



BOARD MEETING: NOV. 17TH 2009

Presided over by Jared Wigdor. Minutes by Bryan Kam.

MEETING DETAILS

Date: Tuesday, Nov. 17th 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 7:05 PM.

2. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

- The Board took several minutes to read the minutes from the previous meeting.
- The previous meeting's minutes were approved unanimously.

3. DEPARTMENT UPDATES

- Jared asked if anyone had questions or comments regarding the department updates that had been submitted.
- Lizzie said that the Outreach students really wanted to go to UNA-USA, but that Lizzie would not be able to accompany them over Thanksgiving Break, as she would be busy writing her Senior Essay. She asked if any other Board member would be able to go in her place; Jharrett volunteered.

4. MEMBERSHIP LIST

- Jared explained that Fil had compiled a list of members based on who had staffed SCSY, and that it was one of the Board's constitutional duties to approve the list of members.

- The Board made several additions including members of the SCSY Secretariat, who had been omitted. Lizzie made several additions for members from Outreach, including Peter Sack, Sarika Arya, Grace Kim and Arsi Sefaj.
- The Board unanimously approved the final membership list.
- Bryan asked how many members altogether; Fil said the total membership list included 127 members.

5. SCSY PRESENTATION & REVIEW

- Jared explained that given the culmination of SCSY, Bryce would now make a presentation reviewing the conference.
- Bryce began by explaining he would divide his presentation into two halves; he would firstly discuss the goals of the conference and whether they had been achieved, and he would then go on to discuss the problems the Secretariat had encountered and how to resolve them in future.
- **Goals:**
 - Bryce explained the conference had six goals: the delegate experience, the Secretariat and staff experience, profit maximization, a unified conference image, refinement of conference procedures, and creating infrastructure and institutional memory; he explained these were listed, to some degree, in order of priority, as the delegate experience was most important in bringing SCSY participants back.
 - **Delegate experience:** Bryce explained that the Secretariat had collected roughly 250 survey responses; 34% had rated the conference as “excellent”, 54% had rated “good”, and 11% had rated the conference “average”; 1% had rated the conference “poor”.
 - **Secretariat and staff experience:** Bryce explained that responses on surveys from staff had been overwhelmingly “excellent” and “good”; in general, there had been great comments, with a lot of staff thankful for the Secretariat’s work.
 - Bryce explained that for the Secretariat itself, USGs felt that while SCSY was a valuable experience, there was sometimes a tradeoff between conference efficiency and a “sense of team”; he explained that, for instance, some meetings had been split between Logistics and Committees halves to shorten discussions, but this had consciously come at a loss of Secretariat cohesion. Secretariat reactions had been mixed, with some appreciating the streamlining, and others saying they would have valued getting to know other Secretariat members better.
 - Bryce said that ASGs were one area where much improvement could be made, and that this had emerged from the Secretariat debrief. He explained that while there were very competent ASGs who could be great candidates for USG positions, more work needed to be done to include the ASGs in the Secretariat, with the possibility of taking on ASGs earlier, perhaps at the end of freshman year.
 - **Profit maximization:** Bryce explained that SCSY had generated roughly \$15,523.50 in profit, and that this could be higher, as he was still waiting on one check and a partial refund from Thali Too; given that the original profit projections had been roughly \$12,500, the conference had done well.
 - **Creating a unified conference image:** Bryce explained that the Secretariat had been fairly successful in this regard, with all print and digital media containing the SCSY logo in some form. This had been a success, and should again be done in the future.
 - **Refining conference procedures:** Bryce said that one of Zharna’s main goals had been to collect, codify and innovate on conference procedures; he explained that this year, the aim had been to build on that not necessarily by innovating, but by refining the procedures that Zharna had developed. Refinements had been made in the topic brief structures, as well as mid-conference evaluations, where every committee had been evaluated at least twice, with problem committees being evaluated 4 or 5 times (something which delegates appreciated). On the logistics side, the announcement structure had been streamlined to a single page.
 - **Infrastructure and institutional memory:** Bryce said significant progress had been made on infrastructure, including the development of a new website which would not need to be redeveloped for some time, registration systems, and the purchase of hand trucks. He also explained that hotel contracts had been secured for more than one year, which had allowed SCSY to choose its own date rather than be constrained by what was available; this was along the lines of UPenn, which has a 3-year contract cycle.

- In terms of institutional memory, Bryce explained that he would create a Sec. Gen. handbook, while individual USGs would also have handbooks, which would be included in the Sec. Gen. handbook. He also said he was working on a final expense report, something which had not been created in the past.
- **Problems:**
 - **Lounge Night:** Bryce explained that during Lounge Night, there had been a music failure, which had been a significant complaint on feedback forms, even though delegates understood that nothing more could be done. Nevertheless, USG Services & Admin, Rachel Fabi, had done a good job organizing the social events; she was now speaking to Thali Too to discuss a partial refund. Thali Too, nevertheless, had some benefits including the easy access to alcohol, which delegates appreciated.
 - **Economic climate & marketing strategy:** Bryce explained that it did not seem clear that the economic climate entirely explained the drop in the number of delegates attending SCSY this year, as Harvard and UPMUNC had managed to retain their number of delegates. Thus, Bryce explained, SCSY's marketing strategy needed a serious rethink, something which the next Secretary-General would have to do.
 - **Halloween Weekend:** That SCSY fell on Halloween Weekend was a frequent complaint on both staff and delegate evaluations, and this may potentially have an effect on registration numbers. Bryce explained, however, that the situation had essentially been resolved as it had already been decided SCSY would not be taking place on Halloween next year.
 - **Staff cohesion:** Bryce explained this was one of the major things that the Secretariat could do to improve the conference, as there had been problems both with dais teams as well as staffers. He said USG Committees, Dahlia, had suggested defining Directors as stronger leadership positions than they currently are, as this might stem dropout among dais teams. Bryce explained one problem had been that there were dais teams that simply had not been sufficiently prepared, and delegates noticed this. Regarding staff attendance, there had been plenty of "no-shows". Bryce reiterated this was one critical area requiring improvement.
 - **Enforcing deadlines:** Bryce explained this had been a persisting problem, particularly given there was no way to "force" dais teams to complete work for YIRA. One unfortunate consequence had been that SCSY had been late beginning registration, and therefore had to extend registration at the tail-end of the period; this had moved everything, including committee assignments behind. Nevertheless, many topic briefs had been posted online by the beginning of the school year, something which delegates had appreciated. Conference materials had been great when done, but had been ordered late, and the Opening Ceremonies speaker had only been confirmed a few weeks before the conference.
 - **Sec. Gen. accountability:** Bryce explained that the primary persons responsible for ensuring Secretary-General accountability were the President and the Vice President, and that Fil had been extremely helpful in challenging many decisions. Nevertheless, the problem existed that there was not sufficient accountability of the Secretary-General, and this was something the Board needed to address. Bryce explained that one particularly important aspect was fiscal oversight, given the significant amounts of money coming in and out for the conference, with little oversight and no expense reports filed after the conference. These made it very easy for money to slip "through the cracks".
- Bryce proceeded to explain the timeline for the selection of the next SCSY Secretary-General. He explained the application had been sent out on Nov. 15th, along with applications to serve on the Ad Hoc Selection Committee. Applications would be due on the Friday of Thanksgiving (Nov. 27th), and interviews would take place on Tuesday, Dec. 1st from 9.00 PM onwards.
- The Board congratulated Bryce and Fil for a successful SCSY.

6. INTERNATIONAL TRIP UPDATE

- **Honduras Fall Trip:**
 - Fil explained that he had asked George and Fernanda a host of questions ahead of their coming trip to Honduras; George had basically explained that the trip was all set, and they would leave on Sunday together. He had further explained that despite the failure of the peace accords, the security situation had not substantially deteriorated.

- Jared asked who the final list of trip participants included; Fil explained there were 9 people on the trip altogether, as one trip member had decided not to attend.
- Fil said George and Fernanda had asked him for a \$1,000 contingency fund in case of emergencies; the Board approved this with the caveat that this money would be returned to YIRA subsequently, and trip members would not receive YIRA money until after they had staffed YMUN.
- **Spring Trips:**
 - Fil explained that the India trip had received 6 applications, with 4 participants ultimately deciding to go on the trip; he said Sonia and Deb nevertheless had no problems leading a smaller trip, and he would soon meet with them to discuss the itinerary and flights.
 - Sebastian asked whether, at this point, it was possible to recruit more trip participants. Rachel said one good idea might be to ask those who were not accepted to the Middle East trip whether they were interested in the India trip instead. Fil said this was an interesting idea, which he might pursue.
 - Regarding the Middle East trip, Fil said there had been 13 applicants. He explained that the trip leaders had wanted to accept 6 participants, but that Fil and Jared would try to persuade them to accept 8 participants so more YIRA members could go. He explained the trip leaders had been hesitant about this because they felt that 8 would be more manageable in terms of travel safety - for instance, they would only have to rent 2 cabs rather than perhaps a van of some sort.
- Fil said it was now important to consider the question of the raising the trip stipend to \$500, which had been deferred from the previous Board meeting.
- Bryan said he thought the reason for the deferment was so the Board could consider the alternatives, but the Board had not yet considered the alternatives; Sebastian agreed and he said he thought the Board had agreed there was no marginal utility for recruitment by adding an extra \$100.
- Fil explained that given the fewer number of trip participants, increasing the trip stipend to \$500 would not increase the amount spent on international trips above the \$16,000 allocated. In fact, YIRA was likely to spend $\$500 \times 25$ participants = \$12,500, which was still below the \$16,000 allocated.
- The Board approved the increase of trip stipends to \$500.

7. POLICIES

- Jared said that some revisions continued to need to be made to the Board policies the Board had drafted; areas that had been under-explained included the budget process, which he said Bryce and Sebastian should work together to draft a section for so that the process the Board had used could be institutionalized.
- Jared asked what other areas had been under-explained; Bryce suggested more be done to codify international trips and the process for selection of participants.
- Bryce also suggested codifying recruitment, although he said this should be done at the policy rather than institutional level of the Board policies.
- Jared also suggested Bryan codify additional information on communications, and Sebastian codify relations with the IRS, such as important deadlines, which needed to be enforced.
- Jared said the way moving forward would be to re-draft Board policies over Thanksgiving Break, and then to present the final document at the Board's final meeting of the year, taking place on Dec. 1st; this would allow the Board one month to read and consider the Board policies, and then to ask questions at the first Board meeting back after Winter Break.

8. END OF SEMESTER REPORTS

- Jared explained that preceding Board had written an "End of Semester" report which outlined the achievements that each Board member had made, and set goals for what to achieve in the coming semester. He said it was absolutely essential that Board members draft these reports both for institutional memory and to evaluate what progress they had made.

- Jared explained he would email out an outline for the reports, and that these would be due by the Board's first meeting after the Thanksgiving Break.

9. REVIEW OF EVENTS OF THE WEEK

- The Board quickly reviewed the events of the coming week. These were to include **(i)** a General Membership meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 18th, **(ii)** a YMUN Info Session preceding this, and **(iii)** an Alumni Happy Hour on Friday, Nov. 20th.
- Fil explained that the alumni event would have significant attendance from both alumni and current members; he estimated 50 persons would attend altogether. He explained that he had purchased 100 drink tickets at \$5 each.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 PM.