

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

UNIVERSITY SENATE
STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Annual Report 2009-2010

September 24, 2010

Roster:

Name	Affiliation	Name	Affiliation
Andreas Svedin, <i>Chair</i>	GSAS/NS	Esteban Reichberg	GSAPP
Andrew Springer, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Journalism	Valentine Edgar	GSAS/HU
Rajat Roy, <i>Vice Chair</i>	SEAS	Liya Yu	GSAS/SS
Shukree Tilghman	Arts	Yael Fischer	Law
Emily Kenison	Barnard	Gilbert 'Spike' Simpkins	Nursing
David Chait	Business	Ryan Close	P&S
Tao Tan	Business	Tiffany Melendez	Continuing Education
Dionisios Vasilatos	Business	Cherie Meyer	SEAS
Monica Quaintance	Columbia College	Pablo Espinel	SIPA
Alex Frouman	Columbia College	U-in Lee	Public Health
Tim Lam	Columbia College	Monica Barrera Contreras	Social Work
Simon Beylin	Dental	Ruairidh MacLeod	Teachers College
Jose Robledo	General Studies	Gaelle Affiany	UTS (Observer)

The Student Affairs Committee (“SAC”) has worked to be the unified voice of all the students of Columbia University. To realize this we have connected with the student governments and undertaken an ambitious “roadshow,” visiting the student leaders of several schools to understand their concerns and present what we can offer. We have set up meetings between student government leaders and administration officials addressing concerns raised by more than one school, for example the drastic increase in the facilities fee over the last few years. We also had two town halls, one in the Morningside Campus and one at the Medical Center.

Internally, we have looked at structures for delegation and the creation of a digital repository of reports and best practices for future student senators. We have had a reporter from the Columbia Daily Spectator at most of our meetings and have looked at how to use media to communicate with our constituencies in a more efficient way.

At an early stage we addressed the threat of H1N1 flu. We spoke to the Pandemic Preparedness Working Group (PPWG) about vaccination, information and self-isolation. We also addressed the possible academic conflict between self-isolation and mandatory classes. There was also some confusion about the procedures for exempting a student from classes because of sickness. For example, would a doctor’s note be required or not? Luckily there was no pandemic, but the preparations and discussions proved helpful in their own right.

We addressed the proposed smoking policy for the Morningside Campus. We worked with student government leaders in the creation of a poll of student opinion and added student representation to the smoking policy working group. We coordinated with the External Relations

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Committee to make sure that the recommendations of the working group would come to the Senate.

We had a coordination meeting with the people working on student communication in the Office of the Executive Vice President for Student and Administrative Services. We looked into issues of student surveys and community emails. We also helped to find students to test a new section of the university homepage for CUIT.

We created the Columbia University Presidents Club (CUPC), an informal and independent network for the student presidents of all the schools. The goal of the club is to connect schools on a personal level and to create a space for peer mentoring and sharing of best practices.

We joined the New York City Student Government Alliance, an organization connecting the student governments of the universities of New York City. Apart from networking and sharing of best practices this group will also look at legislation and common issues for multiple schools. We look forward to learning how this can help the Columbia community in the future.

We reconnected with the Interschool Governing Board (IGB) and started a conversation about the future of the organization and how the Senate can help IGB to promote interschool groups and activities. We look forward to working closely with IGB in the future to connect student across schools and campuses.

We continued looking at ways to connect graduate students with undergraduate students interested in similar career paths. This has been discussed both in terms of connecting student groups, and individuals through the undergraduate advising services.

Together with the Office of the President under the aegis of the World Leaders Forum, we organized an event with Jehmu Greene under the title “Women and Leadership in the 21st Century.” This event brought student leaders into conversation with President Bollinger and a noted leader on important topics. We look forward to future opportunities to collaborate on events like these.

Career education has been a hot topic this year, and much discussion has taken place. We are happy to see that this issue has gotten the attention it deserves, and we will continue to coordinate the student voice to find ways to support and improve this important aspect of the university.

The current academic calendar ends on December 23rd in some years, presenting undue hardship for students who have to travel far for the holidays. A student petition was submitted to the Senate, and efforts were undertaken to solve this problem, including proposals to start before Labor Day in some years, or to have classes on the Monday before Election Day.

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SAC facilitated efforts to express student opinions on the academic calendar, and presented a proposal by the four undergraduate student governments. SAC arranged to have these leaders debate these issues on the Senate floor.

With the Education Committee and the undergraduate student governments, we resolved the academic calendar issue. We wrote and sponsored a Senate resolution, which passed unanimously, enabling students with exams on December 23rd to reschedule. The resolution further specified that exam schedules would be made available as early as possible. SAC will conduct an informal inquiry into the resolution's effectiveness next year.

Some specific concerns and questions remain which we believe bear further examination:

1. The housing situation at the Medical Center has been discussed. In particular, the lack of coordination and fair distribution of housing among CUMC students.
2. The increase in fees, in particular the facilities fee, which has tripled over the last three years. For graduate students with stipends the increase in fees has the same effect as lowering their stipends. Fees are also charged on a post-tax basis.
3. There have been efforts for at least a decade to create a graduate student center at the Morningside campus. When space opens up, after the move of several schools to the Manhattanville campus, strong consideration should be given to creating a center. In the meantime, we support interim solutions.

Next year: Tao Tan was unanimously elected SAC Chair for 2010-2011. Efforts begun this year to increase effectiveness and outreach will continue under his leadership.

On behalf of the Student Affairs Committee,

Respectfully submitted,

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Andreas Svedin
University Senator
Student Affairs Committee Chair