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Senate Meeting

Friday, August 30, 2023

Presiding Officer: Vice-President Mauro

Minute Taker: Justice Zabaleta

1. **Call to Order:** Call to Order at 1:06 pm
2. **Roll Call:** Roll Call Completed at 1:08 pm
3. **Adoption of the Agenda:** Motion by Representative Valdez to move the Finance and Funding Guidelines to Unfinished Business, Seconded by Representative Lorden

Motion by Representative Craig to adopt the agenda, Seconded by Senator Halember

1. **Approval of Minutes from August 23:** Motion by Representative Valdez to amend the minutes to include “excused absence” under the SACAB reports section   
   Motion by Representative Craig to approve the minutes, Seconded by Director Thomason
2. **Public Comment:**
3. Bassem Hassan (Political Science department): Our department plans to organize a debate night event for the upcoming presidential debate. We have observed that recent presidential elections have been highly polarizing. We hope to create an event where different groups of students can come together to build community on campus and engage in discussions about politics and policy. We are organizing this event in the Student Commons building and hope to have the student government co-sponsor it and provide food and drinks.
4. **Unfinished Business:**
5. Finance and Funding Guidelines (45 Minutes)

* Friendly amendment by Senator Anson to add another bullet point to the presentation guidelines stating, “If a budget request is under $500.01, then the presentation section of the Finance and Funding Rubric is to be disregarded when under consideration,” Seconded by Senator Halember
* Vote of affirmation: 14-0-0
* Point of information by Senator Rodriguez: I am looking at the Finance and Funding Committee teams and there are some amendments. Will these amendments be made during Senate, or have they already been made?
* Senator Halember: The amendments posted in the Teams are for the rubrics that we will discuss later. The guidelines were passed by the committee, but we would like to make an amendment here so that everyone in the Senate is informed.
* Point of information by Senator Pham: There are many student events happening in the next three weeks that require funding. For example, the debate is scheduled for September 10th, I believe, which falls outside the three-week guidelines after the form becomes available. Would student organizations be able to request reimbursement if they pay out of pocket for the event?
* Senator Anson: The Finance and Funding Committee does not cover reimbursements for expenses paid out of pocket.
* Motion by Senator Rodriguez to approve the 2024-2025 Finance & Funding Budget Request and University Purchasing Guidelines for Student Government Association Funding for Student Organizations, Seconded by Senator Anson
* Roll Call Vote: 14-0-0
* The Guidelines are APPROVED

1. **New Business:**
   1. Finance and Funding Rubric (30 Minutes)

* Motion to go into Commitee of the Whole for 30 minutes by Senator Halember, Seconded by Senator Rodriguez
* At 1:22 pm
* Back at 1:52 pm
  1. Pro-Tempore (10 Minutes)
* Motion by Representative Pham to go into committee of the whole for 15 minutes, Seconded by Senator Rodriguez
* At 1:59 pm
* Representative Valdez nominates Representative Craig. Nomination is accepted
* Vote of affirmation: 13-0-1
* Representative Craig is our new Pro-Tempore!
  1. Desk Shift Scheduling (15 Minutes)
* Motion by Representative Favorite to add Representative Sivakumaran to the roll call, Seconded by Senator Rodriguez
* Vice President Mauro: Here is what we have so far, which Kelsey put together for our office hours scheduling. I will start a new thread for everyone to respond to, so you can reply with any revisions needed for the current time slots.
* Point of Clarification by Senator Pradhan: I told Kelsey about the desk shift because I hadn't finalized my schedule due to dropping a few subjects. Now that I have it, should I email Kelsey about it?
* Motion by Senator Halember to go into committee of the Whole for10 minutes, Seconded by Senator Pradhan.
* Motion by Senator Anson to table the discussion for next senate, Seconded by Senator Mehta.
  1. Presentation from President Brooks (30 Minutes)
* President Brooks: Combating food insecurity on campus was a major initiative for us this year. We have data showing the impact of our advocacy efforts: from 2022 to 2023, the number of community members and general visits per month increased dramatically, peaking at 2,500 in April. The food pantry recently expanded and reopened on Monday, with several new contracts signed. We will be coordinating with the Wellness Center to schedule group walkthroughs of the new pantry. The increase in numbers has far exceeded our initial 20% growth projection, which is exciting. We plan to work with our PR team to enhance communication about the pantry to sustain this growth and maintain our partnerships with the Food Bank of the Rockies and other vendors.
* Senator Pradhan: We've marketed the food pantry, but many new students are still unaware of its existence, especially during orientation and other campus events. It might be beneficial to table specifically for the food pantry to raise awareness about this resource.
* Representative Valdez: I've seen the Wellness Center tabling with reusable bags. We could partner with them and have them table with us.
* President Brooks: When we met with Victoria, she proposed a partnership because they were fond of Nourish Now. They would love to collaborate to improve communication about food resources for students.
* Point of Information by Representative Pham: at all in the future are we considering moving the food pantry outside of the wellness center because I think that is the number one reason why new students do not know What the food pantry is Because they don't even know what the wellness center is. An everyone know where the MSU food pantry is because it is in the Tivoli. So I was just asking is there like a more is there either going to be increased advertising for that or is there gonna be a move outside of the wellness center?
* President Brooks: I'm not aware of any plans to move the food pantry out of the Wellness Center, especially since they just expanded the current space. However, we could talk to Victoria about doing a pop-up maybe in the Tivoli on certain days to help decentralize it and increase awareness.
* Senator Rodriguez: Last year, the civics committee discussed with Victoria the idea of having mobile food pantry days. Maybe we could use a golf cart or another mobile device to distribute food, like what we did with Nourish Now.
* Senator Leaser: Do you think it would be possible to incentivize students with more points for participating in campus activities?
* President Brooks: I haven't considered incentivizing students with food pantry points since the pantry is meant to be a general resource for everyone. If we were to offer incentives, I think it should be something like Lynx Dollars.
* Senator Vega: I visited the food pantry this week and asked about the points system. They’ve changed it; now they have a list of items you can grab each week, with a limit of items allowed from each section.
* Senator Halember: They've reduced the number of items you can get, maybe because of the high number of students coming in.
* Senator Anson: Is the food pantry still on the third floor of the Wellness Center, in that closet-like area? It almost feels very secluded and uninviting right now, which may make students hesitant to use it. Making it more public and welcoming could help destigmatize the food pantry.
* President Brooks: We shared these concerns with Victoria and the food pantry team. They compared our Wellness Center food pantry to MSU's Rowdy's Corner in the Tivoli and said that ours serves more as a private grocery shopping experience. Since we didn't have any data or survey responses at the time, we agreed to collect feedback. If it turns out that the student body favors a more public pantry, we can bring that feedback to Victoria.
* Representative Pham: Could we put posters in every classroom in North? students might see them while heading to class or walking down the stairs. Posters advertising food could increase visits to the food pantry, I don’t see any problems with this.
* Senator Pradhan: I noticed that the North Building bulletin boards have flyers about the food pantry with QR codes.
* Representative Craig: Currently, AHEC policy prevents posting flyers in the Tivoli unless they’re for events open to everyone on campus. SACAB is working to revise this policy with the Auraria Board of Directors, as it was initially set as an interim measure without our feedback. We believe we can change it.
* Ex Officio Lemons: Student life is not currently complying with that policy, which we find absurd. While I’m not advocating for anyone to break the rules, I continue to put up flyers, and other student organizations are doing the same. Both we and Metro strongly disagree with this policy and are defying it.
* Ex Officio Gallegos: Sustainability has approached me about partnering with Civics to do Nourish Now as a farmers market idea. They also want to collaborate with the food pantry to share more information.
* President Brooks: I bring this to the Senate because the executive team has concerns about our travel spending, particularly for professional staff development this past year. We noticed troubling line items, such as funding for Brian Moffitt, the director of housing, to attend NASPA 2025. We've sent a list of questions to Jarrick, as we believe students aren't seeing a return on this large investment. It's especially troubling since one of the more expensive conferences was in Hawaii, while our CAT team and F&F are facing budget cuts. We discussed this with Jen Saint Peters, who also expressed concern and is working on modifying policy regarding whether student fees can support travel related to professional development. Student travel was included but made up a very small proportion of the costs, which is concerning.
* Representative Craig: Could you clarify where this money came from? Is it from the student life budget, the overall budget, or another source?
* Vice President Mauro: The other document breaks down the spending by type. The first is the 899 speedtype for general operating expenses for student life. Further down, you'll see the general operating costs for SGA and F&F.
* President Brooks: We reached out for clarification because we understood that some grants covered travel expenses and there were savings from unfilled positions. We wanted to know how these factors influenced the spending.
* Motion to go into into Committee of the Whole by Representative Pham
* Motion rescinded
* Senator Leaser: Is there anything we can do in Senate about that?
* President Brooks: Jen mentioned that her team is working on creating a cap, though it's unclear if it's specific to student life. Our Senate could write a resolution to recommend reducing travel spending, and redirecting funds to other areas. We don’t have final budget numbers yet, this is hearsay but last we heard from Kelsey, $15,000 was set aside for travel.
* Senator Pradhan: Where did the budget come from?
* Senator Rodriguez: The money spent is student fee funded, correct?
* President Brooks: We asked Jen about this in our budget meeting yesterday. She confirmed that some of the funding might not come entirely from student fees but needs to check. I noticed a significant amount of student fee dollars spent directly on students, which is concerning.
* Representative Valdez: Is there a way to determine how this year's budget would be affected if the travel hadn't occurred? Some justifications mention Jarrick’s role as NACA chair, but I understand that when serving in such positions, expenses shouldn't typically be covered by the university. It would be helpful to break down these differences.
* President Brooks: Jen gave us a similar answer in our meeting. She said it’s not uncommon, but she wouldn’t have approved it.
* Senator Rodriguez: I'm appalled and frustrated, especially given the budget cuts to F&F and our operating budget. It feels like a slap in the face that, while we face cuts impacting students directly, funds are used for conferences held during the summer when the campus is empty. This seems like a negligent use of money, and I feel it's crucial to inform students about this. I’m trying to stay cordial, but I’m extremely upset.
* Representative Pham: Not only do we face budget cuts, but we also represent students who pay a lot to attend here. Many students work 50-60 hours a week at jobs they don't enjoy. Spending their hard-earned money in this way feels like a slap in the face.
* Senator Anson: Is there a difference between NACA Live and NACA Live 2025? The justifications mention an event in 2024, but I’m seeing early bird registration for NACA 2025. Did they use this year’s funds for an event next year?
* Vice President Mauro: NACA Live 2025 is a prepaid expense from the 2023-2024 budget for an event in the 2024-25 fiscal year.
* Senator Vega: Is writing legislation the only way to prevent this from happening again this year, or are there other options?
* President Brooks: We asked Jen if other units at CU Denver are spending student fees on similar travel for professional development. She said it's not uncommon and couldn't confirm otherwise. However, she mentioned that her team is working on a project to create a system where funds for professional development are set aside separately from student fees
* Senator Halember: In F&F we don’t cover travel and lodging for student organizations. How does this apply to travel and lodging funded by student fees in other cases? Are we handling it differently?
* President Brooks: The process is different from F&F; here almost all travel and lodging are covered. From my discussion with Kelsey, it seems that only high-cost travel, like Leadership on Broadway, required approval, which Genia signed off on. Jen mentioned that we need to trust our directors to be good fiduciaries of the money.
* Representative Craig: I echo Senator Rodriguez's concerns and am appalled by these numbers, especially after our budget discussion during training. This is disheartening, and we may not resolve it today. However, I encourage us to consider how to move forward, possibly through a resolution condemning this and making it clear that we’re not okay with it, even if it's symbolic.
* Representative Sivakumaran: When hiring professional staff, professional development should be part of the conversation. If we haven't allocated a budget for professional development, how can we justify using funds from other departments for this purpose?
* President Brooks: I understand that there is no specific budget for professional development. This was a major concern for the executive team when we reviewed this, as our understanding is that there’s only a general travel budget. While I agree that professional development is important for university staff, I’m not sure it's ethical to use student fees for it at this level, especially without student approval, at least from the executive team.
* Senator Leaser: Could we get a presentation from the Student Life staff who attended these events to see what they learned and how they plan to apply it?
* President Brooks: We can certainly invite them to present to the Senate about what they gained from their experiences. We are asking that our director provide data on travel expenses from previous years to determine if this sharp increase is part of a trend.
* Senator Pradhan: Everyone is disheartened by this, but we need to review the records and learn from this situation. Instead of dwelling on it, we should focus on learning and implementing new strategies to move forward.
* Senator Anson: This is a concerning expenditure. F&F has lost over a fifth of our budget from last year, and we're expecting even more requests for funding. Last year, we had about $5,000 that went unused, and we were unaware of it. Spending thousands on registration for one person seems excessive, especially when the funds are meant to support students. At some point, you can only develop a professional so much. This seems to be a broader issue within the institution, as even Jarrick mentioned prioritizing his staff. It doesn’t feel like student interests are being prioritized.
* President Brooks: We asked Jen about the $5,000 and she explained it was lost due to a system issue with the budget. She said we could work with her to try to recover it, but it’s unclear if we will actually get it back.
* Vice President Mauro: I want to clarify that the total is approximately $80,000.
* Representative Pham: I notice that many of these expenses are for high-end options, like JetBlue and United airfare and expensive hotels. Are there any considerations for choosing more affordable alternatives?
* President Brooks: We noticed a discrepancy regarding the Leadership on Broadway trip. While most of the student life team stayed in affordable lodging, one person stayed at the Marriott, which significantly increased costs. The other staff shared rooms to save money, but Kelsey mentioned that the individual who stayed at the Marriott didn't respond to this request.
* Justice Zabaleta: Last year, F&F discussed incentivizing professional development opportunities within Colorado instead of sending student organizations out of state. Could we explore this option? There are likely great opportunities in-state that could save on travel and lodging costs.
* Senator Vega: I'm baffled by these numbers, especially after hearing from students that last year's events dwindled at the end of the year. This funding could have been used to support more engaging events for students. I’d like to see a presentation from the individual who spent so much on travel with what they learned. As a body, we should also explore professional development opportunities within Colorado to save money. It’s shocking to see $80,000 coming from student fees, especially given the current economic challenges students face in finding jobs. I want to see this money reinvested into students
* Senator Rodriguez: Why is not Jarrick? We’re all frustrated and confused, and while we discuss issues, we need to take concrete actions to drive change. I urge everyone to attend the next meeting or have open discussions in the office. We are here to represent students, and once we’ve gathered all the information, we need to inform former students about this. We should consider passing resolutions, even symbolic ones, to condemn these actions and push for administrative changes to prevent this in the future.
* President Brooks: We’re working with administration to address this issue. As for Director Brown, I don’t know his whereabouts today or have access to his calendar.
* Justice Zabaleta: It's surprising that our system lacks a way to hold staff accountable for these trips. We need to establish clear guidelines for acceptable travel. Prioritizing the implementation of structure and accountability for our pro staff should be our focus.
* Representative Pham: Consider the $80,000 spent—it's $30,000 more than what student life gets for clubs. That amount could fund 14 students’ tuition. While networking is important, $80,000 seems excessive when it could have provided significant benefits to students directly.
* Senator Rodriguez: The second-to-last item lists Brian Moffitt, Executive Director of Housing and Dining, whose NASPA 2025 registration fee was covered by student life. It’s unclear why student life is paying for a staff member from a different department. Since Jarrick and Brian are friends, there might be a conflict of interest worth investigating.
* President Brooks: The conflict of interest will be addressed in future discussions. Jen also found it odd and did not approve of the registration fee for Brian Moffitt.
* Senator Rodriguez: How did SGA get this information?
* President Brooks: We can request almost anything related to the budget, except for some legal documents. Mitchell and I reviewed the budget from an advocacy perspective, as students are asking for more events and funds. We found significant spending, including on NACA conferences we went to. My experience at one of these conferences was not great, and we were not unaware of the high costs involved. Jarrick had said he’d cover it, but I should have pushed more for clarity. The $2,000 expense for Mitchell and me seemed excessive.
* Ex officio Glunz: I prepared the first document you see, and my calendar is open for SGA appointments if there are any questions. I have not been approached since drafting it.
* Senator Vega: why did Jarrick get to go to so many events?
* President Brooks: Jen said we need to trust that our directors will handle funds responsibly. Jarrick makes the decisions on these funds, except for the very large trip.
* Senator Rodriguez: Jarrick was hired in October or November of last year, and it’s concerning that someone recently hired is using funds for trips. Despite his statements about being new and unsure, he’s still spending significant amounts on these trips, which seems problematic.
* President Brooks: For transparency, the executive team has had a rocky start with Director Brown. We’re working to mend the relationship, but there is a lack of trust and ongoing concerns.
* Senator Vega: I agree that students should know about this. It’s important for them to see where their money has gone and to provide feedback on where they’d like the spending to be directed, whether toward events, resources, or other resources beyond what we currently offer.
* Representative Craig: A symbolic resolution could be useful. While we may not be financial experts, it's our responsibility to hold those who are accountable. I would also appreciate Director Brown addressing the students directly, as that would be the most respectful and ethical approach.
* Senator Rodriguez: It's important for the director to address student organizations about the budget cuts. Although there have been critical comments about our staff, I want to emphasize that teamwork is essential for resolving this issue. I hope the director and staff are open to collaborating with SGA. Despite high tensions, our focus should remain on representing students, not personal interests.
* Representative Valdez: We have the SSRC to review student fees but this issue didn't come up in previous conversations. Moving forward, we should consider presentations and feedback to address these concerns.
* Senator Anson: Did you ask Jarrick to come here to explain, or did you not have access to his calendar?
* President Brooks: I haven't asked Jarrick to present to the Senate yet, but we will email him today to request his presence. I also don't have access to his calendar to check his availability.
* Senator Rodriguez: Did you have access to his calendar over the summer, or were those permissions revoked? We should consider how to inform students about this. Should I share what’s happening now, or would you prefer a coordinated response from SGA once we gather more information?
* President Brooks: I trust your judgment on this. While I wouldn’t recommend a mass Instagram post, feel free to talk to peers or invite them to our Senate meetings to discuss the situation. Just make sure to communicate that we’re still gathering information and seeking explanations.
* Ex officio Glunz: I want to reiterate that I drafted this document for our department and haven't been approached about it. Many valid questions have been raised, but they haven’t been directed to student life. I believe it’s important to gather more information before sharing this.
* Senator Leaser: After reviewing the numbers, I want to highlight that Kelsey and Jarrick are very close. This is a fundamental issue, and I believe policy is important.
* Justice Zabaleta: It’s important to give Lance a chance to address our questions. If he hasn’t been approached with these concerns yet, this would be a valuable opportunity for him to provide answers and clarify the issues.
* Representative Valdez: I appreciate the consideration about discretion, but since we are a public body and this is a public Senate, the information is technically public.
* Director Thomason: Is it not possible that because you have not been approached by anyone about this document that this trend of potentially hedonistic spending goes much deeper than the travel expenses?
* Ex officio Glunz: I don’t think so. With nearly seven years in student life, I’m the second most tenured in our office, after Mark Martinez. As a business services professional, I focus on business operations rather than just leadership development. The history of our department is complex and has evolved over time. This issue is intricate and may be more complex than it appears. That’s why I offered to schedule appointments to provide a deeper understanding and ensure SGA is well-informed in its advocacy.
* Representative Craig: Could you come in and speak to us as a body about this in a forum setting? I know we're all busy and this information would benefit everyone. Would you be willing to do this, either in addition to or instead of the individual appointments?
* Ex officio Glunz: As an advisor and ex officio to your group, I’ve offered my private time for appointments. I’m not ready to make a public commitment today, but you can schedule a time with my office.
* Senator Rodriguez: Can we obtain information on spending from other departments, like housing and dining, which also had conferences over the summer? Is this something we can consider for the future, and what would be the process for investigating other departments?
* Senator Leaser: I want to echo the previous point about not sending faculty out of state. It would reduce lodging and travel costs and would be available to more people.
* Senator Rodriguez: I believe it's crucial to address this issue as a whole body rather than on a committee-by-committee basis. I urge my colleagues to work together to find a solution and ensure this issue maintains momentum. This will likely be a key topic for future senates, and I hope we can come together to resolve it, our role is to represent students, not our own values.

1. **General Business from the Floor:**
2. **Reports:**
   1. President: This week, we made progress on the RTD issue, gathering significant information. We met with architecture students concerned about the 120% increase in the college pass price. Given our commuter campus, this is a significant burden. We’re exploring advocacy options, as a $60 fee for the pass isn’t favorable for all students. I attended the Servicios de la Raza Gala and networked on behalf of SGA. I also discussed student fee management with the university lobbying team and Chris from Legal. Progress was made on the timesheet policy, which has been halted. Director Brown will issue a notice regarding this. I’ve been active in attending events and meeting students. We’re preparing to send out interview invitations for the current wave of applicants on Tuesday. We’re also addressing recent resignations and potential impeachments, which will be on next week’s Senate agenda for approval.
   2. Civics: We’ve set our official meeting time to Wednesdays at 9:30. Last week, we reviewed the transition documents from last year and are thinking about using a QR code to collect student feedback on their campus experience, as data collection will be important for our initiatives this year.
   3. College Council: We have been reaching out and gathering feedback from students and organizations. I’ve been working on scheduling fall events and met with the Business School Alumni Network today.
   4. Public Relations: I've mostly been covering events, like photographing and posting about the block party on Instagram. I’ve also been brainstorming ideas for TikTok to engage students beyond our current platforms. Ex officio Dew and I discussed creating mini minutes that could be shared as Instagram stories after each Senate meeting, as well as a newsletter for students to subscribe to.
   5. Finance & Funding: We reviewed and approved the guidelines and amended the rubric. It was my first meeting as chair, and it was a bit rocky, but I hope next week’s meetings will run more smoothly.
   6. Judicial: I met Heather, the new judicial member, and I'm looking forward to working with her. We have exciting ideas that we couldn't pursue last year due to time constraints. I’ll also be getting the absence form to track absences and will be part of the chancellor search committee, as mentioned by President Brooks.
   7. SACAB: I’ve been catching up on work over the summer and sending emails to AHEC. Our first meeting was canceled today. While this isn’t directly related to SACAB, I want to mention the racist anti-immigrant and anti-Black rhetoric signs posted near bus stops along Colfax. Our ex officio attended a press conference this morning to address this issue. She had other commitments, which is why the meeting was canceled. We’ll be meeting next week (?)
   8. SSRC: This week, I’ve been preparing emails for the upcoming SSRC presentations. The first one on our schedule is with John T. Rogers on September 13th at 2:00 PM.
   9. Ex Officio: N/A
   10. Straw poll to continue conversation: 14-0-0
3. **Adjourn:** Motion to adjourn by Senator Vega, Seconded by Senator Anson
4. Senate Adjourned at 3:54pm