

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Date: 10/7/22**

**Topic: Public Meeting**

**Present:**

* **Voting members:** Lawrence Miller, Xiaoru (Tony) Shi, Jada Quinland, Noah Robertson, Yidi Wang, Brian Johnson, Conor Kelly, Ava Philips, Najee Rodriguez, Sydney Gibbard, Dallas Zebrowski, Cierra Chandler
* **Nonvoting members:** Alexa Clayton, Zander Golden, Jolinda Wilson, Barry Bram
* **Public members:** Nick S., Kyle

**Absent:**

**Agenda:**

1. **Call to Order and Opening Roll Call**

Meeting called to order at 8:02 a.m.

1. **Adoption of the Agenda**

Motioned, seconded.

1. **Adoption of the Minutes (September 30th, 2022)**

Motioned, seconded.

1. **Public Comment**

Nick S.: I’m a second-year law student at Penn State. Gavin McInnes is coming to speak on campus. He has been described for his brutal tactics dealing with protestors. He founded Proud Boys to reinstate Western chauvinism. He is a right-wing propagandist and is being paid to speak on campus. So I wanted to come and speak to you all, to understand how that decision has been made, and what decisions can be made to keep someone like this away from spreading their hate on campus. I know this is a public university. But Gavin is a vector for extreme radicalization. The Right Stuff is a blog of praise for Neo-Nazis, diatribe against Jews. 74 respondents from a survey cited McGinnis by name as someone who led them to an extreme right movement. I am not asking for viewpoint restrictions, but he’s not just advocating for edgy ideas, he’s here to radicalize impressionable young people and spread a violent ideology. McInnes has publicly denounced Proud Boys. Based on January 6th, they’ve been involved in violent attacks, and most continue to look up to McGinnis, despite his denouncement of them. I have a lot of faith in the police here, I don’t think this will become violent. But the words McInnes puts out engender violence. McInnes denies he is a white nationalist, but he doesn’t believe white nationalism is a problem in America. Those ideas are rooted in political violence, not just in other minority groups. At its core, it’s violent, at times genocidally so. I just wanted to understand how this satisfies the mission statement of the board to enhance student life and improve the educational climate.

Alexa: The money for this event was funded by UPAC, and its parent organization is the SFB. I wanted to emphasize that the speaker was funded because UPAC has to be viewpoint neutral. Reading from a document: “All viewpoints no matter how controversial must be funded.” This stems from a Supreme Court decision in which Wisconsin University was sued because the student fee was used to vote against things they did not agree with. The First Amendment allows universities to charge students, provided this [fee-charging] program is viewpoint neutral. It is inevitable some of these viewpoints will be found objectionable and offensive. On the allowable allocation of fees, the process of reviewing allocations is administered in a viewpoint-neutral fashion.

I completely understand what you’re saying. UPAC doesn’t agree with what this speaker says. But if UPAC does not follow through, we could be sued by the university for the funds, for the program. I understand, but it’s tough. As a woman of color, I don’t want this event to public, but I don’t see what I can do.

Zander: I definitely sympathize with you. I don’t agree with anything this guy [McInnes] says. I think it’s incredibly hateful. But I would agree that we have a right to free speech in this country. And though you may be right in each point you’ve made, we aren’t able to silence someone. But we could use this as an opportunity to protest against this type of speech. A lot of what he stands for is concerning to people of color like me. But at the end of the day, we have to stand up for free speech, which is fundamental. But we don’t have to agree with him.

Lawrence: I was reading through the minutes through the UPAC minutes, where it says “nevertheless, in regards to possible community response…” I understand this is protecting free speech, but I think it’s important to focus on the implications of what funding will be like inciting violence. While we don’t want to be sued, there are places we can step closer to that line. Viewpoint neutrality means we have to give every voice a chance, but it does not mean we need to approve those voices.

Dallas: Point of inquiry: what specific group is bringing this McInnes?

Lawrence: Uncensored America. Their process for picking speakers is who is being talked about, not being talked to.

Dallas: Are you representing another group on this, Nick? What do you want us to do because there are a lot of constraints?

Nick: To address the first point, I’m not representing one group specifically. I’ve spoken with many groups, and I’ve given the same spiel. But I’m just someone who happens to know who Gavin is. As for what I’m asking, I very much understand there’s not a lot this board can do to keep him from coming to campus to speak. To address the points of viewpoint neutrality, I wouldn’t ask you to do that. The right to free speech is incredibly important. When I went to GPSA and SBA (Student Bar Association), they asked me to put something together to take away from him, to keep people from being involved. Because that’s what they can do. The ask I have for the board is more forward-looking. When you have speakers that espouse violent ideas who are a threat to radicalizing students and violent ideas, I ask that that goes into consideration of what viewpoints come onto campus. My issue here is not with racial slurs, threats against women and POC, but my issue is that he insights violence. He’s been de-platformed almost completely because he incites violence. DePaul University rescinded his invitation and his honoraria because he incites violence. “We’re going to allow you on campus, but won’t pay” makes more sense. Free speech is not funded speech. I’m asking the fee board to consider the threat of radicalization and threat of violence when considering this.

Brian: I completely sympathize with people harmed by his speech. I denounce it entirely. I don’t have anything I disagree with, but I didn’t get a good idea of what we’ve been asked to do. I’m still convinced that this is not an advocacy group. I’m all for free speech and protesting against violence. But I wouldn’t want SFB to become politically outspoken.

Sydney: Hi I’m Sydney. I’m the UPUA president. On that thread, it’s important to hear concerns that students have, but advocacy work should more be done by student governments. I think going to GPSA and UPUA are better forums around what level of advocacy can be done - if anyone wants to bring concerns outside and what it means to put on a counter event.

In addition, I fear a counter event could bring that same level of radicalization that I don’t want others to become victims of violence. I’m very open to hearing what your thoughts are in more of a UPUA realm.

Alexa: One, student programming association is already working on events that will happen on the same night. UPAC is working to fund other events that will also happen on that night. When the budget was funded initially, the Chair asked if they needed funding for security, and we added that. We were proactive in terms of realizing a gap of what the event will look like and what needed to be there.

Nick: I don’t have much to respond to that, I understand there’s not a ton this board can do because this is a public university. My concern, my ask is more forward-looking, to be more concerned about speakers/events that may cause riots, may espouse ideas that create future opportunities for political violence. I understand this board is not an advocacy group. But political violence is what this speaker represents - the potential as well. To put a finer point, my ask is more forward-looking. Think about the protection of the student body from radicalization from student body to violence. Thanks for your time, I know this is not easy to talk about.

Sydney: Point of inquiry is around future discussions like these. Especially when 25 students come, and looking at what these discussions will be like.

Lawrence: Send me an email and we’ll put that in the operating guidelines.

1. **Old Business**
2. **New Business**
3. **Topics of Discussion**
   1. **Equity Committee Chair Appointment**

Lawrence: Would you like to stay, or move to a more advisor role?

Najee: I worked with Noah last year, and we spent hours, outside of this meeting, especially in the distribution of the equity fund materials. It would be nice to see through. I’ve already reached out to offices and there’s a student of their own project I’m helping. But I haven’t had the bandwidth in the past weeks.

Lawrence: Having a proxy chair could also help put everything together, and we’ll talk more about this next week.

* 1. **Bryce Jordan Center Student Advisory Board Update**

Zander: I’ve met with the BJC, in regards to the Student Advisory Board. I’ve pointed him to UPUA, GPSA. I’m also going to send him more resources. I showed him an outline of the Student Legal Services student advisory board. His question is that, when he goes to seek funding from us, will he be penalized if the advisory board is not fully formed?

Lawrence: We are not a penalizing body, we may just choose to allocate less. The reason he received less funding last year is because there was no movement. I would defer to the jusification letter from last year. I will also send you a list of 27 student organizations he can pull from.

* 1. **Future Concerns** 
     1. **UHS**
        1. **STI Testing Fee**
        2. **General Health Fee**

Lawrence: UHS last year received a new director. Last year, UHS received $315,000 for 7,500 STI tests for an initial pilot program. This year, there’s an expectation that they will ask us for 2 new fee requests as a result of this pilot program. Another thing that could come up is a general health fee. Most university health systems get funded out of a general health fee from the university, a fee from the student fee, and insurance. No university in the country has equal weighting, but Penn State offers heavy insurance. The general health fee will cover a baseline of health services, for those students without insurance. Going forward, make sure to vote on two separate fees instead of one.

Sydney: I’m meeting with the new UHS director. I was going to ask them about their perspective of STI tests as part of health fee. My question is that: they would need to submit a new fee request, but would they still submit the concept of the standing health fee and STI testing separately as part of their annual allocation?

Lawrence: I think they should submit separately. I understand when it comes to the hearing, I would suggest it would be combined into one hearing.

Najee: I’m going to submit something in the General Teams chat. I’ll say it out loud. I wanted to bring this up to everyone: Berkeley has a basic needs fee that distributes money to relevant care of basic needs that support students that otherwise wouldn’t receive that report. In the Lion’s Pantry, the fee is $100,000, and other student fee requests advocating for basic needs related requests. I’m putting this out there to think about health equity. If there are fees that are coming that are intersectional, there should be another way for strategic communication, not only for students but the SFB. e.g., a more robust infrastructure. I wanted to strongly consider this in consideration to the weight that basic needs have been given.

Sydney: What is the SFB’s role in advocating for basic needs?

Lawrence: A potential problem is feasibility studies of a basic need. This is something we could look into in the future.

Najee: Essentially, the university is putting forward a health fee because they need to. If the university is trying to push this forward, we have an obligation to add our own twist for something that is central to what we need. As an exception, we must centralize this and communicate to students. It’s easier to communicate a general approach the SFB is taking. I don’t want people to have the impression of socialized health as well. It makes more sense to communicate the centralization and prioritization of the SFB. We’re also leveraging the university being pressured into adding more money.

Noah: I’ll yield time to Kyle.

Kyle: I wanted to flag something. For grad students, this is one of our concerns. I like the idea of lumping essential student fees into a single fund. I also like having it separate so there won’t be changes to one entire fee. So there needs to be a way to highlight the demarcation, but also how this shapes out during the summer.

Najee: I like the concept of securing. Is that something we can talk about to Andrea in terms of contracting and summer grad students?

Noah: I also like the idea from a communication standpoint of how much money is going to basic needs. Would this be a separate standing allocation or is this a point of communication, or is it indexing fees?

Lawrence: We will need to discuss this. This is outside of the scope of this meeting, however. We just need to discuss how well it works for this campus.

* + 1. **Potential Backfilling**

Lawrence: The admin suite suggested relying on SFB more for the purpose of backfilling. It is something that may be a concern in the future, but it is something that I vehemently am against.

Noah: Do you have an example?

Lawrence: All I was told was backfilling tuition money.

Noah: One thing we discussed last year was backfilling for the Lion’s Pantry. But backfilling may be a dangerous precedent: overloading the new student fee board. Especially last year when we decided this is not what the board wants to move in the direction of.

Tony: We spent some time talking about the current financials of this institution and about this. Talking about backfilling may open up even more proposals. That may add costs for us as well.

Lawrence: We are probably going to be hit by many new fee requests. One thing we were discussing is capping new fee requests, but that is another question.

* 1. **Class Experience Definition First Try**

Lawrence: Tony, this is in the ID committee folder. The definition I came up with was “experiences that are for the recruitment, execution, or completion of the process of earning credits”

Tony: We had tons of discussions about whether professional experiences come toward this. Back again to the discussion of whether “class experience” is only credit-bearing or professional development as well.

Sydney: My opinion on this topic is that UPUA funds a lot of professional development, so my fear is that that would hinder some of the work we do.

Lawrence: Did we come to a conclusion of what the definition would be?

Noah: I don’t think we came to a conclusion. Would that discussion come to the “non-academic” definition, or would we just relate the definition to non-academic experiences?

Alexa: This year, UPAC has allocated $200,000 toward travel. A lot of where people go is conferences, but we always consider: are they also going for workshops? It’s always been a grey area for UPAC. I don’t think professional development is the same thing as academic. Going to conferences is out of class explicitly, and it doesn’t go toward their credits or graduation. Professional development is educational, but we should be very careful.

Lawrence: A lot of the language around UPAC is what are you bringing back to Penn State, which is why I said “recruitment, execution, or completion of the process of earning credits.” Under that definition, conferences you could bring in along those lines.

Conor: One thing we should bring the conversation is accessibility. For example, everything under tuition is accessible. I think this should be left up to discussion for UPAC.

Lawrence: Right, individual conference vs. a conference that would be accessible for all to go to.

Alexa: Many people don’t know that UPAC is student-run. So if anyone is interested in learning more about what UPAC is. I’m willing to send someone from UPAC about funding opportunities.

Noah: One thought is: last year, we didn’t want to inflate the student fee. When we’re talking about academic experiences, I think professional development also entails a sense of learning opportunities. I feel hesitant to fund those types of learning experiences through the student fee, e.g., maybe asking individual colleges. It is still a funding opportunity, but that may be more for a college itself to fund. Draw a line between informal learning opportunities and professional development. I think we should qualify what we consider academic, thinking about the bloom of the student fee.

Lawrence: I think we should add discretion to the definition, which will keep the door open.

* 1. **Removal Language**

Lawrence: I wanted to add “or alternatively, will be able to submit, via email to the SFB, information in defense of their absences.” This will be something we talk about next week. Ultimately, we can do the 10-day process, and we don’t need to take attendance.

1. **Committee Chair Reports**
   1. **Communications**

Sydney: Communication committee met on Monday, and we went through the recommendations last year. I’m sure I’ll follow up with Noah for more information. We started to talk about creating new materials for the new Student Fee Board and accessibility of the website and giving students a more accessible way to show their concerns through comments. Next steps are to populate content. I plan to talk to Kacey to talk about website updates as well.

* 1. **Equity Fund**

Najee: Ava Starks (Black Caucus) and Mike Garza (Latino Caucus) are both pursuing new fee requests. Mike is thinking of pursuing CAPS for a DEI project. Ava is thinking of a laundry subsidization in collaboration with HFS. We’ve had 3 meetings so far. The dropbox was created, so they can distribute that information to us.

Others were made aware of the fund. They are getting information and access to information they may have not been able to pursue before. I will organize and set up a meeting as well within the fund.

Lawrence: The application is not online. Could you work with Sydney to get the language on the website?

* 1. **UPAC Appeals**

Brian: I’ll resend the Doodle poll and funnel it through emails as well.

1. **UPAC Chair Report**

Alexa: Next year we’re thinking of creating something for the cost of travel, and we’ve seen that in our costs. I’ll come with more updates. We’re considering a change, but we don’t want to do it this semester. Thinking of next semester.

1. **Chair Report**
   1. **OPP is moving forward with the Feasibility Studies**

Lawrence: There’s a timeline as early as three months, and we’ll hopefully get that sooner rather than later. Remind your offices. The only people that have access to the Calendly link are the offices. Every office needs to fill that out. We’ll do all the offices, and then all the new requests. Hopefully, we’ll be done with everything at the beginning of March. There’s only one option, but not all are filled. We had a survey go out underneath Facilities, and we’ll probably do another one again, to cover what the feasibility studies cannot provide. Has anyone not received first contact? Send me a list of those offices.

Najee: My office doesn’t have a director yet. Am I pursuing the interim or superior?

Lawrence: Reach out to the interim.

1. **Comments for Good of the Order**

Najee: Would anyone be against my putting in language about the centralization process? In theory, everyone is having their own ideas. Since the University is pursuing the health fee independently, they see a need. We can just ask for each separate proposal into a basic needs proposal. From our side, that’s where our official language would be put in. What would it look like to address students facing homelessness, and what’s not used is pushed back to the student fee? Having broken up responses, let’s communicate it [the basic needs fee] as one thing with an overarching umbrella. We want to put an emphasis on the development of a Memorandum of Understanding. I think we should step in for students for a more effective way to go about this, leveraging how the university wants to pursue funding for these types of basic needs.

Lawrence: Send me that, and we’ll get it on the schedule.

If there are any concerns about the way these meetings are run, just send me an email. If any offices have concerns, let me know and we can resend them the justification letters and we can get them on the hearings.

1. **Closing Roll Call**

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 a.m.