

UA Council Meeting Minutes 12/9/15

Attendance:

Mary (McCormick), Taylor (Panhel), Ayomide (Panhel), Charlotte (Panhel), David (IFC), Trevor (IFC), Michael (IFC), Trey (New House), Alana (MacGregor), Eric (Random), Mandy (Baker), Kate (Simmons), Haley (Next House), Paul (BC), Sonja (EC), Daniel (LGC)

Approval of minutes from last meeting--unanimous

State of the UA Report:

Sophia met with all of the committee chairs, altogether we are doing well. Kelly McGee is going to Apple and his vice chair is stepping up; they have been working closely so there should not be any hiccups. Everything is running well; failures have been mostly on Matthew's end. He takes responsibility for the bylaws committee. In attendance were Matthew, Malte, and Olivia. They have made progress after working last night and have made recommendations around the judicial board. We will have to choose new council members. Obasi is distracting Matt and guiding his consciousness. Does the outgoing council have any recommendations for what the current Council can do better?

Sonja: Student contribution is not on par with peer institutions, and so I am curious if there are updates on that front. Small concern with how outside scholarship funding is done.

Matthew: Minimum wage for students has been raised, and there are talks to raise this wage even further, but there are also talks to lower the student contribution or do away with it entirely, but these are all in talks with President Reif.

Paul: Great job informing Council of updates, please continue to do so with new Council.

Matthew: Taylor are you continuing with the MetX committee?

Yo: We are changing the committee and what it does slightly.

Taylor: I do not expect to be on it next year.

Matthew: You always have my ear, please reach out to me whenever you would like.

BSU Presentation and Discussion: Rasheed Auguste

Tabled until Kevin and other pertinent members return.

UA Government Accountability Committee Discussion and Vote

There is a copy of Government Accountability which has been revised since last Council.

Eric: What would be kept confidential from Council by the President if s/he so chose?

Matthew: That is at my own peril, in terms of finances and other documents that make the organization run, then the organization would have access to. The level of executive discretion comes if I fail to write this down.

Eric: Future UA presidents should be able to operate confidentially, and would not want this to hamstring them.

Matthew: Well there is still the executive discretion, but this is recognized.

Eric: So would they be informed of private meetings?

Matthew: This comes down to their reasoning for keeping things secret, do you have recommendations? I wouldn't want to put a God clause.

Kate: It's a little sketchy to keep putting something on the agenda after it was voted down.

Matthew: My understanding after speaking with Taylor was that the no votes were under confusion for the meeting.

Taylor: That was my logic as well.

Mandy: What if they share something that is really not supposed to be shared? What are the repercussions?

Matthew: I've never seen a student in our positions maliciously release something that could really hurt them. The potential for it to happen exists, but that also exists in the private council members email list. There is a risk that the person can leak confidential information, but the upside is that Council is more informed and there is the opportunity for more steps to be taken.

Taylor: There is a risk of retaliation against a group if someone on the committee gets hold of confidential information, and there is a grudge. I would like to see more of a safeguard against this, because the Greek community is more at risk.

Matthew: Do you see a safeguard that should be implemented?

Taylor: I can't think of what, especially if it's something really juicy they can use for their own benefit.

Paul: Is removal from Council an acceptable cost?

Taylor: I don't want to play God and do that, do we even have the right to remove an entire body's vote? Anyway, what incentive is there for outside groups such as Panhel to share outside information with the UA, if it will be shared with the committee?

Matthew: I understand the incentive, so with the current Council structure there is not enough incentive because they will still be president of their living group.

Taylor: Exactly.

Matthew: If there is a way to put in the incentive structure, I would like to explore it, but the general vote seems to shake out the same way as it would be last time. Would anyone like to call a vote?

Silence

Matthew: Ok, then I am putting this in the side.

BSU Presentation and Discussion: Rasheed Auguste

Next order of business, Rasheed is here and I am hoping that moving forward and into the future, groups can speak before us and listen to our concerns as they seek to create a more welcoming atmosphere for us and their community. For the list of recommendations that they have sent us it is just that, recommendations, and the goal is to help them create a more welcoming experience for the Black Community on campus. I am looking forward to hear how we can help BSU and help them create community for us in our living groups as well, if we have any suggestions then we can entertain them. Rasheed?

Rasheed: Does everyone have a copy? So, hi everyone, I am a member of the BSU, co-chair of the BSU and head of the Political Action Committee, but I am a student at MIT just like the rest of you. I don't want to read off the recommendations to you, I want to gauge the impulse of all the student leaders and tweak some of the recommendations to advance these aims and help improve diversity and inclusion on campus. These have been shared with Academic Council, but we want to move this forward by recognizing this is a working document, and recognize we can all work together by work towards the same ideas that can help us progress. Let's look at number 10: It's a formal statement from department and lab heads to reaffirm their commitment to mental health and diversity. For many people, you can live your whole MIT existence without interacting with members of the MIT community that participate in diversity and inclusion. A lot of students might live in areas like this but we have to understand that if we want students to have their mental and physical health at a high priority, then we have to start here. Accountability and transparency is another huge takeaway and for these departments to institute changes, and this comes into play because we have made great strides with all of our departments relevant to diversity, but accountability is where it falls through. So all the steps we have been or should have been taken then we have the look for who should really be taking charge for this, so that's accountability. Transparency comes from the registrar and looking at how underrepresented minorities exist at MIT and making sure that we are working towards improving diversity and inclusion in a transparent way. So we also need to make sure that we address diversity as it applies to all groups. This is not just for black students, though, and will improve campus as a whole.

Yo: So point 7 has 3 great questions, but I think they are already being asked, and we can probably look for more specific ones.

Rasheed: I have talked to MIT about this, but sometimes they don't always provide the answers to these questions.

Kate: I went through the surveys and while some of them are, point 7 C is certainly not being asked.

Hayley: What happened with the 2004 mandate?

Rasheed: Interesting that you ask! In 2004 they specifically resolved to double the amount of minority in 10 years and triple the amount of graduate students, but we have not reached that goal.

Taylor: What's the absolute number of URM in Faculty?

Matthew: I have that data, I can send it out after.

Charlotte: 2009 looks like it was at 6%, maybe it's around 7%.

Matthew: The ICEO report on pages 94 – 99 has this information, so feel free to check.

Paul: Have you and the BSU received feedback or friction? Who do you think has not accepted these changes?

Rasheed: I can't say for sure, but I would say think about the time it will take for different departments to establish these statements, these will give you a ballpark estimate.

Sonja: I would suggest speaking to Ms. Gibson in Course 3 and she's done a lot of work relating to this, specifically diversity points, she's also awesome...but broadly what can we do, as a material engineer I can ask my department to support you, but what can I do as a council member?

Rasheed: Look at the intersectionality of your identity. It's great to go to your department, but you can also endorse this as a representative of your living group, but the most important thing is spreading the word, making this statement for #10 would also help, and bringing these ideas forward is important, too.

Taylor: I mean this in the best way possible, but in the preamble it says we are not lucky to be at MIT, MIT should be lucky to have us, and it set an odd tone for me and I'm not entirely sure what purpose it serves.

Mandy: I agree with Taylor.

Rasheed: It might just be a fundamentally different opinion, but to quote Stu Schmill, "admissions doesn't make mistakes," and I feel that as an MIT student, you don't have to feel any different. This was one of the most comforting to me, because we do want the statement to stand out, but the truth is MIT exists because we exist.

Taylor: I still think it's a very polarizing statement, and even as a Senior I feel very fortunate to have been here, you might be more lucky rewording this because it turns off a lot of people.

More complaints about this rewording.

Ayomide: Are you trying to implement a HASS-I?

Rasheed: This is a little bit broad right now. You currently have your HASS requirements, which are 8 courses, but we want to see one of those unrestricted electives narrowed down to already existing courses which focus on intersectionality and diversity. The way it's going to be implemented would be a debate now.

Charlotte: For me, this is important because I am a HASS major, and I don't like having HASS classes being allocated at will – it shouldn't be fluffy for students.

Matthew: More broadly, how can we get students involved in race diversity and inclusion in this realm?

Alana: One of the ways might just be having either HASS-A, etc. fulfilling those roles so it fills what is already necessary.

Rasheed: There already is a wealth of classes, I have spoken to Dean Noble, and even if they may not specifically address diversity in the title, then there may be subsections to make sure that this is addressed.

Eric: I would be up for more of these classes but all of your other recommendations seem much more doable, because changing the GIRs is tough.

Taylor: On the HASS thing, so I'm a HASS double major but it is only possible under the current system and Course 17 already has a ton of CI-Hs and everyone complains about how giant classes become

because the class is mandatory. So there will be a lot of negative associated with it. Also, with number 11, are you saying someone else should be hired, or should someone already existing fill in this role?

Rasheed: Right, we have tried in the past to just have someone tasked to this since 2011, and it hasn't worked yet, but we think introducing someone who actually has a background and knows how to implement diversity initiatives then we feel this will be much more effective, rather than a faculty member who is also passionate but is also busy with research.

Taylor: Where is this extra funding from?

Rasheed: I will forward you to the Treasurer, because we are making these recommendations and will work with the administration to make it work.

Hayley: I disagree with the HASS thing, because of conflicts with Course 20 I had to wait 2 years to participate in 14.01. I am also a little confused about why the sexual assault and diversity training has to be completed by Sophomore Year?

Rasheed: Because it is usually by the halfway point, and we want to get a sense of how you are thinking about diversity and inclusion halfway through your MIT career.

Matthew: I will share an anecdote about the HASS requirement, often times when I am in an IRC I will get in a debate about a point while deflecting from the bigger topic at hand, so this may not be the best takeaway right now.

Charlotte: Echoing Taylor's earlier point that it's not useful for students to take classes they don't care about, so I strongly recommend against it because students already hate the HASS system. Second point is who have you run this past before? A lot of things we're picking up on I'm surprised hasn't been filtered out yet.

Rasheed: I could make the same arguments about 8.01 and 8.02, but that doesn't mean they have no value. To your second point, we've run it by a lot of minority student groups because these are the ones that are a little more affected by diversity and inclusion offices on campus and their purview, and we have had minority student townhalls as well as anonymous responses from the minority community. Working on the language could help, but it's certainly not set in stone so we can see the most tangible ends and deal with branding. Like you said, HASS department has opposition and a lot of it's branding and we will work with them on that.

Matthew: I'm going to limit this to Sonja, Isaac, and Sam.

Sonja: Just going to say moving along.

Isaac: Will you be including religious groups in this?

Rasheed: Yes.

Isaac: I commend you for #6, other peer institutions throw so much money at students we lose them, so thank you for bringing light to financial aid. We've been talking about the preamble so try and make it positive-positive. I would also recommend talking to people in Course 11, and they are hugely active in terms of community organizing, and a faculty that's attuned to diversity issues and extraordinarily institute savvy department.

Sam: What is the feasibility of this? Are you just trying to ask for things that can't be done? I've tried to get 75% for things, but here for number 4 you ask for 100% but it's tough to change orientation.

Rasheed: The UAAP has definitely been a part for this, and diversity orientation has certainly be discussed and it can be done, and alcohol and sexual assault trainings do have 100% completion. Why undersell myself?

Matthew: It's a stretch goal right? You'll constantly strive for it, but you'll continually strive and refine yourself. To me this is a difference of negotiation tactic.

Sam: My main point is we want people to listen to this, but you don't want people to make comments saying – oh this is unrealistic.

Isaac: Just say you have a completion rate similar to the office sending this out.

Trey: Motion to vote?

Alana: Seconded.

Motion fails, with only 3 Councillors in support.

Rasheed: Thanking for having me.

Matthew: This is a good launching point for our community.

Medical Transports Discussion, Q&A

We have Don here to talk about medical transports.

Don: Let's dive right into questions.

Kate: Can we have a specific number of transport that's happened this year?

Don: Right now we're just under 40, but normally we are between 25-35, but it started out fast and there were a number of transports in the first 4/5 weeks of school, but that's not actually a bad thing and given our alcohol consumption behavior, since we know some students are engaging in binge alcohol use.

Sonja: Do these include all campus property?

Don: Yes, it does, and we include non-MIT students.

Charlotte: The number of non MIT students being transported is usually 2-3 but now it is 6, we recognize lots of students come to our events that are non-MIT.

Alana: Maybe there is some confusion about drugs being involved, can you speak to this?

Don: Up until this year drugs, were not included in our help seeking practice, but it is now included because there has been this recommendation for 3 years about drugs besides alcohol. There were concerns about practicality of other drug use being more problematic, so there should be more follow up than an alcohol offense. For other drugs, the policy looks at case by case what the issues are with other drugs which gives lots of latitude to the administration to see what happened. But overall, there is the same guidelines for alcohol, but more latitude for administration. So far we have had zero other drug transports.

Matthew: I have a future list of recommendations for the next Council and I would like us to glowingly recommend removing barriers for other drugs.

Taylor: What are costs associated with transports?

Don: It depends on your insurance and hospital, but we give cab vouchers on your way out, so your cab is free.

Charlotte: There was a lot of worry about penalizing students for helping their friends, they specifically denoted spotted.

Obasi: What is next to nothing, and does MIT know if it's a non-MIT ambulance?

Don: The only time it's not MIT ambulances are busy weekends like Halloween, 9/10 transports are MIT ambulances. An overnight hospital stay is \$50-75, but yes there are still costs, no MIT does not know about non-MIT ambulances.

Obasi: So can you ballpark that number?

Don: During busy weekends, 1 or 2, but over the course of the year, it's about a handful.

Taylor: Do lots of transports put them on a watchlist or strike policy?

Don: No, we put them on student intervention, and try to ask them what's going on, and I may get invited to do an educational policy visit. I don't remember any happening this year.

Taylor: Does this ever happen with a dormitory?

Don: Yes we do it by floors.

Taylor: Are injuries covered by help seeking?

Don: Yes, so if you're drinking and hurt yourself, then help seeking certainly applies.

Taylor & Charlotte: Wow, this is news to us.

Paul: I hope the new Council votes this in.

Don: I recognize that people aren't calling as much as they should, but students feel the opposite. In my world, I want people to call even if they are only a little bit concerned, not when they start turning purple or blue. I want the threshold for how we respond to be as minimal as possible.

Sonja: I was pushing to get data, but there was no data so we couldn't publicly shame others into learning help seeking protocols. I don't know how many people in each dorm are party-safe trained, etc. But if hall by hall had financial incentive, this would be helpful.

Don: We are trying to push through with residents a financial incentive so – we're doing it by hall – if you get 60% trained, then you get \$200 in TechCash for a non-alcohol/drug fund, but you can buy food for a party with alcohol, just not the alcohol. So \$200 if you can get 60% of your entire hall guaranteed. And an additional \$200 for the floor with the most trained.

Sam: I'm opposed to this because when we developed this system, we thought it was wrong to give people money to learn how to help people.

Don: Here is my long term plan – people will find value, and will start talking about it, and transition the halls, and make them do it themselves, and still give them the money. I have a safe party fund so if you want to party safely, then my office has money for it. The most non-FSILG students I have gotten trained in a year is 175.

Trevor: Is there any system for a student who it is unclear if they had consumed alcohol, but they still hurt themselves?

Don: If a reasonable person can look at the situation and not know, then what would you do? I want to lower the barrier to where it is acceptable for students to still ask for help no matter what.

Kate: Do you keep statistics on when EMS comes and a transport is not required?

Don: Less than 5 a year, but I assume that we are missing a few. Harvard has 250 – 275 alcohol transports a year and we should be comparable them, and that's what our numbers should be looking like – right now our peak is around 80.

Mandy: Here's a question! Does more transports mean students are being responsible or just binge drinking more?

Don: I would look at data first from our surveys – I would look at national college health assessment survey and look at binge drinking and transport numbers and see if this seems right. Overall, we seem more responsible than our peer institutions, except for ultra conservative institutions.

Sonja: If what you want to do in the future is compare drinking numbers to whether or not we are at the correct number of transports – I would want to relook at what numbers count as “binge drinking,” so maybe the surveys should be rephrased.

Don: Would you answer questions about number of drinks, age, height, weight, would you answer that honestly?

Sonja: Plus, on average I might drink 7 times in a week, but that's not necessarily one a day.

Don: Thanks, I appreciate that.

Bylaws Discussion and Path Forward

I have a motion that I would like to make – move Bylaws discussion to the spring?

Paul moves to adjourn. Seconded. Meeting adjourned.