



BOARD MEETING: DEC. 1ST 2009

Presided over by Jared Wigdor. Minutes by Bryan Kam.

MEETING DETAILS

Date: Tuesday, Dec. 1st 2009

Time: 7:00 PM

Venue: WLH 205

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jared Wigdor, President

Filip Savatic, Vice President

Sebastian Serra, Treasurer

Bryan Kam, Secretary

Rachel Wolf, MUNTY Head Delegate

Bryce Scanlan, SCSY Secretary General

Natalie Kotkin, YMUN Secretary General

Jharrett Bryantt, UNCSY Secretary General

Elizabeth Breit, Outreach Chair

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

- The previous meeting's minutes were unanimously approved.

3. END OF SEMESTER REFLECTIONS

- Jared asked each member of the Board to reflect on their work of the past semester.
- Jharrett said for UNCSY, he taken on an amorphous project, but that it had nevertheless gone well; he was currently in the process of creating a Secretary General handbook for transition purposes, and he said he hoped that his successor would have a new vision for how to take UNCSY into the future.
- Fil remarked that he had had some successes and failures; his goal had been to build a sense of YIRA "community", but that town halls had not been successful, and he would have to reconsider how to achieve this goal.
- Natalie said her goals going into the semester were to build on the successes of the previous YMUN, and to hold and even more successful YMUN XXXVI. She said she primarily had been working on streamlining the registration process, and encouraging better communication within the Secretariat and with other organizations. She remarked that communication had been significantly better this year, and there had been some success getting dais teams to communicate with one another. Her goals for the next semester would be to hold the best YMUN ever.

- Bryce said that he had done a review of SCSY as the previous meeting, so another evaluation would probably be unnecessary. He said, however, he was working on a SCSY handbook, which he would finish over Winter Break and hand to the next Secretary General.
- Rachel explained that she had had two goals: to train, and to win. She said that while MUNTY had not “won” at UPMUNC (although they did win the Outstanding Delegation Award), they had made significant progress on training. The goal for next semester would be to win at Harvard.
- Bryan said his achievements for the past semester had been to oversee the overhaul of the website, create a new Facebook group, overhaul the format of the minutes, as well as completing the regular duties of the Secretary. He said tasks to work on next semester were setting up a Wikipedia page for YIRA, working on an overhaul of the bulletin, tweaking the website, and finding a Director of Technology.
- Although she was not able to make the meeting, Swati had sent a message to Jared, who read the message on her behalf. Swati had said she had been disappointed that the North Korea Panel had fallen through at the last minute, but that she was confident the Speaker’s Committee would return to exciting work next semester.

4. SURVEY REVIEW

- Jared explained that he had sent out a survey to the general membership, and that Fil had compiled the responses.
- Fil said there were 24 responses altogether, and that these had represented a good sample across YIRA classes, departments.
- He explained that he had divided the results for analysis into four parts: communication, spending & benefits, YIRA and Model UN, and miscellaneous.
- **Communications:**
 - Fil said when asked if Board members were approachable, 63% had said that they were. However, Fil explained that this may have been skewed by the fact that those responding were people that Board members already knew, and that it was significant that the freshmen responding to the survey had responded that they did not know.
 - He explained that the number of people responding who said they had attended Town Halls was overwhelmingly low, and suggestions for improvement had included “not sure”, “after big conferences”, “switch days”, and “more usually good”.
 - He said most thought the YIRA bulletin was great, but that a large number said the bulletin can improve, with the main suggestions being a better ordering of the points (i.e. prioritization of the bulletin news), and better aesthetics.
 - Fil explained that the take-home message from these results was that communication was good, but could be improved.
- **Spending & benefits:**
 - Fil explained that the majority of respondents overwhelmingly did not know how YIRA spends its money. Bryce commented a good idea may be to post YIRA’s budget on our website.
 - Fil said when asked to prioritize between membership benefits, happy hours had come first, and international trips had come a somewhat second. He explained the take-away was that happy hours were important, international trips were somewhat important, and that after that, the membership was not entirely decided on what it wanted. He remarked though that respondents had been excited about YIRA gear.
 - He said suggestions for member benefits had included YIRA gear, small YIRA dinners, membership cards and increased trip leader subsidies.
- **YIRA & Model UN:**
 - Fil explained that results here had been mixed. He said that there had been some indications that there should be greater emphasis on non-Model UN activities.
 - Fil said when asked if they would like opportunities to compete as a delegate, half said yes, while the other half said no.
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - Fil said there had been miscellaneous comments, which had mostly been positive, such as “I love YIRA”.
- **Conclusions:**

- Fil said the survey had been a good survey with an ideal sample of YIRA members.
- He explained the take-away message was that the Board needed to improve its approachability, and suggested ideas to do so might include Board office hours, or having contact information more prominent. He said that it was clear Town Halls were no longer a good idea, and would no longer be held. Bryce further suggested having dinners in dining halls would be a good way both to make the Board more approachable and to build a sense of community.
- Fil further said other take-away messages included that the bulletin can and should be improved, that members do not understand how YIRA spends its money, and that members were polarized about whether Model UN should remain a priority.
- Regarding member benefits, he explained members clearly liked happy hours, and suggested these could be improved by varying the types of drinks and having themed happy hours; members were also generally supportive of having YIRA gear.
- Fil pointed out that members were still looking for greater community-building, and suggested having more social, non-international relations related events such as a poker night, sports events and weekly dinners. He also suggested more domestic travel opportunities, such as a trip to New York City and the U.N.

5. DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY BRAINSTORM

- Bryan explained that no applications had been received for the position of Director of Technology, and there needed to be a brainstorm of how to move forward with the position.
- He suggested forwarding the application to both the Student Tech and Yale University Computing Organization (YUCO) panlists might be a good idea to broaden the pool of potential applicants.
- Bryce commented that there had been problems finding Under-Secretary Generals of Technology in the past, and that one reason was that prospective candidates often worried about getting pigeon-holed as the “tech” person, with no prospects of advancing in the Secretariat hierarchy.
- Rachel said she thought the idea of looking outside YIRA was a good idea, since she was pessimistic that a candidate could be found within YIRA.
- Natalie said one problem with looking outside YIRA was that some Model UN experience was needed for the tech role, since many of the implementation decisions needed to be made with a knowledge of Model UN in mind.
- Rachel asked how great the need for a Director of Technology was given that a system had already been built for the website.
- Bryan said that the website still needed tweaking and continual improvement, especially to build further functionality into the website; Natalie said she agreed and that not having a technology person was not sustainable.
- Jharrett explained that while the system for the website was already in place and less innovation would be necessary in future, it was still necessary to have someone responsible for technology in place.
- Lizzie commented that the need for a professional YIRA website was very important, and suggested paying an external organization to run the website might be a good idea.
- Bryan said paying someone was a good idea, but that it might be extremely expensive and outside YIRA’s resources.
- Jared said that YIRA nevertheless required a more long-term solution.
- Natalie asked if the idea of payment would involve paying a YIRA member; Rachel said this would be a strange idea since all other members worked without payment. Jared said one possibility might be to hire a Student Tech.
- Lizzie said she thought that the job required a certain degree of consistency, and that looking to an external company might provide that consistency.
- Natalie asked if it would be possible to approach the person who designed the Yale Daily News website, and ask them what they did; Jared said he would attempt to do so, although it might be difficult.
- Jared then said the main question was whether the website was such an important thing that it was not possible to rely on an undergraduate, but rather an external organization.
- Fil said the main problem was that the Board did not have enough information, and suggested taking a dual approach whereby the Board would continue to look for YIRA members or Yale undergraduates willing to take on the position, while researching the cost of outside options.

- Bryce said one possibility might be to find a company that had compiled user-friendly tools allowing a member of the Board to maintain and develop the website by him or herself, instead of directly hiring a professional website design person; he explained this would likely be less expensive.
- Jared remarked it seemed logical to pursue all options; Bryan would email the Student Tech, YUCO and Computer Science Department parlists with the Director of Technology application, and would also look into the cost of paying an external organization, while Bryce would look into the possibility and cost of an automated system. Sebastian said he could look into the cost of hiring a web design person in Mexico, which might be less expensive.

6. BRAINSTORM FOR NEXT SEMESTER

- Jared explained he wanted the Board to briefly brainstorm ideas for next semester.
- Bryce said a good start was to address the specific action items from Fil's powerpoint.
- Jared said in terms of YIRA gear, he had been in contact with someone from the silk-screening business, and that he had gotten a quote and sample.
- Fil asked what the Board thought of weekly dinners. Jared said he thought it would be a great start to building a sense of community. Sebastian further suggested organizing YIRA trips to Rudy's and Viva's. Bryce said this was a good idea, but it might be a better tool for building community among familiar YIRA members rather than recruitment or consolidation among younger members.
- Jared asked if there were any other ideas for more social, non-international relations events. Fil said he wanted to organize a trip to New York, and would get in touch with a YIRA freshman who had said he knew Ban Ki-Moon personally. Sebastian suggested having YIRA compete against other organizations, such as the YPU or Yale Debate Association, at a particular game or sport; Natalie remarked this was a good idea, and that cooperation with other organizations could also extend to mixers and happy hours.
- Fil asked what the Board thought of a Yale-wide party, hosted by YIRA; the Board was generally against this idea, as it required staff and significant amounts of money.
- Bryce asked if themed happy hours were going to occur; Fil replied that they were, and that the themes would be based around a particular drink.
- Fil asked if there were any further ideas for domestic trips, perhaps to the New York or Washington D.C. areas; Jared said part of these trips could include visits to countries' missions to the U.N., and that many of these missions had specific tours and talks for Model UN teams and organizations.
- The Board then turned to the Master Calendar for next semester:
 - Jared explained that YMUN would take place almost immediately as soon as the semester started; this would be preceded by a happy hour and stuffing parties.
 - Rachel asked when MUNTY had held tryouts in the previous spring semester; Jared replied they had been in the first week back; Fil inputted this date into the Master Calendar.
 - Jared explained that the general conception among YIRA members was that once YMUN was finished, the YIRA semester was over, and that it was important for the Board to find ways to keep YIRA members involved past YMUN, which would take place in the second week of semester.
 - He explained that perhaps the trip to the U.N. could become a flagship trip that would take place after YMUN. Fil said the trip could occur on April 2nd or 3rd.
 - Jared said the Elections Information Meeting would take place on April 5th, while the elections themselves would take place on April 25th, and the Spring Banquet would take place on April 27th.
 - Jared asked how Board members conceptualized the non-Model UN events, and when such events would take place. The Board tentatively schedule a social event every week that would include such things as a movie night, weekly dinners or a weekly pub crawl.
 - Jared explained that, with that, the bulk of YIRA events had been scheduled, and that the remaining thing was to schedule a time for Board meetings next semester. He explained it was important to move meetings away from Tuesday, as this was when Mellon forums for seniors took place. A new meeting time was set for Mondays, from 7.00 – 9.00 PM.

7. POLICIES

- Jared explained that he had received some great submissions on new Board policies, and that he would email these out so that Board members could read them over Winter Break.
- Fil asked how the Board intended to vote on Board policies. Jared explained that all Board members would read the policies over Winter Break, and then would sit down and put the policies to a vote.
- Jharrett asked if it would be possible to make friendly amendments to the policies. Jared explained this would be possible, but would prefer all amendments be made individually before the vote took place.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 PM.