

Senate Reflection

December 15, 2016

Role of a Senator?

- Work on initiatives and represent the student body's interests (Lilly)
- Important to think about every single undergraduate student and what the student voice. Also important to think about making change last past when we're here (Collin)
- Serving as a role model for the entire organization/student body (Sarah)
 - Collaborating
 - Pursuing change
- Custodians of the organization's health, ensuring our processes are being followed (Evan)

Role of an FYA?

- Opportunity to experience what Senate is like, setting up a platform to become a Senator (Maria)
- Important to learn ins and outs of SGA; their purpose is to ensure future leaders are developed for SGA (Feyi)
- Offering a different perspective (Chiamaka)
- Opportunity to work collaboratively with elected members (Lilly)

How can we reach out to more students? (Ex. Hydration stations, how can we promote that ResLife is putting hydration stations in lobbies?)

- Depends on the initiative; for example, with hydration stations, it will require signage, but Gerardo's Arbutus initiative, it could be a MyUMBC post or seeding a Retriever article (Emily)
- Consult more student opinion, take advantage of friend networks (Milan)
- Perhaps every month SGA should post a document summarizing initiative progress on social media? (Chiamaka)
- We can do a better job of just conversing with people, spreading news and stories via word of mouth. We need to build relationships with other organizations on campus, which can create a ripple effect (Collin)
- Communications Department should work on newsletter; there's a need for more students to know what's going on in various branches of SGA (Emily)
- A regular e-mail blast would entice students to get involved, as they'd be attracted to positive momentum in the organization (Maria)

How can we collaborate with more students and organizations?

- We need more visibility; many students and organizations don't know SGA Senate exists. We can go to student organization events and show up physically. Face-to-face communication is better than on social media (Stanley)
- Collaborating with other student organizations is important (e.g., Midnight Breakfast with RSA). When we collaborate with charter organizations on events like Election Night Extravaganza, it reinforces openness of organization (Feyi)
- When I met with organizations to work on my initiative, I found that sitting down with them allowed for them to learn how to better connect with SGA resources. (Milan)
- Accessibility is super-important; perhaps having a point of contact within Senate for student organizations would be helpful. (Emily)
- When we do have good collaborations with other organizations, we need to tell stories about those. It reinforces that we're willing to work with partners, and it sets a tone for collaboration among other organizations. (Collin)
- Also important to remember that there are no distinctive roles for each organization in collaborating; we're all students and we're all working toward the same thing. (Gerardo)

What does accountability look like?

- I think we do a good job of following up with individual Senators to be sure they're doing work (initiatives, SRC meetings); we should be doing that for each other and working together well (Feyi)
- I think it's important we ask each other questions and to pay attention to our initiative and shared governance updates; will help with us contributing divergent perspectives and strengthening our conversations (Gerardo)

What is the purpose and importance of weekly meetings?

- I think they're important for accountability, especially with initiative work. It's an accountability mechanism to help us balance our work with our other involvements (Evan)
- They also make it easy for us to split up our initiative work into digestible chunks, and it allows for discussions that can strengthen our initiatives by offering various networks to which we might be connected (Ted)
- Allows for the development of camaraderie among all of us (Lilly)
- Creates a forum for various guest speakers that connect with our initiatives; also reinforces among staff members and administrators how seriously we take our work (Gerardo)
 - I notice this in University Steering Committee meetings; we meet the most often, and we always have something to report compared to other Senates (Sarah)

Opinion and structure of the meetings thus far?

- I worry that we have conversations that we previously had, or that they're redundant. Sometimes I think we take 25 minutes to have what should be a 2 minute discussion. How can we make better use of side conversations outside of the meetings? (Collin)

- Sometimes I feel like we don't really run our meetings. I don't like the fact that sometimes outsiders attend our meetings and take up space we could be using to discuss initiatives more pertinent to us (Feyi)
- I think how we do initiative updates could be changed to be more hands-on, constructive. Perhaps we could serve as consultants to each other and take deep dives into particular initiatives and provide feedback for each other. (Emily)
- Sometimes we'll go around and give updates, and someone asks a question, and then it gets tabled, and then the same process takes place the next week--can we just continue the conversation in one meeting? (Lucas)
- I worry that having those conversations will leave people to feel left out; I think that we could do that consulting work for each other outside of Senate meetings (Lilly)
- I think we don't have enough time at weekly meetings to consult for each other; perhaps we could pursue that in the SGA office, which already has lots of people from across the organization present (Feyi)

Pros & cons of how meetings are run?

- Pros
 - I like the structure of the meeting where we know what's coming and what we need to get done. (Stanley)
 - Sarah does a good job of asserting authority to maintain the structure of the meeting (Gerardo)
- Cons
 - I'd prefer to have more than a paper copy of the agenda; would prefer to have technology allowed. I'd like to be able to access and make use of the agenda online in real time, similar to what we did with Joe Rexing last week. I know the technology policy is there to keep us focused, but I think we can hold each other accountable (Stanley)
 - Perhaps we separate times in meetings when we can use technology and then when we can't (Lilly)
 - I disagree with the electronic agenda opinion; I also believe I would be tempted to browse the internet in the middle of meetings if I had technology available to me. (Gerardo)
 - I think certain people are given more time to speak in meetings than other people, including someone who acts as if they are a Senator, too. (Gerardo)
 - If we come to a group consensus, you can still have your opinion individually, but we also sometimes decide things as a group by majority

Feedback - Speaker

- I think the job you do is very difficult; you can't please everybody. You have to put your foot down and take responsibility for the body. You do a good job of setting limits on acceptable

behavior. I like how you take time out of your schedule to sit down 1-1 with Senators to talk about many different topics. (Feyi)

- As an FYA, you've been super attentive to how we're feeling. You've been really on top of orienting us to the position. I'm really appreciative of that. (Sarah)
- Sometimes I notice that you and Collin get distracted, even during the guest speaker tonight. (Lilly)

Feedback - Assistant Speaker

- In the beginning, as you were settling into your role, I didn't think you were as present as I thought you should have been, but now I think you are very present and I feel comfortable coming to either of you (Lilly)
- I really appreciate the flexibility you show in how you do your work (e.g., Election Night Extravaganza and Election Reform) (Gerardo)
- I lean on Collin for everything (e.g., reading over agendas); I appreciate Collin's handling of Shared Governance Committees and handling all the other things (Sarah)
- Collin was super-engaged during STRiVE when he was in his first year; since then I've been impressed at how hard working and dedicated he is with SGA. I appreciate how organized and how responsible you are. (Feyi)
- One observation is that you don't seem to own your role as Asst. Speaker. I think you deserve more credit for the work you do. (Evan)
- I appreciate that in both of your roles you work on internal SGA work, which allows us to work in other areas. (Lilly)

Feedback - Advisor

- I think Craig is wonderful. I think he does a wonderful job at being the advisor. I like that Craig is there to talk about any issue. Craig is able to balance being professional with being a mentor. (Feyi)
- Snapchat :)
- Craig is a very helpful resource, though it would be nice to schedule more one-on-one time more quickly. (Lilly)
- I do wish that Craig would not respond to messages over the weekend so that he can have a life outside of UMBC (Collin).
- As a new person in Senate, you've made yourself super-approachable to us, and I really appreciate that. (Maria)
- I would appreciate getting to know you sooner--reach out more quickly. (Lucas)

Feedback - Secretary

- She has a really hard job (Stanley)

- I think you're a wonderful person, and even though you're not a Senator, we want you to feel welcome to provide your feedback and perspectives. (Gerardo)
- I appreciate having Tessa; I know I'm picky, and I appreciate your patience (Sarah)

Our experiences with Shared Governance Committees

- When we are on Shared Governance Committees, we need to recognize we are one collective voice. Those committees are an opportunity to shape policy and UMBC, and we need to have a unified voice represented. I worry about the number of complaints I've heard about SGC's; be cautious, and recognize the opportunity we have with those (Collin)
- My experience has been a little frustrating with a lack of information. The Dining Committee has worked out well for me schedule-wise. I'd like to see us transcend the kid's table dynamic present in the Dining Committee. (Lilly)
- I've only gone to Human Relations Committee once, but it seems like it's aimless chatter. How do we hold them accountable for doing work? Doesn't feel productive. (Milan)
- This is my first ever experience in Shared Governance. I think it's important to observe the content *and* the atmosphere. Learn how to read dynamics and how they affect how others are seeing you in the meeting (being viewed as a student). (Gerardo)

Feedback - General Senators:

- I wish more people would dive deeper, offer more detailed reflections in Pass the Gavel (Lilly)
- I would say that in general if you feel like you're not too fond of what someone else is doing, speaking directly to them is important and respectful (Feyi)
- I think we could do better at truly listening to each other instead of focusing on what we're going to say next (Sarah)