

# UA Senate: Monday, May 4, 2009 PENDING

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*8pm: Senate Meeting*

Call to Order: 8:15 pm

## Roll Call

- Late: Samuel Rodarte, Daniel Katz, Iman Fayyad, Jorge Simosa
- Absent: Cyril Lan, Caryn Krakauer, Eleni Orphanides, Ye Yao, Hongyou Xiong, Vinay Tripuraneni, Sun Kim, Anila Sinha
- Proxies: Adam Bockelie for Shin Nee Wong, David Hutchings for Charlie Huang

Jason Forte: Tonight, we're going to be talking about dining.

Nelson Elhage: I motion to put the Resolution to Approve the Dining Proposal Committee's Final Report on the table. The motion is now on the table.

## Blue Ribbon Committee Discussion

- Noah Jessop: I think we should talk about the BRC as Dean Donna Denoncourt is here today, and we should be conscious of her time.
- Sammi Wyman: Why don't we have the BRC talk about the changes from the draft?
- Donna Denoncourt: We've incorporated the feedback we've received from the open forums. We've now included information about updating and renovating kitchens. There's been concern and discussion about making the McCormick having mandatory dining.
- Sammi Wyman: Did you make specific changes to the recommendations?
- Donna Denoncourt: We explained why the \$500 opt-out is there in the new report. With regard to McCormick and the all-female dining aspect, we addressed concerns without changing our recommendations. We made notes about the concern expressed over McCormick having mandatory dining and also being the only all-female dorm, where the latter is often the reason to live there.
- Sammi Wyman: So you don't plan on changing the recommendations for the \$500 opt-out fee and McCormick residents having mandatory meal plans?
- Donna Denoncourt: Things in the report which get a 75% vote will be a strong recommendation, while other things will go in as appendices.
- Alex Dehnert: Will you be going through the report on a paragraph by paragraph basis?
- Donna Denoncourt: No just on the basis of the recommendations.
- Paul Baranay: What is the feasibility of actually implementing additional entrances in all the dining halls, as recommended by the report?
- Preeya Phadnis: Not right now. It's a recommendation to help any future dining hall committee by adding these if possible.
- Mike Bennie: When they construct a building like that, it would take a lot to make those renovations.

- Paul Baranay: Regarding a central dining facility which would be near building ten, how would that fit in and integrate with Café 4?
- Donna Denoncourt: It's a long term recommendation and could impact Café 4 and other similar dining facilities. Financially, we need to see if it makes sense. We also need to consider the dorm-based system's interaction with such a dining facility.
- Sarah Dee: What was the response to the \$500 opt out fee?
- Donna Denoncourt: Students didn't understand why it was there and why it was so high. It didn't make sense to them. The explanation is on page 33.
- Preeya Phadnis: It's about fixed costs for such a dining program.
- Sarah Dee: People who don't use it will pay for those who do?
- Preeya Phadnis: Dining has fixed costs. It's not the optimal solution. But, people who aren't in residences with dining halls shouldn't pay for it.
- Austen McRae: Shouldn't it just be the people who use the dining hall pay for it? I wouldn't want to have to be on two meal plans after joining a fraternity and end up paying double for meals.
- Donna Denoncourt: If you really don't want campus dining, you should live in another campus dormitory. It was split between dorms if you're interested in dining or not.
- Sarah Dee: You talk about choosing to live in another dormitory. As a frosh, you choose based on factors before you may even be able to eat in a dining hall. You either need to move dorms and leave the culture you love, or suck it up and pay. It exacerbates the cheap dorms vs. expensive dorms issue. Dorms should be about community not finances.
- Donna Denoncourt: We heard some of that. We really want to see opportunities to support non-dining hall and dining hall cultures. The survey respondents were very split over how much dining affected dorm decision.
- Sarah Dee: If a dorm is split, half will be opposed to dining. The half opposed need to support the other half?
- Keone Hon: I want to echo Sarah's concerns. Dining is a very small factor in dormitories—dining shouldn't prevent people from living in certain communities. Dining shouldn't discourage someone from being in the community that fits them best. It would pose a very difficult decision.
- Donna Denoncourt: We tried to look at the survey responses about choosing residences. A third chose based on dining. A third chose partially based on dining, and the other third did not choose based on dining at all.
- Keone: I don't understand how one only partially chose based on it...
- Paul Baranay: Point of Information: technically, every dorm has kitchens.
- Donna Denoncourt: McCormick has both options.
- Danny Katz: \$1000 a year, \$500 a semester at minimum, is a large amount of money, but dining isn't the only reason people live in a dorm. I'd hate to see my dorm, Baker, lose potential residents who are a really good fit for Baker because of it.
- Donna Denoncourt: We'll bring these concerns back to the BRC.
- Sammi Wyman: Is part of the reason the \$500 opt-out is so high so that people choose to take the dining plan?

- Donna Denoncourt: Noah, you were on that subcommittee...
- Noah: No, it was all about the fixed costs.
- Sarah Dee: So 60 meals only cost 100 bucks?
- Vinayak Ranade: Assuming recommendations put in place, there will be two sets of students—dining and not—do you think this will create a large divide? Some will form community around dining halls, others won't—will this create factions?
- Donna Denoncourt: One of the benefits of the debit account is the opportunity to feed classmates and friends. It gives more flexibility in how to use that money. With preferred dining you can only pay for your own meal.
- Paul Baranay: I thought the part on sustainability was well done, do you have any concrete thoughts on how to move forward?
- Donna Denoncourt: Central facilities for recycling, water usage, etc.
- Paul Baranay: Creating a new committee for three years about programming for dining? Thoughts on who should be on it? How do you foresee this committee interacting with the UA?
- Donna Denoncourt: Instead of on the local level, I would foresee a three year committee, which would look at dining globally instead of locally.
- Catherine Olsson: Going off the \$500 charge, how can it be sustainable if you need to charge people who aren't using it? Also, there's already a subsidy, is there another one on top of that? Can you just explain that section?
- Donna Denoncourt: Currently, there is a deficit in the house dining program which is subsidized by the food trucks, café four, and catering.
- Daniel Hawkins: Also, the other half of the subsidy comes from house membership.
- Catherine Olsson: What is the portion about the reserve fund trying to accomplish?
- Donna Denoncourt: Basic wear and tear, replacing equipment.
- Catherine Olsson: There are currently no funds for capital fixes? Proposal to make a reserve fund?
- Donna Denoncourt: Yes. Want wiggle room to replace capital issues.
- Catherine Olsson: That's not very clear. Capital funds to retain dining? Domino effect...This would be useful to have included in the section on financial sustainability because it's very unclear right now.
- Preeya Phadnis: The report is endorsing dining have high enough quality that people want it without it being mandatory. That's the long-term stance that the report is approving.
- Catherine Olsson: That's also unclear—it would be great if it was clear.
- Sarah Dee: Are there any recommendations that another committee should exist to find out how to make it sustainable? The needs for specific plan will be imminent. Choosing a dorm would also mean choosing a dining hall would after this. A plan where you lose \$150 vs. \$1000 is a big deal. From the data regarding how residents chose their dorms and dining's role within that, dining plays a small role, but after this it will play a large role. Financial sustainability needs to be planned for in the future.

- Alex Jordan: This plan increases minimal preferred dining by 67%, but most students don't like the current fees for preferred dining. Why make a plan that goes against what a student wanted?
- Donna Denoncourt: It wasn't data-driven. It was more of the charge to make dining more financially solvent.
- Alex Jordan: The idea was just to increase revenue to make what we have sustainable?
- Donna Denoncourt: Yes, and we want to take away the subsidy of house dining. We needed to look at it seriously to make it less of an issue.
- Sarah Dee: Just moving where the subsidy comes from... I feel uncomfortable calling this self-sufficient if people who don't use it are required to pay for it.
- Liz Denys: Tech catering use has been going down as a result of departments looking outside of MIT for cheaper catering because of departmental cuts. This would create less of a subsidy for dining—has this been considered?
- Donna Denoncourt: No.
- Preeya Phadnis: We never discussed this.
- Vinayak Ranade: 20% respondents said having a dining option was significant in their decision, but doesn't say if they chose significant because for or against.
- Preeya Phadnis: Later it has because it does or doesn't have a dining hall.
- Vinayak Ranade: The issue with this question is that it was only for those who indicated that dining was a significant factor, which only included less than 10% of undergrads.
- Preeya Phadnis: You're on the DPC to make observations like that.
- Paul Baranay: There was confusion about whether everyone would have to buy into an IEP.
- Preeya Phadnis: Everyone has choice to opt in. We assume most without dining halls won't.
- Paul Baranay: Sounds like they'll have to make their choices for IEP. It's before Fraternity and Sorority rush. That could affect dining.
- Preeya Phadnis: We talked about the ability to waive it afterwards.
- Paul Baranay: Would it then be prorated? Or has this not yet been fully fleshed out?
- Preeya Phadnis: Not fully fleshed out.
- Paul Baranay: Most people seem to agree \$300 house dining is sunk cost, but now it would be \$500. That's a non-trivial increase to students.
- Preeya Phadnis: We understand. We argued about it.
- Daniel Hawkins: What worries me is that the arguments or issues over this aren't in the report.
- Preeya Phadnis: I thought we had put something in the second draft about the socioeconomic issues that would arise.
- Cinjon Resnick: Sarah made the comment that it passes subsidy onto students. How does that not undermine the report?
- Donna Denoncourt: My understanding is we need to look at restructuring how we fund dining. The institute needs to look at no longer internally subsidizing dining.
- Preeya: He means that people who would choose not to use the system are paying for it.

- Sarah Dee: In the short term would be fine, but it needs to be written in the report as an issue.
- Preeya Phadnis: I agree.
- Cinjon Resnick: The part about implementing during REX is 3 lines on page 32, stands out so strongly as a bad idea. Expand more upon it, but I don't think it's good.
- Richard Dahan: My impression was that it was supposed to find a better way to run things and make it entirely sustainable without subsidy. Was it part of the charge to get rid of the subsidy?
- Donna Denoncourt: It was in the charge to make it more sustainable.
- Sarah Dee: I'm looking at your choice section. A statement that received mostly negative response was that students living with dining halls should have to pay something mandatory. But that doesn't line up with your recommendation about dining.
- Donna Denoncourt: It was tough to reconcile these sentiments and house dining needs.
- Mike Bennie: We should wrap this up.
- Keone Hon: I motion to end this discussion. Second. Discussion ended.

#### 40 U.A.S. E2.1: Resolution to Approve the Dining Proposal Committee's Final Report

- Vinayak Ranade: Read the report. Comment on that.
- Richard Dahan: I think it's pretty awesome. Other people came up to me and said that. I also agree with Nelson's comments: if there are no real objections, let's not spend all night talking about it.
- Nelson Elhage: The one thing I might have wanted to see in the report was more discussion as to how you think your suggestions would be financially sustainable.
- Vinayak Ranade: We really wanted to do that. We tried to from week 1. The problem is we needed the current system's finances to compare it to, but we couldn't get that. We couldn't get the operating costs, what MIT's paying to subsidize it, etc. The only thing we could get was the card swipe data of people paying with tech cash. One week's time was insufficient to go through that data.
- Noah Jessop: From that data, the Tech Cash average meals per week was 2.78 meals per week. It's nice to know that DPC's report used similar information.
- Sammi Wyman: Did you incorporate some of the cool stuff from BRC, like converting MacConn to a late night dining option?
- Vinayak Ranade: We put more efforts towards things we disagree with. BRC will be considered anyway. Both committees have been up all night lately working so we wanted to focus on our own ideas instead of keeping up and borrowing.
- Cinjon Resnick: We do have the late night option in there.
- Alex Jordan: Just not that specifically. Are McCormick senators here?
- Liz Denys: No.
- Sammi Wyman: My dorm loved it, but dorms with dining halls might have people that would not like it?
- Daniel Hawkins: Our idea was to come up with something and see if students liked it, and if they did like it, then we'd recommend it. Most people in Simmons liked it.
- Vinayak Ranade: Didn't you do an email survey?

- Daniel Hawkins: It was 70/30 for/against it roughly.
- Sammi Wyman: Do you have a sense as to how Baker residents reacted?
- Danny Katz: Yes. In the long run, they felt like they'd benefit from it. 65% of the 50 people I talked to were for it. Some were opposed to closing Baker D in the long run.
- Noah Jessop: The tech swipe data for McCormick showed that 50% of McCormick resident meals are consumed not in McCormick—most of those not in McCormick were consumed in Baker. McCormick also had the lowest overall utilization. Also, McCormick is the only dining hall dorm with convenient kitchens. The data backs the recommendations.
- Sarah Dee: On the sustainable food section, I'm cheap. Sustainable food is good to me, but not if costing more. How can you reconcile keeping costs down with sustainable food?
- Vinayak Ranade: Report doesn't recommend how to be sustainable.
- Daniel Hawkins: "Given equal or lesser costs" we recommend sustainable food.
- Alex Jordan: This section is fairly small because data we had to work with was lacking with regards to sustainable food.
- Paul Baranay: The report doesn't have a conclusion.
- Alex Jordan: I started writing that.
- Catherine Olsson: There is a section addressing the BRC's \$600 declining balance. A section addressing the \$500 dollar opt-out fee should also be there.
- Daniel Hawkins: I agree. We've been wondering if we should leave it in there because their report also isn't final yet.
- Maggie Delano: We could approve what exists now, and then ask for an addendum. That sounds like the idea...
- Mike Bennie: I'd really like to not push this to the next meeting. We have to vote on Blue ribbon and approve more chairs.
- Sarah: But the BRC's recommendations might change.
- Liz Denys: We could say based on the second draft...
- Mike Bennie: We can approve changes at next meeting.
- Vinayak Ranade: Conditioned on what the BRC comes out with might be good.
- Tim Stumbaugh: I'd really like to see a conclusion.
- Vinayak Ranade: What would you like from a conclusion: wrap up and happy feeling? Something sort of like the principals section before?
- Sammi Wyman: Why did you decide to put the history section where it is? I know there was discussion on this.
- Vinayak Ranade: Humankind tries to generally learn from its mistakes. We wanted to show how our plan learns from mistakes.
- Daniel Hawkins: There's a citation 14 has history Tech articles.
- Cody Daniel: The principals are good, but kitchens are an essential part of the dining experience.
- Vinayak Ranade: We didn't survey people or gather tangible data about kitchens. We want there to be some standard for kitchens. This standard was meant for all dorms more so than those without dining halls which should probably have more facilities.

- Vrajesh Modi: Can we include the arbitrary kitchen data as an appendix?
- Alex Jordan: Even members of the committee didn't agree...
- Daniel Hawkins: Can we not? It might come back to haunt us as "we gave you what you want."
- Vinayak Ranade: A few years from now, we don't want the administration to say "we gave you the minimum you wanted, don't be unhappy."
- Sarah Dee: I agree we shouldn't put in things that aren't supported.
- Alex Jordan: Conclusion will reiterate, not in bullet form, what we want—our proposals.
- Vinayak Ranade: Essentially it will say: make it so!
- Cody Daniel: I like the line about how parents demand shouldn't trump student freedom.
- Alex Jordan: Nothing will be in the conclusion that isn't already in the report.
- Vrajesh Modi: When it's done, email it to ua-senate.
- Cody Daniel: I want to motion on approving this contingent upon a conclusion in a similar spirit of the report. Now voting.
- Resolution approved contingent upon the addition of a conclusion.

#### 40 U.A.S. E2.2: Resolution of Appreciation for the Dining Proposal Committee

- Mike Bennie: There's a typo, I'm fixing it.
- Vrajesh Modi: Motion to approve. Second. Now voting.
- Passed.

Adjournment: 9:17 pm