill approving such."
 - Ye Yao: Would this allow each senator to have their own site?
 - Mike Bennie: Yes, it could.
 - Paul Baranay: Motion to strike the second whereas clause. Friendly.
 - Iman Fayyad: Remove "will" from the second that clause. Friendly.

- Alex Dehnert: Change “anyone” can modify the site to “anyone appropriate.”
- Bill passed.

Announcements and Updates

- Election Commission Update
 - Ainsley Braun: We had some problems with perceived unfairness with Evan being on the Exec Board. We need to approve two new members today. We’re going to be working with Josh in SAO to get something more permanent with elections.
 - Paul Baranay: Did you bring this up to Evan before or after the complaint was brought up officially?
 - Ainsley Braun: Before.
 - Paul Baranay: Evan was the only one with access to the data. Why is it a problem that he is the only one with this access by your own admission?
 - Ainsley Braun: He’s on the UA Exec Board, but we’re under the Jud Board.
 - Maggie Delano: Was the conflict of interest issue because he had access to the data? Because there are other members of Elect Comm on exec.
 - Ainsley Braun: It’s also that he is on a different level of UA Exec than the, say, the committee chairs are. We’d like to approve Ashley Brown. She’s been working on it, but never officially approved. To replace the open spot now, we have Tim Stumbaugh.
 - Paul Baranay: Was the Jud Board hearing held in public or over email?
 - Ainsley Braun: Over email. Evan resigned.
 - Alex Dehnert: Election code process isn’t listed this way in the constitution.
 - Ainsley Braun: It’s outdated there, but on the Elect Comm website has it right.
 - Maggie Delano: Who’s running the election?
 - Ainsley Braun: Elect Comm and Josh from the SAO for the technical components.
 - Alex Dehnert: We are constitutionally not allowed to nominate these candidates. It needs to go through Nom Comm and other channels.
 - Ainsley Braun: Bills passed by Senate last year say that this is the proper procedure.
 - Paul Baranay: As a proxy Senator and the chair of Nom Comm, I support going forward with this.
 - Alex Dehnert: The issue at hand is appointing a new member of the Elections Commission. Constitutionally, we are not following that procedure.
 - Ainsley Braun: This was passed last year as a constitutional amendment.
 - Jason Forte: We will update the constitution to incorporate the relevant bills.
 - Ainsley Braun: Senate approves new members as a slate, but they need not come before senate.
 - Sun Kim: Tim’s solid.
 - Rachel Meyer: Do either of these people live in the same constituency as any of the candidates?
 - Ainsley Braun: As of right now, no.

- Mike Bennie: Who is Ashley Brown?
- Ainsley Braun: A freshman in New House. She has enough time to deal with it and wants to get involved. I could see her being Election Commissions chair in the future. We should give her a shot.
- Eleni Orphanides: Is there a rule about having different class years on ElectComm?
- Ainsley Braun: No. We can have freshman.
- Paul Baranay: How rigorous was your interview process?
- Ainsley Braun: I've been talking to Ashley since last term, and Tim's always expressed interest.
- Mike Bennie: What are we doing with Evan's seat?
- Ainsley Braun: It will probably remain open as we don't have a chief technical person. Josh in the SAO will be fulfilling that role.
- The two ElectComm candidates were approved.
- Announcements about Interact@MIT Website
 - Mike Bennie: Institute Committee on Student Life is building it. Keep adding questions. Does anyone want to work on this? It is going to deal with a lot of transparency issues the UA has to deal with. You'd be working with Bob Berwick (chair of Institute CSL) on the site and on what content to show. If interested, email ua-vp@mit.edu
 - Jason Forte: Senators not on a UA committee should consider doing this. There is no lack of UA projects to work on, if you are interested.
- Blue Ribbon Dining Committee Update
 - Noah Jessop: Dean Colombo told us the committee won't be dissolved.
 - Mike Bennie: Pushed a lot for clarifying the administrative processes. Vote to approve recommendations will need 75%. A majority of the students have to approve the recommendations. If 5 disagree with the recommendations, it won't pass. 5 of us are against campus-wide mandatory dining, so that will not pass.
 - Sarah Dee: Are the same students still on the committee? Including those who have not shown up?
 - Cody Daniel: The bill we passed was a clear vote of non-confidence in the committee. What more can we say now?
 - Mike Bennie: They've also tried to increase transparency—minutes will be online on their new website. Do we want to react to this? And if so, how?
 - Ye Yao: Can we make them have meeting minutes?
 - Mike Bennie: They said they will post the "exact minutes minus the names" tomorrow at <http://web.mit.edu/dining/feedback/blueribbon.html>.
 - Vrajesh Modi: Is it written down anywhere that there will be a 75% vote of the committee? I'd like to see that spelled out in writing. We should define it to be 75% of the entire committee.
 - Noah Jessop: There are 18 people, 10 students. All have equal voting privileges.
 - Vrajesh Modi: This verbal agreement is not enough.
 - Mike Bennie: It will be on the website. Also, a calendar will be up on the website. We need to get the voting word for word on the website.

- Richard Dahan: The emergency bill was a huge risk, as it was so strongly worded. If we do nothing, our reputation might be tarnished.
- Ye Yao: Is it true that there is a proposal for requiring dining dollars?
- Mike Bennie: That is part of the proposal. Most students spend less than this amount per semester, which is a big problem.
- Vrajesh Modi: If I lived in a dorm with a dining hall, it seemed like I'd have to buy a certain number of meals instead of getting Tech Cash. Depending on where you live, does that affect which plans you are allowed to buy into?
- Noah Jessop: No, but it affects which you are required to buy into. However, it's still just the consultant's report.
- Paul Baranay: In response to Richard, I saw the bill as anchoring our position as an extreme in order to work towards compromise.
- Richard Dahan: Sure. When we get a response, we should make it clear that that's what we wanted.
- Tim Stumbaugh: What happened to former reps from dorms to BRDC, like the Next House rep?
- Paul Baranay: At DormCon meeting, we discussed how those reps disappeared. James Torres is going to be working on putting people back into those spots.
- Vrajesh Modi: This would change the 18 members.
- Mike Bennie: We're looking to put more students on, but it will follow a process.
- Daniel Hawkins: What will happen if the recommendation is voted down?
- Mike Bennie: We're going to discuss next time what we should do with the report next time.
- Noah Jessop: The draft on the website is what I would highlight as good out of the second draft of the report.
- Vrajesh Modi: What else happened at the meeting?
- Mike Bennie: We talked and argued about the report for an hour.
- Catherine Olsson: What was this first draft?
- Noah Jessop: At Exec, we heard that the report was back, so we called an emergency Senate meeting. The administration says that only typographical type things need to be fleshed out between Colombo and the consultant so we get our money's worth. The first version is not public, but it's very different than the leaked version. BRDC first saw the first version at 5 pm today on the Stellar site.
- Mike Bennie: The big issue was the first version wasn't public to the committee.
- Eleni Orphanides: Did the committee talk about whether or not the Student Life Budget Task Force comes in?
- Mike Bennie: This hasn't been discussed yet.
- Daniel Hawkins: I feel like the students at least need to hear the administration agree that they messed up.
- Ye Yao: I have spoke to people who are for mandatory dining. Some people can't afford the mandatory dining.
- Daniel Hastings: I'm referring to the process, eg. lack of transparency, not what's in the report.

- Richard Dahan: I've talked to a lot of people about this. Those who approached me were against mandatory dining, and about 9 out of every 10 I approached were against mandatory dining.
- Mike Bennie: The issue isn't about if most people are for mandatory dining or not. If a large minority says it will change our culture, like how we act on a daily basis, then that's a big deal. If one dorm or something wants mandatory dining, that could be fine.
- Liz Denys: It's a different thing to be for mandatory dining and want a dining plan for yourself. The students who say they are for mandatory dining want to have the ability to purchase a dining option.
- Vrajesh Modi: We have to form our response heavily based on what you and Noah tell us. Is it within Blue Ribbon's plans to look back into the data?
- Mike Bennie: As of now, probably not. They want to get the report finalized in two months; there's simply not enough time. Committee as a whole wants to make progress forward, but the students want to question some of the assumptions. We want to review data that we need for the recommendations we reach.
- Vrajesh Modi: I have a lack of confidence in this being done properly in just two months.
- Sarah Dee: I think there are still serious membership issues, even though the voting discussions have been good. A good step would be to seriously consider the membership of this committee.
- Mike Bennie: Should the student reps which represent the UA go back to the BRDC meeting next week?
- Sarah Dee: Don't stop going, because we need to know what goes on. We should develop a list of student reps we'd want on BRDC or some competing committee. Prepare for adding more to BRDC or creating a competing committee.
- Daniel Hawkins: We'd need access to the data to form a competing committee. Do you think we'd get access to the hard data?
- Mike Bennie: It probably can't be arranged.
- Daniel Hawkins: Could that be arranged as a compromise?
- Mike Bennie: We can ask, but the consultants seem to want to keep it as theirs.
- Vrajesh Modi: I feel like data used in the leaked report was cherry-picked. I'd like to at least see more of the data analyzed.
- Alex Dehnert: We can't reconstruct all of the data because we don't have enough information.
- Vrajesh Modi: No other recommendations that we made were really implemented other than the lack of the word mandatory. What do people who actually go to the meetings see as the proper response of Senate? Do we have enough transparency yet?
- Mike Bennie: Transparency is an ongoing process. Whether or not we have enough transparency with this website, we'll see. I'd like to see what they do

before telling them what to do in the case they do enough. If people think it's not transparent until we get the data, we should say that.

- Ainsley Braun: Do our student reps show up enough to represent our voices?
- Bennie: Attendance doesn't seem to be kept.
- Richard Dahan: As it stands, things aren't acceptable, but we don't have enough time right now. Let's wait until the next Senate meeting. If they don't take the appropriate steps, then we can handle it. Let's give them a chance first.
- Jason Forte: The next meeting is the discussion session. We could vote to suspend the bylaws and allow legislation to be passed then. Just don't expect legislation until March 16. Colombo will also be coming to Senate soon.
- Daniel Hawkins: To talk about our response, let's have another meeting on March 2.
- Sarah Dee: This is an important discussion we could have over email.
- Daniel Hawkins: Did you think the process would be more efficient if it done by a committee of eager students?
- Mike Bennie: I don't know how easy it would be to do things without the data.
- Alex Dehnert: We're going in circles. Can we wait until another week or so and email Senate about what happens at the meeting? From there, we can call an emergency meeting as needed.
- Ye Yao: Can we get BRDC administrators to talk to Senate?
- Mike Bennie: Donna has already expressed interest.

Finboard Appeals

- Jason Forte: Forgot to put on the agenda.
- Mike Bennie: I was on Finboard. Finboard over allocated in the first round, but not all was spent. It was then reallocated and there's still about \$5,000 left over. There just wasn't as much good content.
- Eleni Orphanides: Is there one request at the beginning, or once every term?
- Mike Bennie: There's two terms: IAP/Spring and Summer/Fall. You apply during the end of the previous term. These are appeals from the spring.
- Eleni Orphanides: It's senate's job to approve appeals and allocations, correct?
- Mike Bennie: Yes.
- Jorge Simosa: What is funding increase?
- Mike Bennie: How much more they got over the last allocation cycle. It looks like there is a typo.
- Sun Kim: So the two values at the right should match?
- Mike Bennie: No. We should look at the two columns before the last.
- Vrajesh Modi: There is an issue with the Traditional Medical Society.
- Mike Bennie: Yes, there appear to be typos. Increase in funding is number approved for appeals minus the number they got in the first round.
- Sun Kim: Motion to vote
- Appeals as stated passed.

Proposals for New Business

- No new business.

Closing Announcements

- Bennie: I just put a resolution online about moving student holiday to the fall career fair. Please read it. The GSC president and I have been working on this.
- Liz: Pick up t-shirts.

Adjournment: 10:51 PM