

20 April 2020 Senate Meeting Minutes

*Meeting called to order at 7:03pm*

Attendance: Quorum is met.

## **Approval of the minutes**

### **Community Comment**

#### **Politician Dan Feehan and Team**

Nick Summers: I am a junior this year at Gustavus and I have been interning with Dan and his campaign for a few months now. Dan is an army veteran, taught middle school, and worked under the Obama administration for a period of time.

Dan Feehan: Thanks Nick! I am a DLF candidate for congress in this upcoming election and I would be representing all of Southern Minnesota. I attended undergrad at Georgetown university and I witnessed 9/11, which is what inspired me on the path of public service. As Nick says, I was in the army, taught middle school, and worked at the pentagon for a period of time. What all of this has taught me is that it is so important that the people come first. Our campaign is built on the people. I want all of you to get involved even if St. Peter is your adopted community. Another plug, there are not many members of Congress who have student loan debt, but that would not be the case for me so I could offer a unique perspective.

→ Senator Jeremiason: What are your policies on environmental issues?

◆ Dan Feehan: We are in the middle of a pandemic right now, but one thing that is not talked about is how climate change makes the spread of diseases so much worse. I often get frustrated that climate change is only looked at as an issue for coastal states, but it affects us everywhere including in Minnesota. There are many cities that suffer from extreme flooding. If we are not leading on this subject, then we are doing harm. I believe rural communities and agricultural voices need to be represented. We need to reduce admissions and remove existing admissions. We have the ability to become environmentally independent with our access to wind, solar, water power.

→ Senator Jeremiason: Thank you! And my second question would be how do you see us being able to vote safely in this upcoming election?

◆ Dan Feehan: I worry about how Pandemics come in waves, so I am worried it will strike again in the fall which will be during election time. In Minnesota, we are lucky to have an option for mail-in voting. I would like to see this be the case

across the United States. I also think everyone should be automatically registered to vote at the age of 18 to make the process easier on everyone.

→ Ombudsperson Menke: Thank you for taking the time to be here today. What are some of your campaign strategies to encourage the younger population to vote?

◆ Dan Feehan: Things like what I am doing right here. I am trying to get in touch with young people by reaching out to colleges and students like you all. It is important to build genuine relationships. That's why people like Nick are so important, because he can really connect with you all. Young people are always told they're the future, but young people need to recognize the power they have now in the present. I even hope this inspires you to go encourage your friends to vote.

→ Chair Yangh: Thank you so much for coming in today! How has your team practiced resilience and adaptation during this pandemic?

◆ Dan Feehan: It's hard. I have definitely been struggling. I try to draw on my past experiences. This situation reminds me of a deployment. You lose track of time and you are limited in what you can do. One thing my team tries to do is find one thing to look forward to. Even if it is something really small it can help so much. Talking to people and reaching out to friends is also incredibly important as we are very social people. Staying active can also help you stay calm.

→ Senator Young: What are changes you would like to see for healthcare in the United States?

◆ Dan Feehan: An approach I would like to take is a focus on rural healthcare. A thing like covid-19 has really shown where inequalities exist. In rural Minnesota, there have no been enough access to hospitals and doctors. In some cases, people have to drive hours and this can lead to lost lives. Throughout our presidential race I didn't really see this idea get raised but I think it is very important.

→ Senator Olono: What are some of your thoughts or solutions for illegal immigration?

◆ Dan Feehan: It is definitely a difficult one. We have what I like to call it a people problem. There aren't enough people to run businesses in these rural communities in Minnesota, so we need to embrace these immigrants coming in. I do think it is important to allow immigration. They help contribute to these communities by paying taxes and working in businesses. This is one thing I think our country needs to work on. We do not have an easy system for a pathway to citizenship. We need dramatic by-partisan immigrant reform while also making sure to take National security into consideration.

→ Senator Nelson: If you get into congress what would be the one thing you would want to see changed the most?

◆ Dan Feehan: First, may I ask what year you were born?

◆ Senator Nelson: 2000.

◆ Dan Feehan: We have been at war for 95% of your life. We are going on 20 years of war. We have been at war in 14 different countries during the time that you've been alive. I believe congress should have the power to choose whether we are at war. I do not think the president should have this power exclusively. I think I have a unique voice as a veteran to help champion this cause.

→ Co-President Elect Conception: I was wondering if you have any policies that will directly affect us as students?

◆ Dan Feehan: I would guess at least one person in this call and probably many of you have student loan debt. I would love to see a cap on student loan debt and loan forgiveness, such as for those going into any sort of public service. My college debt is greater than the mortgage on my house. I want you all to feel comfortable pursuing your degree without being saddled with debt and fear of bankruptcy.

### **EAC Co-Presidents Aviva Meyerhoff and Kendra Held**

Kendra Held: I am one of the Co-presidents of EAC and I am working as a sustainability intern under Jim Dontje the director of the Johnson Center for Sustainability Innovation.

Aviva Meyerhoff: He is the only director on campus with a focus on sustainability. He helps train the interns and helps inform the administration on the campus regarding environmental issues. Jim notified the campus that he would be resigning at the end of this year. We had initiated some feedback sessions to try and create a job description and find a replacement however due to current circumstances we were unable to complete all the sessions, but we want to keep this process moving forward.

Kendra Held: Right now it does not look like a replacement director is going to be hired, but we think it is very important for campus to have. If he is not replaced, it will leave 6 interns without a boss and many other groups without leaders. We propose you charge the Environmental Sustainability Chair to craft a letter regarding concerns to the administration surrounding the possible loss of this position to be shared with the board, Kristi Tunheim, and the provost.

Co-President Bhakta: We will now open the floor for questions.

- Senator Young: You mentioned you were crafting your own letters. Would you propose we sign onto your existing letters or work to craft our own?
  - ◆ Kendra Held: I think the interns have a somewhat different perspective since we have worked closer with Jim, so I think it would be nice to work with you all in the Senate to create a different letter offering a broader perspective.
  - ◆ Aviva Meyerhoff: To echo Kendra, I think it is important to show that this is an important issue for everyone on campus, not just members of environmental sustainability groups.
  
- Co-President Elect Conception: Have you guys reached out to these faculty members you mentioned earlier?
  - ◆ Aviva Meyerhoff: Yes, that has been a process. We have been talking with our director Jim who has been meeting with the provost and like I said they have been working on writing up a job description.

Chair Yangh: I just wanted to mention that I wouldn't be writing this letter alone. I would be working closely with Aviva and Kendra and my committee. We are all very passionate so I would encourage a senator to charge our committee when it comes to that time.

Kendra Held: In closing, I just think environmentalism can be very broad reaching and it is important to everyone on campus, which is why we hope you will all get involved.

Aviva Meyerhoff: We don't want all the work we have done to be swept under the rug. The issues addressed by this position are important for the whole student body, not just those in the environmental orgs or department.

- Senator Nelson: I was wondering if you could talk about Groundswell and other environmental issues you are working on for campus currently?
  - ◆ Kendra Held: Following the first groundswell we go to meet with the Cabinet and President Bergman and she made two commitments. The first was that in 5 years we would reduce emissions by 35%, and that we would work towards becoming a zero waste campus. One thing we would love to see is a sustainability credit in the Gustavus curriculum, but unfortunately that will not be implemented this fall. This is something we were both disappointed about, but we will continue to work on this moving forward. Some other things we have looked at is the culture on campus regarding sustainability, how we get rid of waste, and if we are holding each other accountable. This last thing is transparency. I think we need more work on this. Sometimes I think the administration thinks they are doing enough, but

we as students do not always agree. Aviva and I are now working on planning the next Groundswell for the fall and we are trying to get prepared for new demands.

- ◆ Aviva Meyerhoff: Yeah another thing is if any of you are interested in getting involved in this movement please feel free to get a hold of one of us.

## **Committee Updates**

Chair Carlson-Sather: Earlier this year, my committee had been charged with safety of pedestrian crossing by Collegeview. We were talking about if we should look into creating additional crosswalks at multiple buildings, just College View, or if we should abandon this idea.

- Senator Nelson: I cannot speak for everyone, I think the issue with collegeview is that the lighting is not as good which makes this specific area less safe. I think it would be important to make every area safer if this is possible.
- Senator Young: I am in favor of creating as much pedestrian based safety as possible. I think we should address as many locations as possible.
- Chair Johnson: I would like to advocate for more lighting behind Christ Chapel by the new Nobel because it is very dark there.
- Chair Carlson-Sather: The initial charge was requested for College View since it is on more of a back road and people are less likely to slow down.
- Advisor Ruble: Yeah I am fine with anything, but it is sounding like college view is the biggest area of concern

Controller Johnson: I just wanted to update you on the Spring budget process. We have gotten 64 responses so far and we will be able to start approving those next week!

## **Old Business**

Chair Carlson-Sather: We got over 80 responses to our survey. From these responses we drafted a letter from our committee to send to the administration in charge of changing the policy. We included all the quantitative data for them, and then we included quotes that we thought summarized the information well. There were 27% who were indifferent to seeing the change. I didn't include as many of those quotes, but he will have access to the entire survey. Now we are looking for approval from the Senate to send this letter on.

- Co-President Bhakta: We will now open this up to questions/discussion.
- Senator Jeremiason: One thing I would like to point out and see included is the colleges policy regarding bathroom use. I am not even sure how many gender neutral bathrooms we have on campus, but I think it is important that people feel comfortable and do not need to conform to the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Senator Lim: I do think Senator Jeremiason's point is very important. I am not sure if it fits with the exact topic of this letter, but I do feel like it is something we should address. I know there are gender-neutral bathrooms, but I do not feel like there's a lot of transparency from the administration regarding these policies.
- Senator Jeremiason: I think it is something we should dive into deeper, but i think it would still fit in this letter addressing gendered language.
- Senator Young: I feel the letter should be sent as is and I feel that the other issues brought up should be addressed in a future letter when we have a chance to look into the language further, especially since this policy he asked about specifically.
- Advisor Ruble: One thing to think about is how the entire senate feels about this. Our survey was good but if you still think about this is not the majority of our campus population
- Senator Jeremiason: Now know that this letter just specifically was meant to address visitation hours, I would agree with Senator Young that we should wait and address the transphobic language at a later date.

Senator Young: I move that we include a section in the letter on removing gendered language in the Visitation Hour Policy, and instead replacing it with a blanket statement that affects students without regard to gender identity or class year.

*Second goes to Senator Patterson*

Senator Patterson: I am super in support of this. I also wanted to reiterate the idea of giving students the opportunity to have some choice in their visitors' hours which could be discussed in roommate agreements.

Co-President Bhakta: All those in favor of approving this letter to be sent to res life say aye.

*The ayes have it. Motion Passes.*

- Chair Johnson: I was going to say this before the vote happened, but if we leave it up to students about deciding visiting policies, not all students are as good at advocating for themselves so I worry that this could create inequity.
  - ◆ Chair Carlson-Sather: I see what you are saying since we recommended a blanket statement, but then we also advocated for individual decisions.
  - ◆ Senator Young: My hope as roommates would be that you could work together to decide visitation hours, but there would still be the ability to reach out to the CF. I do see the concern, but I think it is important because everyone has very different living styles so it makes sense to me to give individual students some say.
  - ◆ Senator Braun: I was going to say something similar to Senator Young so I won't repeat too much. I definitely think removing this language is important, but like he said, CFs are a resource for us. We know there will be bumps in this road during this process and it may take more than just one letter of communication.
  
- Senator Schaaf: I am not sure if this has been mentioned, but would this mean we are advocating for the abolishment of quiet hours?
  - ◆ Chair Carlson-Sather: That is actually a separate policy from visitation hours, so I do not think our proposals would affect that.
  
- Parliamentarian Boyden: This is just a reminder that we already voted on the letter as is so right now we are just talking which is fine, but to change anything else we would need to have another vote.
  
- Chair Carlson-Sather: I added some bracketed words if someone wants to create a new motion for this to be added. Otherwise I will remove them.
  - ◆ Senator Young: I move that the bracketed words be added to the letter.

*Second goes to Senator Nelson*

Co-President Bhakta: All those in favor of changing the wording in the letter say aye.

*The ayes have it. Motion passes.*

## **New Business**

### **Approval of next year's calendar**

Co-President Elect Doran: This calendar includes the dates of certain things required by the constitution. Let us know if you have any questions.

→ Advisor Ruble: Something that happened a lot this year was constantly looking for students at large throughout the year. I think it would be helpful to have the applications sent out at the same date.

◆ Co-President Elect Doran: So we have 3 committees with students at large. The reason they were spread out is that one of the committees was created part way through the year so this would most likely not be an issue this coming year.

Co-President Bhakta: If there is no further discussion. All those in favor of approving the calendar for the 2020-2021 calendar say aye.

*The ayes have it. Motion passes*

Co-President Bhakta: Do we have any other new business?

Senator Hieptas: I charge the environmental sustainability chair with writing a letter in accordance with what was discussed during community comment.

*Second goes to speaker Ellingson*

→ Senator Young: The only thing I would add is to have the committee reach out to the individuals mentioned to see if they have been working on this before we write them a letter encouraging them to do so.

→ Advisor Ruble: I would second what Senator Young says. I think it is important that before we make assumptions we ask questions. There are a lot of reasons that hiring gets put on hold, or maybe it is not on hold and we don't realize the extent of what the college is doing. For example, the college has lost a lot of money this Spring from refunds and the loss of summer programs.

→ Chair Yangh: Point of Information. One of the reasons we wanted to bring this up to the senate today is that we would like to see a replacement before he leaves at the end of the school year so he would be able to train this new person. I would also like to second Young and Ruble's sentiments so I think the motion should be made very clear whether we want information first or a letter.

→ Ombudsperson Menke: I think a letter is a great idea. Just make sure to send it out 24 hours before the meeting so we are in accordance with the bylaws.



- Senator Young: I would be in favor of both a letter and more information about the process.
- Senator Hieptas: I would like to friendly the sentiments raised by Senator Young.

Co-President Bhakta: If there is no further discussion, we will move to a vote. All those in favor of the Environmental Sustainability chair crafting a letter to be looked at for next week say aye.

*The ayes have it. Motion Passes.*

Co-President Bhakta: Is there anymore new business to be discussed?

Senator Patterson: I recently got a question about the lack of information about getting off-campus housing. I know we are a residential campus so it makes sense that we fill the dorms first, but as classes continue to get larger there will be some people let off campus and a greater level of transparency would be helpful. I charge the health and housing chair with reaching out to res life about this issue.

*Second goes to Senator Young.*

- Senator Young: Did the constituent want more information about how the process works or just to be able to know sooner?
  - ◆ Senator Patterson: A little bit of both. He said a lot of people do not find out if they are off campus until August and at that point it is too late to find a house. Additionally there is a discrepancy with some of the language about who is considered a part time student.
- Advisor Ruble: It is a very fine line to walk with this issue. It is important for the campus to fill all the beds, so in asking for an earlier deadline that could lead to even less people being let off campus which would not be ideal, but I understand that puts students in a hard place. Also, paige can you sent me the discrepancy
- Senator Young: I am in favor of reaching out to res life just to get more information about the possibility of students knowing sooner.
- Chair Carlson-Sather: I was thinking would it be helpful if I could see if Daniel Sandberg would be able to come into a meeting and be able to answer the Senate's questions. Otherwise, I still still send an email with the previously stated information. What are peoples' thoughts on this?

- ◆ Senator Patterson: I think it would be great for him to come in if he has time or even meet with a small group, but either way I think you should send him an email right away.

Co-President Bhakta: If there is no further discussion, we will move to a vote. All those in favor of the Health and Housing Chair send an email to res life regarding off campus housing say aye.

*The ayes have it. Motion passes.*

## **Announcements**

*Meeting adjourned at 8:47pm.*