

3-5-2003

## Minutes 03.05.03

Student Government Association BBC, Florida International University

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# Council Minutes

Florida International University • Student Government Council • University Park

March 5, 2003

Samir called the meeting to order at 4:03 PM.

## Roll Call

### Governing Council

Salman Azhar  
Stefanie Cabrera (AB)  
Derek Capo  
Omar Castillo (AB)  
Damion Dunn  
Huguette Esquivel (AB)

Luis Martinez  
Jessica Morffi (AB)  
Collette Papa (AB)  
Jag Ramasamy  
Maite Reimundo (AB)  
Jorge Rosario, Jr.

Kimberly Skiffington  
Clayton Solomon (LT)  
Jacqueline Sosa  
Bill Wilson

### Standing Committee Chairpersons

Alejandra Cordovez  
Cindy Fraga  
Roxy Fuentes (AB)  
Maria Garcia  
Patrice Hernandez (AB)  
Samir Qureshi  
Tania Varela (LT)

### Standing Council Chairpersons

Panther Rage- Angelica Fernandez  
Honors Council- Wendy Fernandez  
GSA- Vicky Salazar  
RHA- Kimberly Skiffington  
SOC- Samir Qureshi  
SPC- Alina Garcia

### Advisor

Vicky Owles

Minutes were passed with no corrections.

### Reports of Executive Board

Comptroller Samir Qureshi

Samir began by saying that he would be conducting the council meeting today because Jessica Morffi and Omar Castillo were in Washington DC lobbying for some federal issues affecting FIU. Samir then reported that the budget process was on its way and that the first budget hearing would be held on March 17<sup>th</sup> and then the second half would be held on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Finally, Samir reported that there would be a finance committee meeting directly after the council meeting.

Chief of Cabinet Malik Wilkes

Malik announced to the council that if anyone was interested in attending FIU Day next Thursday in Tallahassee to lobby for FIU, to please sign up with him and he would give you details.

## **Reports of Standing Committees**

Academic Affairs Tania Varela

Tania reported that she met with Professor Salokar this week to discuss the outstanding issues with the Faculty Senate. They discussed having a set syllabi structure that the entire faculty would have to adhere by. Tania said Dr. Salokar would bring it up at the next Faculty Senate meeting to pass a resolution to have some type of policy regarding syllabi in the faculty handbook. Also, Tania reported that Dr. Salokar agreed with her that the Faculty Senate would discuss having a common statement that would be mandatory for all faculty to read right before they hand out their evaluations. Finally, Tania reported that her committee would be meeting next Monday at 4:00PM.

Elections Cindy Fraga

Cindy reported that the applications for elections are due today by 5:00PM. She said she would call the Registrar's office by the end of this week to verify the eligibility of all candidates. Cindy then reported that all candidates must attend the candidates meeting on Monday, March 10<sup>th</sup> either at 1:00PM or 5:00PM in GC 241B. Finally, Cindy announced that at this meeting, the candidates would have their individual picture taken for the "Know Your Vote."

Student Services Alejandra Cordovez

Alejandra reported that she has the results for the bus ticket dispenser: 57% of FIU students felt that the GC ticket master was an inconvenient location for the purchase of the bus tickets; 83% of the students felt that they would use a ticket dispenser by the bus stop; 79% of students felt that they would pay for their ticket in cash; and 93% of the students felt that they would like a ticket dispenser installed by the bus stop. Next, Alejandra reported that she has all of the information for the pamphlet, and that she is in the process of designing it to be sent to Publications as soon as possible. Finally, Alejandra reported that the Student Services Award surveys are not complete and that she hopes to have them done by next week.

## **Reports of Representatives**

- A) Jag Ramasamy (see attached)
- B) Maite Reimundo (see attached)
- C) Bill Wilson (see attached)

## **Reports of Standing Council**

Panther Rage Angelica Fernandez

Angelica reported that the basketball season is done and that Panther Rage blew up the last home game on March 1<sup>st</sup> with numerous giveaways. In addition, Panther Rage made a presentation to the FIU Dazzlers to thank them for their assistance all year. She then reported that softball won three games this weekend, but lost their Coca Cola Championship. Angelica said that the game of the week would be tonight at 6:00PM, which is baseball versus FAU. Tickets for the game are free and there would be a coke truck there giving away free drinks. Next, Panther Rage will not be having a general meeting this week. Angelica reported that because there will only be one game, there will be no conference trip. Panther Rage is currently looking at alternatives. Finally, Angelica reported that the Panther Rage banquet is on March 31<sup>st</sup> at 9:00PM in GC 243. The banquet will be followed by the Judy Shepard lecture, so everyone can go out and support.

GSA Lorraine Duarte

Lorraine began by introducing herself as the treasurer of GSA. From Feb. 19 to Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>, Vicky, GSA President, was at Washington, D.C. as part of the 'National Coalition of Graduate Students for an Affordable and Accessible Graduate Education' Lobbying program at Capitol Hill, sponsored by NAGPS. The main goal of the 2003 Winter Lobby effort was to secure Tax Exemption for Graduate Assistantships. Thus, we seek to simplify the tax code and encourage students to pursue a graduate education by expanding the definition of "qualified educational expenses" in Section 117 of the Internal Revenue Code. We wish to change this definition to

match the "cost of attendance" language in the Higher Education Act (Title 20). If this bill passes, it can potentially return \$100-200 per month to graduate students – money which is urgently needed to cover the costs of attending graduate school. Vicky found broad-based support for this proposal from both parties and in both houses of Congress. However, the coalition has not 100% secured a member to sponsor this bill. To accomplish this task, she has faxed follow-up letters to all the representatives that she visited during the lobby days urging them to bring this to the 'Ways and Means Committee.' Also on Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, we also finalized and submitted our 2003-2004 budget proposal. Vicky, Peter and myself will be representing GSA on Friday March 14<sup>th</sup>, at our allotted budget hearing time (11 a.m.). Peter, GSA Vice-President, drove up to Tampa to attend the Florida Statewide Graduate Student Organization Conference from Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup> to Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>. The meeting's goal was to enhance networking and communication exchange among the different graduate students associations in the state of Florida as well as creating some kind of database where all graduate organizations, new ones as well as established ones, can post and download information on how to become a good GSA. The following universities were represented: UNF, FAU, UCF, UF, FAMU, USF, and FIU. All FL GSA representatives also had a chance to talk to the deans of the SE region as there conference was at the same time and place as the FL graduate conference. They exchanged ideas and issues and all the deans were very impressed by their initiative (and also precedent as this kind of statewide meeting was never done before) and they supported the way we want to go forward with our GSA's. The second day we discussed our goals and action plans for the future. As a result of this meeting, the FSGPSO was formed. This is not a regular organization with members but more a clearing house and database where other organizations can go to if they need assistance. However, it can and will be used as a collective for lobby days and so forth in the future. Further information will follow and our next statewide meeting will be next year spring in Jacksonville. Approximately 80-90 people attended our 'Pre-St. Patrick's Day' Gradskeller on Friday, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>. Gracie's Grill was colored green and white for this occasion. Most of the people were sitting outside, which was understandable because of the nice weather. Therefore the DJ will bring an extension chord for one of the speakers, so next time there will be music (hopefully) outside too. We will have a Mardi Gras Gradskeller Happy Hour this coming Friday (March 7<sup>th</sup>) from 6-8 p.m. at Gracie's Grill. On Thursday, Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>, we hosted a second Competitive Edge Seminar on Grad Tax Compliance from 11 a.m. to noon. at PC 432. Once again, our speaker was Eric Davidson from the Controller's Tax Compliance Office. He discussed the basic tax regulations for tuition waivers, teaching & research assistantships, loans, and new tax credit laws. We served pizza and refreshments to all the participants. We had an E-board meeting yesterday (March 4<sup>th</sup>) at GC 350 from 3-5 p.m. We had a General meeting on Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at GC 305 from 3-5 p.m. On March 6<sup>th</sup>, we will be hosting our next Competitive Edge Workshop at GC 241A from noon to 1 p.m. Our invited speaker will be Ms. Stacey West, from Instructional Photography and Graphics, who will be discussing the graphics component of Conference presentations: how to use Power Point and other tools to create winning oral and poster presentations of your research. Our next General Meeting will be on March 11<sup>th</sup> at GC 150 from 3-5 p.m. and our next E-board meeting will be during Spring Break on March 18<sup>th</sup> at GC 315 from 3-5 p.m. We had to schedule a meeting during Spring Break because we are having elections on March 25<sup>th</sup> and the Scholarly Forum (AKA FIU Graduate Conference) is coming up (March 26<sup>th</sup>) and we need to finalize all the details for both projects.

SOC

Samir Qureshi

No report.

#### **Old Business**

- A) A 03-04 In support of the Bachelor of Fine Arts Catalog (Jacqui Sosa, Lower Division Representative and Bill Wilson, Representative At-Large)  
Favor: 10      Opposed: 0      Abstained: 1

**New Business**

- A) A 03-07 In support of a special allocation for the Student Organizations Council (Jorge Rosario, Representative At-Large and Jacqui Sosa, Lower Division Representative)  
Favor: 11      Opposed: 0      Abstained: 0

**Announcements**

- A) SGA and Writing Across the Disciplines are sponsoring an English/Spanish essay contest open to all full-time undergraduate students. The deadline will be on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2003. (see attached flyer)

The meeting was adjourned at 4:52PM.

## Jag Ramasamy, Graduate Student Representative Semester Report

My projects for this semester are

- 1) Reaching out to international graduate students
- 2) Increasing the voter turnout in the elections by encouraging more international students to vote.

On behalf of international student committee, we conducted a cricket tournament which got the attention of international graduate students. I have planned to conduct an open forum along with Salman Azhar on March 12th to inform the graduate students about our projects and the on-coming election.

I conducted a sample survey about the graduating experience of the graduate students. I have planned to modify that a little bit and complete it after spring break.

Maite Reimundo

CHUA Representative

March 5, 2003

I. Projects

- I am still working on the Printer Project that I came up with for the CHUA students in the OE Computer Lab.
- I have already collected the petition forms from the CHUA students, and I have narrowed down my printer options to present to Dean Berkman.

II. Committee Assignments

- No assignments as of yet, but I have been attending the Campus Life meetings with Maria and the rest of the committee.
- Student Union Board meetings have been canceled.

III. Meeting with Dean Berkman

- I have already been in contact with Dean Berkman's Assistant Secretary, Edna. She will be contacting me to verify an appointment time and day with him so that I will be able to inform him of my current projects, including requesting his assistance with the printers.
- I will also ask him if for further suggestions.

IV. Miscellaneous

- I have been meeting with Stefanie Cabrera for help on formulating my survey questions that I will be administering to the CHUA students.

William Wilson  
Representative At Large  
3/5/03

## **Representatives Report March 5, 2003**

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

- Finance Committee has been working long hours in the past two weeks.
- We have been delegating massive requests from various organizations and the council will be hearing about them in the next couple of meetings.
- This week, Lower Division Representative, Jacklyn Sosa and I will be presenting an appropriation regarding the Bachelor of Fine Art Catalog later in this meeting.
- In the upcoming weeks, I will also be presenting an appropriation for the DAY of SILENCE for GLBT.

### **STAC COMMITTEE**

- The STAC Committee has been very successful in getting together new projects underway.
- I attended a special STAC Committee meeting last Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup> in GL 835. It was attend by Peter Horst, Chairperson of STAC, Yogi Misir, Associate Director of MTS, and the Director and Associate Directors of UTS.
- Frederico Mo and Omar Castillo, presented the ideas behind a new web portal called "MY FIU". This project is supposed to present new outlook for FIU EMAIL and also become a homepage for FIU student. This project will attempt to show features similar to YAHOO's "MY YAHOO BRIEFCASE". The committee

is attempting to correlate with PEOPLE SOFT and even try to include current FIU students in a internship program to develop and upkeep of the new "MY FIU" project.

- Some of the goals for this semester are:
  - Attain Full Membership (Problem with BBC)
  - Advertise the availability of Free VIRUS Software offered by the University to Students, Faculty, and Staff. ( McAfee )
  - Website Development & Email Account
  
- There are also many other projects proposed to the STAC committee are:
  - Network Security Policy – such as Copyright Issues and Virus Proliferation.
  - LDAP Project – Unification of usernames and passwords
  - FIU Email Advertisements
  - Dial Up Access from Home
  - Improvement of Existing Services
  - Bulletin Boards
  - UTS Intership Program
  - Orientation Information Distribution

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## **Best Student Government**

### **Public Universities**

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**Winner: Florida International University—University Park**

**Runner-Up: Florida Atlantic University**

**Honorable Mention: University of West Florida**

#### ***Winner***

#### **Florida International University—University Park**

For the second year in a row, **Florida International University—University Park's** Student Government Council is tops, continuing to meet student needs through innovation and club support. President Jessica Morffi and Vice President Omar Castillo lead a team that serves students well and generates ideas all the time to continually reinvent themselves.

"They're very pro-student. They've gone above and beyond in their attempts to represent their student body," says Vicky Owles, assistant director for campus life and SGA advisor (the Student Government Association is comprised of an SGC at UP and Biscayne Bay campuses, respectively). "All decisions that are made, services that are provided, and programs that have been completed have one thing in mind: students. This SGC has been very thoughtful in its mission to be there for the students and to represent the needs of the university."

SGC began the school year with "Kick-Off 2002"—a freshman convocation with free T-shirts and an invitation to food, fun, and entertainment. Students, faculty, and administrators were on hand, along with the FIU Dazzlers and cheerleaders, rappers, poetry readers, and DJs. The event motivated students to get involved while introducing them SGA.

As part of its "Welcome Week" festivities designed to boost school pride and introduce students to opportunities at the university, SGA continued its successful "Level 5" dance party inaugurated last year. Held on top of a parking garage, the event provided DJ-hosted music, dancing, and refreshments—all in a safe environment.

Greatly expanding on an initiative started by last year's administration, "Reach Out" is a comprehensive program designed to improve communication channels between students and SGA. It started simply, with visits to clubs and organizations, but this year's group went way beyond that. Just one of the many new parts of this year's program, "Campaign Days," involved two days of simply promoting SGA to students by showing them how SGA serves as a representative for students' needs. SGA members passed out flyers, answered hundreds of questions, and conducted surveys. The group even designed an SGA logo and came up with a color scheme, printing up red T-shirts, mugs, and squeezers with the slogan, "We make things happen!"

"Our administration's greatest strength is its accessibility toward students," Morffi says. "We pride ourselves on an open-door policy and have become known for working one-on-one with our students. This is important because we are able to know first-hand what student concerns are and address them accordingly."

SGA also improved "CATS"—FIU's shuttle system—which transports students to the off-campus Engineering Center. Now it also goes to nearby shopping malls and grocery stores to assist on-campus housing students. An on-campus bus terminal will be added to make commuting easier.

Ushering in FIU's inaugural football season, SGA funded the painting of the school logo inside the Graham University Center and paw prints around campus leading to FIU's football stadium, "The Cage."

In yet another way to help students, SGA established the "Academic Rights Advisory Program" to ensure that students sitting in a grievance hearing are fully aware of their rights.

"The president is one who really takes time to be involved in everything that goes on, on and off campus. This has been a clear asset," says Sara Lipman, director of campus life. "She (and her administration) also work hard on the concept of serving the students. This is definitely a positive difference [from last year's administration]."

For the first time at FIU, on-line voting was successfully implemented for homecoming court and SGA special elections.

SGA lobbies through the Florida Student Association (FSA), with Morffi serving as treasurer/secretary of FSA's board. In addition, SGA split its director of student lobbying office into two—director of legislative affairs and director of community and internal affairs to lobby at both the state and local levels.

Continuing to use its newsletter, *SGC Quarterly*, SGC communicates to students about its programs, events, officers, and elections. Their detailed web site also makes it available on-line along with news, events, the constitution, the by-laws, the budget, meeting minutes, photos, e-mail addresses, and links. The events calendar is not quite up-to-date, and it lacks a "news" link on the navigation bar (the various items are only on the home page). The overall look and feel is nice but seems more artsy than clean. Also, the on-line newsletter is also not quite up-to-date, and each page is provided as a picture rather than a standard PDF file that can be zoomed in, printed like the original, and searched. For a top-rate SG at a large public university, the web site could use a little work, serving students more as a services-and-information-portal that goes beyond an "About SGC" site.

SGA also gets the word out through "SGA Notes," a regular feature published in the school newspaper, *The Beacon*, and compiled by an editor in attendance at SGA's meetings.

One way to connect with students is by getting them upstairs to the third-floor office via free "Blue Books"—the little ruled books students use for tests, assignments, and notes. This encourages students to come up and see the office, learn where it's located for future inquiries, and ask SGC questions. The Graham University Center will have a circular addition next year that houses all of SGC together on the first floor for even better student access.

To keep a strong SGA going, transition plans are in place through per-office transition manuals, two retreats, and its unique Student Council Intern Program (SCIP). The program lets students experience SGA and prepare them to run for office the following year, if they choose. "The program is a fundamental aspect of transition of leaders in SGA," Morffi says. Interns help plan various council meetings as well as implement their own programs such as planning a departmental holiday party along with a toy drive for needy children, compiling statistical reports of student views to present to the administration, and even producing an SGA video profile as an outreach tool for FIU freshman experiences classes and at high school Student Councils. Even the interns have a retreat of their own. "Though they may not all remain as council members in future years, by the end of their tenure as interns, they have established themselves in numerous student organizations on campus and inevitably ensure their involvement in campus life and student advocacy at FIU," Morffi says.

This administration is doing all the right things, and doing them well, as evidenced by their own student survey which revealed that nearly 80 percent of students agree that SGA members are approachable, that SGA has a strong presence on campus, and that SGA keeps students' best interests in mind.

Even the *The Beacon* gives it its blessing. "This year's SG is probably better than last year's because they're more approachable and less political," says Hatzel Vela, editor in chief. "We never have a problem when we're trying to quote them for stories. They're real—they're students first and that's what makes them stand out. Jessica understands and respects my job and vice versa. We feel comfortable with each other and are both well aware that part of our jobs is to make sure students are treated fairly."

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