

**Student Alliance Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, 17 September 2008**  
**3:00 PM room 218**

*Student Alliance is a student-run organization that facilitates communication, sponsors events, and allocates funding to help students and student groups actualize the seven institute ideals. Listening to student voices, we build alliances, cultivate student leadership, and advocate for social change and transformation of existing power structures.*

Present at the meeting (14)

Nairem Morales, Yonat Mayer, Shelby Leigh, Heidi Rhodes, Rodrigo Guimaraes, Alejandro Urruzmendi, Chien Hui Liu, Adwaita Mildes, Grace Shalhoub, Jeremy Zhu, Lilmilagro Henriquez, Isac Takino, Maitri Gopalakrishna, Shirley Strong

**Decision making in Student Alliance- instituting a board**

The question of how SA made sound decisions in the absence of regular turn-out to meetings was brought up. Alejandro then brought up the idea of a board for SA made up of representatives from Student groups. Maitri said that this was something that would be very useful and something that SA had been planning to institute. *Alejandro offered to follow up with UNITE on this matter.* This board would function as a team that took important decisions like event funding and so on which is especially important since turn out at SA meetings can be low. It serves to have the decision making functions of SA be streamlined.

**Student Awards and the Proposal Action Team**

The Deadline for Student Awards as 5pm on 10 October 2008 was announced. This was followed by an introduction and explanation of the SA awards and PAT process. Nariem also offered a brief introduction to the various campus groups for new students that were present at the meeting. This was followed by a Call for **PAT volunteers**. *Yonat and Jeremy volunteered to serve on PAT for this semester.* The PAT meeting will be on Monday Oct 13<sup>th</sup> from 3-6 PM. A call for volunteers will be sent out within the week to the student listserv.

**Tai-Chi Classes at CIIS**

Jeremy asked if SA would be interested in funding Tai Chi Classes at CIIS. SA agreed that it would be a great idea. A proposal would have to be presented at the next meeting to be voted on by SA.

### **Creating a designated Movement Space for Student Use**

The question of a movement space was brought up. This is not the first time this has come up and SA would have the funding to put into creation of a space. However, sustained discussions would be required with administration to make it happen. It was determined that there would be a short-term and a long-term goal. In the short run, how could SA get an already existing space to be converted with minimal effort into a yoga/movement space. In the long run, could we fund the construction of such a space? *Adwaita and Shelby volunteered to follow-up on this.*

### **The Conference phone**

Student Alliance Conference Phone open to all student groups. Email Maitri and then Check out from room 410 (Margie Lam, Student Affairs Coordinator)

### **Yoga schedule is up and classes are running!**

### **Student Newsletter**

Any submissions to the first newsletter must be received by Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2008.

### **Student Representative to the Board of Trustees**

The Nominations and Elections for the Board of trustees will be handled by the Dean of Students office but students were asked to keep an eye open for the announcements. (the call for nominations was just sent out by Margie Lam, student affairs coordinator this afternoon).

### **Presentation, Discussion and voting on the new Social Justice Research and Community Service Grant (SJR&CS)**

The SJR&CS grant was received with a lot of interest and enthusiasm by all present. There was a discussion on the details of whether one could be compensated for time spent on a project through the grant and it was decided that at this stage it was important to stay with the larger picture- is the motivation for the project social justice and is there community involvement and participation. Participants requested more time to go over the guidelines and respond with suggestions. Maitri said that she would send the guidelines to all students present and requested feedback within a week.

It was determined that the next step would be to create an application form. *Heidi, Yonat and Grace volunteered to work on creating a draft of this form if possible, before the next Student Alliance meeting.*

### **Meditation Group**

Chien was exploring the appropriateness of having a group at CIIS where her yoga/meditation organization could come in to teach. SA discussed this aware that the idea is not to promote any one spiritual practice here. Jeremy also spoke about the meditation group as it used to function in the past where it was a space for people to meditate in whatever practice they followed. These meetings would sometimes have guest teachers who would teach or speak about their particular style but the group itself was nondenominational and open to all. SA concluded that a good idea would be to revive the meditation group in the way that it used to work and invite Chien's teachers as a guest for a session or two but also allow people with other meditation practices to be in that practice to share. *Chien and Yonat have volunteered to work on reviving the meditation group.*

### **Increasing the work-study hourly rate**

Rodrigo brought up the issue of increasing the hourly rate paid to workstudy students at CIIS. At \$11.75 and with most students only being allowed 20 hours (International Students) or 25 hours (US residents or citizens), it is extremely hard to make ends meet. It was suggested that this be taken to UNITE since that is the stronger advocacy body within SA. The next UNITE meeting is on Friday 26 Sep at 6:15 PM in room 26. Maitri and Alejandro will be at this meeting to bring in this point and others.

### **Financial Aid- What can we do?**

Alejandro directed this question to Shirley Strong (Dean of Students) asking, how can we help make the Financial Aid Office more accountable to students? This was with direct reference to the recent loan dispersal deferments that seems to be a fairly regular phenomenon. Shirley responded first clarifying what set of circumstances had led to what happened this time but also said that it was no excuse. She also outlined the following options that students had in such an event.

1. If you have an award letter, you can get an advance of \$1500
2. If you do not have an award letter, you can get an emergency loan for \$500

However, Students must be made aware that these options exist which was not what happened this time. Alejandro asked if Shirley and Chip Goldstein (Associate Dean of Academic Administration) can ensure that Financial Aid Counselors are told to discuss these options with every student whose loan has been deferred. Shirley said that this would be done the very next day (by Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> Sep 2008) in the form of a written document that can be given to Financial Aid Counselors to hand out to students.

Shirley also requested students to hand in a written document with their experiences with Financial Aid anonymously as this would help Financial Aid be more responsive in the future. *Alejandro also offered to collect these testimonials on behalf of Students.* (An email has been sent out a few hours after this meeting to the listserver to this effect)

**Many thanks to all who were present and/or reading these minutes. Please stay involved!**