



# Student Government, Inc.

## Minutes of the Meeting

### October 5, 2020

*A meeting of the Board of Directors of Student Government, St John's University Queens Campus Inc. (the Board) was held on October 5, 2020 virtually through the Student Government, Inc. Zoom.*

**Due to open dialogue, the Assembly Meeting for October 5th, 2020, was tabled for a later date. Below are the informal minutes of the discussion that was held in its place. We want to be mindful that some details discussed are sensitive in nature. TRIGGER WARNING: Sexual Assault and Violence.**

1. **Opening**
  - a. Call to Order at 5:06 p.m. EST.
  - b. Patrick Kohn
    - i. Hello everyone, Thank you all for coming today and for meeting quorum. I call on the Junior Senator to say the prayer.
  - c. Chris Bernabe
    - i. Prayer
  - d. Attendance
    - i. Quorum was reached during this meeting.
  - e. Campus Dialogue
    - i. Patrick
      1. Now we'll start with campus dialogue
    - ii. Faiz
      1. Who wrote the letter?
    - iii. Julia
      1. We all wrote it together.
    - iv. Faiz
      1. Do we have an outside consultant that can change the system? Right now, there is more student misconduct than administration doesn't get away with? SGi needs to get on it immediately.
      2. Can we do outside audits through legal outlets?
      3. I want there to be more transparency. Release your salaries. There was an election a few weeks ago that I didn't know about, so that must not have been sent out through the proper channels.
      4. How do we ensure permanent change?
      5. We request SGi get in contact with the Board of Directors and Administration.
      6. Seeing what's going on on campus right now is [expletive]. Students have been having problems for years with division of student affairs. It seems like you're not doing anything. It is [expletive] that nothing happens. What are we actually doing to take steps? People are calling out their own administrators.
    - v. Patrick
      1. Excuse me, we usually keep campus dialogue to about 2 minutes per person.
    - vi. Faiz
      1. I'm going to finish real quick. I need to know what's being done to fix this. SGi needs to have contact with the board immediately.
    - vii. Patrick

1. Thank you, you bring up a lot of great points. I will just ask you to watch the language that you're using, as we try to keep this meeting professional
- viii. Faiz
  1. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to let you police my language. [expletive] no I'm not going to change anything
  2. This needs to be rectified immediately. What is SGI doing for all those people besides making statements.
- ix. Patrick
  1. I don't want you to be confused with what I meant by that. I was asking if you could avoid saying expletives. I'm not trying to say that the way you're speaking isn't ok.
- x. Faiz
  1. As a white person, I don't care how you feel about how I'm speaking.
  2. There are students having horrible things done to them on campus. I don't care how you feel. What else is being done besides making statements?
- xi. Patrick
  1. Ok, you brought up a lot of things. I think we should save them until the end of the meeting.
- xii. Faiz
  1. There are students getting assaulted on campus. That is the topic of the day.
- xiii. Julia
  1. Faiz, could you send all of the bullets you talked about in the chat? So we can address each one of them?
- xiv. Faiz
  1. Yes
- xv. Amy
  1. We hear you. Patrick would you like to take time out now? We do want to get through the rest of the meeting. I suggest we table this discussion, so we have more time after we go through the agenda that needs to happen so people who have class can leave
- xvi. Patrick
  1. I think it would make more sense. I want to give this the time that it deserves. I think we should get through all of the other stuff first so we can take more time for this afterwards. Last meeting we got done very quickly, so we will have much more time at the end.
- xvii. Faiz
  1. What I just spoke on needs to be the topic of today. Nothing else
- xviii. Shaeleigh
  1. I second that. We have a big situation going on right now that needs to take priority. There's nothing in this meeting that is life or death. Students' lives are on the line right now. That should take priority.
- xix. Julia
  1. I agree with y'all. I think we can table the presentation, because this is of extreme importance. I'm suggesting we talk about the student affairs situation, and answer people's questions for now, then continue with this presentation.
- xx. Faiz
  1. Thank you. I won't talk over anyone anymore

## 2. TOPICS

*For this section of the meeting minutes, we have anonymized the points of conversation to protect the students in the meeting who chose to speak up about their experiences.*

- a. Going over student concerns from campus dialogue
  - i. Bringing in an outside consultant to review code of conduct and amend it
    - 1. Good idea. SGI has to research that. SGI is planning to make an ad hoc committee to review the code of conduct process.
    - 2. Student concern: It should be done by an outside entity. The student code of conduct is being used to protect the administration, and BIPOC students have more problems with student conduct than other students. I can't look at it as a student. It needs outside consults, and it deserves a large portion of the budget.
    - 3. SGI has third party social justice consultants that we've worked with in the past. We can run this by them to see if they or a colleague would be able to review it
    - 4. SGI will share their correspondence with those consultants by cc'ing and by instagram update
  - ii. Calling for an outside audit
    - 1. Yes, that's something that we're calling for as well.
  - iii. What is getting done
    - 1. SGI has had meetings with two board of trustees members to discuss promoting antiracism at St. John's. We have not been in discussion with them regarding assault and university employees. We haven't had the chance to talk to them about it yet
    - 2. We aren't in contact with anyone else from the board. Only those two are in collaboration with SGI now. We don't have the contact info of other people
  - iv. Transparency
    - 1. Student concern: salaries for the eboard should be public.
    - 2. We do not have permission to say the numbers of individual salaries. We can say the aggregate numbers though and that number is included in the presentation for today
    - 3. We would need to get permission from the SGI "corporation owners" - our advisor, the head of student affairs
  - v. When you leave what is being done to ensure the changes the E-Board makes are permanent
    - 1. We can write things into the bylaws
    - 2. SGI concern: future eboards can change the bylaws and undo our changes
    - 3. Student concern: why not just write things into the bylaws if you believe in them
    - 4. There may be better ways to make permanent change than just writing things into the bylaws that would be more impactful *[Note from Patrick after the fact: I said this during the meeting, and after reconsidering, I have changed my stance on this. I do not want to discourage representatives from formalizing SGI's public stances through bylaws or the legislative process. If SGI wants to take a stance, it should do so, and part of that should be using the legislative processes that was introduced this year. To all the representatives, your voice matters, and it deserves to be heard and made permanent.]*
    - 5. Student concern: why not implement them. You can set that precedent for future years.
  - vi. What happened to the push a couple years ago to get a student on the board of trustees
    - 1. Previous e-boards have tried to get a student on the board of trustees and were told no. This is the first time that anyone can remember that board of trustees members are trying to meet with students
    - 2. We will try to meet with them regularly and hopefully get a student on it
    - 3. SGI needs to be constantly pressing board of trustees and admin
  - vii. Why isn't SGI making email chains and pressing the admin as aggressively as other student groups are doing
    - 1. SGI has a responsibility to the groups it provides resources to to stay in good standing and a respectful relationship with the university. Our resources that we provide to other important groups and functions on campus can be taken away. We have considered trying "nuclear options" of putting pressure on the university, and have decided against it because (1) they would never listen to us and (2) they can take away all the resources that we get that other groups on campus need. Other groups who do not receive anything

from the university do not have that responsibility.

2. Student concern: you need to be more aggressive. If you aren't willing to do the work then resign. Do not worry about being respectful. The time for a passive approach is over. Statements are not enough. We can't dance around and avoid taking accountability for pressuring the administration. At the end of the day, the power belongs to the students.
- viii. Identified issues - SGI needs to be more accessible with its information; we need to get an external audit; SGI is responding but not listening
  1. SGI has a connection to board of trustees members that it will be using to address pertinent issues
  2. When SGI sends information out to the student body, it needs to go through internal communications, and those requests must be approved by student affairs
  3. Student concern: a division that has problems raised about it is responsible for approving things. Who do you go when you have problems with them. Why is there more trouble for students than admin. Take a stance. No more excuses. E-Board needs to take accountability for what they ran for. SGI cannot sit idly by. A statement is not actionable. This is as important as anything else. You have the power to initiate the change we want to see.
  4. If SGI gets in trouble for standing up for the students, alumni and all the students will have its back

*The next section of the meeting was requested to be censored by members of the SGI Assembly due to triggering and personal content. We are respecting those requests and therefore not including notes from that section of the dialogue that was identified by the students making the requests. The meeting minutes continue from after that section.*

5. Change will not come if we're not pressuring for that change. We need to apply that pressure to administration.
6. Statements are not enough
- ix. What do people want to see more of?
  1. More transparency in SGI's email correspondence and in SGI's meetings with administration
  2. Contact board of trustees, put out more information, getting in contact with alumni, getting in contact with student affairs executives in a fashion that's open to the entire student body, being more visibly passionate
  3. There has to be more
- b. Wrapping up / updating
  - i. Patrick
    1. I hear what you are saying. We need to be more transparent in doing it when we are doing it. We are going to flex our relationship with the Board of Trustees more. We have finally gotten an agreement from the administration to meet with us regularly last week. We finally had a meeting with us on webex where they made promises to us about the work that they're going to do to address some of the student concerns.
    2. They've agreed to meet biweekly and they agreed to meet with us and whatever the topic of the meeting is, the respective parties will bring individuals who are relevant to the topic of the meeting.
  - ii. Shaeleigh
    1. Admin shouldn't be deciding and dictating how meetings are supposed to go. Can't just talk at SGI and use that as an excuse to say they met with you
    2. Suggest that you get an advanced notice of the topic and who is going to be on the call. Demand that the people who need to be on that call are on it.
    3. Take ownership of the conversation and don't allow there to just be premade statements
  - iii. Patrick
    1. We had agreed about some of those with admin during our last meeting that we would decide the topic of

the meeting and then the people who are relevant to the conversation would necessarily be there.

2. We've had those experiences before, as you know, with the meeting regarding the tuition increase that was not productive.
3. This most recent meeting was not that way. They talked to us about some of the complexities surrounding bias reporting of a particular professor.
4. We talked about the antiracism letter we sent in the summer that they had previously never acknowledged, and the president of the university said how they want to use those questions as a framework for what will be going on in the future. I know it's like they're pushing it off, but at least they acknowledged it, and they made promises about these things.
5. We were able to talk about the new Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department (that was going to be talked more about in the slides for this meeting). There's a lot of traction around it, and we got a promise from the provost of the university that he's going to be fully supporting it with all the resources it needs
6. They promised to send us more specific information about the complexities on how charges can be brought against faculty to multiple committees that are made up of faculty to judge, and if they don't follow that process exactly they can get sued by the faculty union. They had promised that they were going to provide that information within this week. The relevant information about how the university handles these situations and what it's doing (without naming anyone in particular because it can't) in a letter form. And they told us to publish. They said they're not going to publish it because they need to be careful about what they say publicly, but encouraged us to do so.
7. These are promises that they said they were going to hold themselves to.

iv. Shaeleigh

1. If you didn't say that right now in the last five minutes we wouldn't have known that. I'm sure there are thousands of other students that also want to know what's going on and that you had a meeting about antiracism that was actually productive.

v. Patrick

1. You're right. And that's something that we internally talked about today - how we need to make an announcement about what happened at that meeting - to let everyone know what's going on and so that everyone knows that they made those promises. If they promise that they're going to send us that information within a week and they don't, that information is out there.
2. One of the several takeaways from this meeting is that we need to be more transparent. That's something that we had done in the past and that we've started to slip with. That's something that so important - even more so now that's we're starting to gain some traction. That's something that's really going to drive us and that we're going to really cling to moving forward.
3. We have 3 more minutes, does anyone want to say anything

vi. Julia

1. Thank you to everyone for being honest and telling us that we need to do more. It's rare that we get to talk like this. I know that this is to hold us accountable, that we're doing what we're supposed to be doing, and that we don't forget to do things
2. We're going to do more. We're going to be more transparent and put out a lot more information. I want you to hold us accountable to that. By the next assembly meeting, we should've already checked off some boxes. Although it takes responsiveness from other parties, we need to initiate change.

vii. Shaeleigh

1. We understand that you're also students. We understand the limitations that come along with that, and even though you have the platform you have, there's only so much you can do. I want to reiterate, we will stand by you if you stand with us. If anything bad happens to you, we will stand with you, because we know that you guys are standing with us.

2. There's nothing more powerful than student power. We run this school. But we need you to stand with us, we really do, and I do hope that by the next assembly meeting we can check some boxes off because that's all it's about at the end of the day.

viii. Patrick

1. Thank you Shaeleigh, "we'll stand with you, and we want you to stand with us". I want to end on that because I think that really sums up today's meeting
2. We'll be sending out our reports, the slides, and the minutes from today
3. Thank you everyone for having this nontraditional meeting
4. To the reps, see you next monday at the legislative meeting
5. Thank you to all the freshman reps to coming to your first assembly meeting

ix. Amy

1. We'll figure out how to pass the things that need to be passed this week

x. Patrick

1. As always, when we send out the info, if you have any questions about something on a slide, the people who wrote that slide have their email on the slide so feel free to reach out to them and ask questions about it
2. As always, stay safe, thank you so much for being here