



Agenda for February 7, 2022

I. Attendance
II. Town Hall w/ Dean Agosto

Dean Agosto thanked the student body for accepting and working with the COVID protocols for arrival. She shared that while they did not get the COVID numbers they expected, there was still a very high positivity rate. She stated that while no students in isolation were seriously ill, many were experiencing symptoms, and they were continuing to do what they could to support the students in isolation. She said that they anticipated being able to shift back to lesser protocols fairly quickly. Furthermore, she said that she took responsibility for issues surrounding communication with housing and apologized, saying that there were a lot of factors but she did not want to fall back on any of those as excuses. She said that housing was still tight, but they would be able to support some room changes. Finally, she said that a focus on well-being was a priority for student affairs this semester, and that they would be doing work on community building and expanding access to resources.

Jaden asked if Dean Agosto could share some of the reasons for the issues that had occurred with housing this semester, given some of the bad things he had heard.

Dean Agosto said that housing selection for spring semester was initially scheduled for December, but they didn't have an account of which rooms would be available, so they had to reschedule it. She shared that they had issues with vacancy so they had to shift the standards of who could get changed rooms. On January 19th, room selections did happen, but there were some significant lapses in communication, and the reason behind this was a data issue. She said that she could not share the reasons for this inaccurate data. She said that at the moment, they had streamlined the process, and the staff had shifted to make sure they were up to date on the data and could have a smoother process moving forward. She said that they took responsibility for not communicating with the students more effectively, and that they could and would do better.

Jae Yun asked first about privacy concerns around professors knowing the testing status of students, saying it would be embarrassing if students were asked to leave class after



accidentally missing one or two tests. He also asked when Val would go back to full capacity, given that it was extremely packed and students were often unable to find seats.

Dean Agosto said that Val would go back to 100% capacity on Monday barring something dramatic happening. She said that faculty members would be notified when a student's ID was turned off, which happened after a student missed three consecutive tests.

Angelina asked what the College was planning on doing if COVID housing was filled.

Dean Agosto said that they had invested in isolation housing and they had nearly 200 beds available. She said that they had prepared for extremely high numbers that did not end up coming to fruition. As such, she said they did not imagine that the housing would fill up. She said that if they were at the point where 200 students needed isolation, they would start thinking about locking down the campus.

Cal asked about the move to testing three times a week and harsher penalties for missing tests, wondering how quickly they would be subject to change.

Dean Agosto replied that the testing regularity would likely go down fairly quickly. She said that they would likely shift back to twice a week before February 25th, and that it could even go down to one later in the semester. She said that they were trying to balance supporting their traditionally aged student body and the rest of the community, and that testing was a very important part of that. She said that in terms of testing compliance, the goal with shutting off the ID was actually to be less harsh in order to make sure people complied. She said that faculty had asked to let them know if a student wasn't being compliant.

Dania said that she hadn't received an email regarding positive cases, and asked why that was.

Dean Agosto responded that they had shifted the notification of positive cases from an email every day to an email once a week. On Wednesday, they would get a COVID email which would contain case numbers. She said that they had heard from students and



faculty that they stopped paying attention to the daily emails because of their regularity.

Naya asked about the anticipated missed test form, asking if tests they missed while filling out that form would count towards their ID being shut off.

Dean Agosto said that the form would excuse students from the test that day, so it wouldn't be counted as a missed test, but the expectation was that students would get a makeup test the next day.

Cole asked about the interterm move in date communication at the beginning of Thanksgiving break last semester, saying that when that came out, there was a large uncommunicated change forcing students to make travel plans very late. He said that he heard from a number of students that they were unable to communicate with the Housing Operations Team, and the policy of everybody arriving on the same day proved to be unworkable. He asked what they were planning in the future for similar changes and if she had methods planned that would allow students to contact somebody about their concerns.

Dean Agosto said that there was a communication about dates early in the semester that was easily missed, but one of the things they were working on was a much more visible and frequently updated calendar that would inform students about dates like that. She said that before the end of February, students would have all of the dates for move out. She also said that one of the things they were working on was reiterating communication throughout the semester. She said that it was on them to make sure they were communicating early and explaining everything, and she acknowledged the fact that they had failed to adequately do this.

Sofia asked when they could expect to hear about the logistics of commencement, and asked approximately how many guests they could expect to bring.

Dean Agosto said that it was dangerous to say anything definitive, but that at the moment, the plan was to hold commencement in the way it had been traditionally held. She said that student affairs did not manage the details around commencement, but that she would try to get communication around commencement to happen sooner. She said



that at a minimum, it would be similar to last year's commencement, in which four guests were allowed for each student.

Shreya asked about the student body status of booster shots, saying that when she was having a conversation with a representative at the health center, she had been marked as having gotten her booster, when she had not and had just signed up and been turned away.

Dean Agosto replied that about 98% of students were boosted. She said that there were a handful of mostly international students who were just now eligible that she was working to get booster shots for. She said that students who remained non-boosted were beginning to get increasingly assertive emails. She said that the expectation was that all faculty and staff were boosted, and she would check in with health services to make sure all the records were accurate.

Gent asked what the protocol was for students who were close contacts of those who tested positive, asking what the process for moving into quarantine housing would be.

Dean Agosto said that quarantine housing was reserved for unvaccinated students, and the majority of COVID housing they had was isolation housing. She said that current CDC guidance said that if you were vaccinated and boosted, you were not required to quarantine. She said that testing allowed them to capture cases as quickly as possible, so they would not have to worry as much about close contacts.

Lori asked if testing would continue going until 8pm throughout the semester.

Dean Agosto said that they made that change based on feedback from students, and that they did intend to keep the 7am-8pm range throughout the semester.

Dean Agosto said there would be communications coming from her and the president in the next few days, and advised that students be on the lookout for that.

III. Public Comment

There was no public comment.



IV. Budgetary

A. Student Activities Fee

Jae Yun shared that he had been talking to Paul about the student activities fee, and had been discussing with him to return the fee to what it had been pre-COVID, but there had been some feedback from the administration. He said they had settled on an amount of \$280 a semester, which he was confident would make them sustainable, at least for the next few years.

Sirius said that he was concerned with having a \$70 decreased amount given how much they were spending in BC.

Angelina asked if they had 2100 students now rather than 1800.

Jae Yun said that they had roughly half a million dollars in cash on hand, and that he had done the calculations based on 1800.

Paul said that there were roughly 1900 students on campus for the fall, and the full course correction likely wouldn't happen for a couple of years.

Jae Yun said that with the 1900 number, they would get about \$532,000, which was about \$100,000 less than they would have taken in pre-COVID.

Lucas asked what the administration's rationale was for wanting to have a lower student activities fee.

Jae Yun said that the fee was reflected in the sticker cost of the college and that the administration noticed that they had a large surplus.

Dania said that seeing the push from the student body demanding they support them, and knowing that things like travel would become more frequent as COVID protocols decreased and things went back to normal, it was concerning seeing the student activities fee decrease. She said that she understood that it was a large



jump, but wanted a better middle ground like \$300, especially given that it didn't affect low income students.

Jae Yun said that he knew there were concerns about underspending, saying that there were certain policies he wanted to remain strict on, but that he was open to increasing certain caps.

Cole asked if the Fall 2021 budget was finalized.

Jae Yun replied that it should be finalized. He said that Monica may make some small changes but that would be the extent of it.

Cole asked if it was true that they had \$65,000 left from the budget.

Jae Yun said that it was, but that they were strict with what they funded at the beginning of the semester, and it was not reflective of a full pre-COVID budget.

Lastly, Cole asked if they were expecting any change to the campus activity board spending for the semester.

Jae Yun said he wasn't sure about the PVTA, and that the cab fee was much higher in the spring.

Cole also said that if a whole \$50,000 check was cut to cab, they would have broken even, meaning they would need more money to give to students.

Lucas added that he did not feel good about the administration telling them what their fee should be.

Jae Yun said that there was a balance between them being responsible with actually spending money given, but that he agreed with the sentiment. He also reminded everybody that the fee was reevaluated every year.

Jae Yun said that with a \$300 fee, they would get \$64,000 less than what they had



gotten in the past, but in the past they had greatly underspent.

Paul said that there was not an actual concrete number the administration was suggesting, just an ask that they not increase it all the way to pre-COVID. He also said that most of the underspending was happening in club budgets.

Cole motioned to set the student activities fee at \$280 for the next year.

The motion failed.

Sofia asked if Jae Yun could remind her of why the cultural food policy changed.

Jae Yun said that it put the Senate in the uncomfortable position of having to decide what was and wasn't cultural food.

Sirus motioned to increase the Student Activities fee to \$300.

The motion passed.

B. BC Recs

Jae Yun presented the budgetary committee's recommendations.

Basma, representing MENAA, requested \$90 for tea for a tea night, \$150 for a crafts night, and \$160 for book club book supplies.

Sirus said that he saw the book club book supplies as a giveaway, but he would be open to hearing about how it was more interactive.

Basma said that the book was a very popular YA book based on middle eastern history which would be regularly interacted with, and that the books were kept with the clubs.

Jae Yun said he was not worried about this as they were not just giving the book



away as a giveaway, but they were annotating and interacting with the book.

Shreya requested \$12000 per year for her Senate Project to get Grammarly premium for all students. Furthermore, she would need \$50 for making posters and publication. She also asked how she would transfer the funds.

Jae Yun said she could email Monica Soto and they could literally just write a check.

Gent asked what Grammarly Premium gave you that the free version didn't.

Shreya said that Grammarly Premium had more advanced checks and was very helpful for writing.

A motion to approve the discretionary fund requests passed.

A motion to approve the rainy day fund passed.

C. Committee Elections [2 senators]

Basma opened the nomination period.

Mia was nominated, accepted nomination.

Hannah nominated herself.

These two were elected.

V. Officer Reports

Lucas said that there were a number of open seats on the senate, so he would send out an email announcing elections later this week. He also said that he was working on an update for the AAS website, so if anybody had any ideas, they could send it to him.



Basma said that Angelina and her met with Dean Agosto and her two main goals were communication and well-being.

Mia asked if there was any increased funding going towards counseling at the school.

Basma said that she was given news about the new director of the counseling center they could look forward to, and that there was an endowment surplus so they could circle back to her and let her know that counseling was an important service. She also said that Dean Agosto was aware of the Amherst Share your Story account and was working on ways to change the culture.

Angelina said that they were communicating with different departments and would also reach out to AAS.

Isaiah said that on the topic of Amherst Share your Story, the Senate should have a response to this issue, like an address to the students to show solidarity.

Jaden asked if there was a clear change in what the administration was doing differently.

Angelina said that they did not go too in depth but they were going to in their next meeting.

VI. Committee Updates

Mia said that the arts committee had met and talked about plans for the semester, and one of their first projects was to support the black arts matter festival. She asked what they could do in terms of supporting another event on campus.

Basma said that she did not think there were limits on the budgets, but she wasn't entirely sure.

Mia asked if they could just choose to give them monetary support or if they would have to request it.



Jae Yun said that the AAS could fund anything within their funding policies.

Jae Yun asked if the dining committee could ask for Lewis to be opened so there would be space for people to sit down and eat their food.

Maira said that Lewis being closed was part of lowered capacity, and that it was an admin decision and not a Val decision.

Hannah said the arts committee had also talked about taking care of instruments in storage locations as it was very moldy in many of the storage spaces and the pianos were very out of tune. She asked if she had to contact anybody beside just making a base rundown of how they would allocate funds to correct this.

Angelina said that she imagined they would also have to communicate with the music department.

Basma said she could try putting them in contact with the music department.

I. On-Campus Check-ins

Lori said that there was still no lighting on the way to many houses and it was now a little dangerous with the icy sidewalks, asking if there was any way they could talk to somebody about that.

Basma said that Campus Safety may be in charge of that, and she could send them an email.

Jeffrey said that on the path to the Hill, there were only three sides of the crossing that had crosswalks on the ground, and he had heard of people crossing the road and having drivers honk and swear at them. He asked why only three crossings were marked on the ground.

Basma said it was probably a town of Amherst thing, but she could include that in the Campus safety email.



Jeffrey asked if they could do something to deal with the ice around campus.

VII. Senate Project Updates

Mia said that she was talking with the associate of public speaking and that she wanted to organize a group of student volunteers to act as public speaking coaches. She also said that she really wanted this program to be for kids in lower income schools, but she didn't know if it would work for a Senate project.

Basma said that if it were Amherst students doing this, it could count as a Senate project.

Gavi said that Anna and her were talking with bikeshare people and that they could do something at Amherst. She said that if anybody had any ideas to bring to the meeting on Friday they could let her know.

Hannah said that her Senate project was doing a major fair, and asked who the best person to contact about this would be.

Basma said that the Registrar would be the best place to start, and that Student Activities would be helpful in actually putting on the fair.

Jae Yun also said that Marie Lalor could be a potential point of contact.

Anna said that Mia and her were still working on doing a Prom, and they would have to figure out what type of budget they could get from the Senate, and they would like to have that conversation in the next meeting.

VIII. Adjournment

Minute Taker: Caden Stockwell, Staff Recording Secretary
Length of Meeting: 2 hours