ASGC Plenary Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2022, 6:30 PM
Zoom Link | password: 194462 | https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/

Dates of Upcoming ASGC Plenary Meetings (a Tuesday of each month, 6:30 pm):
March 22, April 19

1. Welcome (President, Ashley Wells, asgc.president@columbia.edu)
   a. Saying “hi” to each other
      i. Anyone who is willing to leave their camera on during the meeting is encouraged to do so, so speakers can see who they’re addressing.

2. Guests
   a. Janet Grapengeter, Director of Planning and Capital Project Management at CU Facilities & Colleen Lewis, Executive Director of Disability Services
      i. Edward McArthur (Vice President for Capital Project Management) also joined the meeting to say hello and thank the ASGC for the invitation
      ii. Presentation on Morningside Campus Accessibility
      iii. For context, ADA became law in 1992, and since then, requirements have been added to NYC building codes. Columbia follows a robust set of accessibility requirements for new buildings and renovations, but because of the progression of codes, CU has different categories of accommodations, depending on the circumstances when buildings are erected. Janet shared a timeline of that. Most of the Morningside Campus was built in the early 1900s, so since 1992, many projects have occurred to remove barriers and improve the experience there for students with disabilities, including interior and exterior routes. Columbia University uses Barrier Removal Master Plans to prioritize accessibility projects, and other factors impact how projects are executed, such as historic preservation, conflicts with other codes (safety, plumbing, etc.), logistics, and regulatory reviews and permitting. Bigger projects in the last decade include the Butler ramps, Low Plaza ramps, Kent College Walk entrance, Havemeyer ramp, Hamilton ramp connecting College Walk to Lower Campus, Math improvements (sidewalks and plaza, Math to Havemeyer ramp, Math lift), IAB lift, and many restroom upgrades (with more than 460 restrooms on campus).
      iv. Questions:
         1. What is the process of reporting and resolving issues when automatic door buttons fail?
a. In terms of reporting outages, students can share that with Disability Services, but since that office isn’t available 24 hours a day, students are also encouraged to contact the Facilities Hotline. If there is a ticket number associated with the report, Disability Services can follow up.

b. Students are encouraged to sign up for email alerts for elevator outages on the website: https://notify.cuf.columbia.edu/

2. Why do we see varying levels of accessibility across different Columbia campuses - Morningside, Manhattanville, Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory?
   a. Since these campuses and buildings were built at different times, they were constructed under varying requirements. Since Morningside is older, we’ll see a more varied set of solutions to barriers.

3. What is Columbia University doing to support access across all campuses?
   a. We are communicating and trying to do everything we can to make sure there are resources available.

v. Other questions?

1. Question: Is there a way to not put the burden of finding these issues (for example, broken buttons that normally would open doors or elevators for people who can’t use stairs, etc.) on staff rather than students? Could we implement that into Facilities routine?
   a. Ed McArthur responded: He meets with facilities operations frequently, and shared that they have a preventative maintenance sensibility and periodically check on this type of technology. At times, there are situations where things break down after they’ve checked, etc., but Ed will be happy to circle back with the Facilities team to reinforce that routine of preventative maintenance. He added that they would prefer to identify issues sooner before it becomes a problem for somebody.

2. Comment: It seems it would also be more beneficial for Facilities to call issues in because they may be able to better communicate which doors, etc. since they know campus so well. It also could cut out the middle-man.
   a. Ed responded that the University is planning to roll out a new app where you can snap a photo of the problem and upload it into the app when you’re reporting, which may help with identifying doors, etc., but added that he appreciate Arden’s point and knows the importance of making sure the Facilities team is doing preventative maintenance.
b. Maintenance requests may currently be submitted online or by phone at 212-854-2222.

3. Comment: To underscore some of the frustration with LDO (Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory) Campus, there is only one building with an elevator and none with push door. While students understand that money is tight, this lack of accessibility is really impacting some students who work there. Some students have had to switch buildings where they’re working due to inability to climb stairs.

   a. Ed responded thanking the student for this comment. He appreciated students for bringing up this topic and committed to taking the concern back to his team to make sure they really understand it with regards to LDO Campus.

   vi. The guest speakers invited students to contact them if anything else comes up, particularly of things they should be aware of as they work to develop a new master plan.

b. Michael Higgins, Co-founder and Chair of the Food Pantry at Columbia

   i. Michael is a GS student graduating in May and will shortly after begin an SPS nonprofit program. Michael shared some of the history of the Food Pantry. It began in May 2016 in response to concerns highlighted by a Quality of Life group from General Studies Student Council (GSSC). 30-40% of students had food insecurity during some part of their time at Columbia. Students who stated the Food Pantry were given $1,000 and told to do something about this issue. They rented a classroom, bought food, and ran out of food during first week. They also realized there were more than solely General Studies students coming to obtain food. Since then it has expanded.

   ii. Three locations: Lerner, Barnard Hall, and 50 Haven Ave in Medical Student (the last of which is not currently open due to the pandemic)

      1. All active Columbia students are welcome to pick up food or vouchers at any open location.
      2. COVID shifted us to pivot and distribute information in new ways

   iii. Site: https://thefoodpantry.us/

      1. All our information is there, including real-time data on disbursements, information about locations, info for people to get involved, and FAQs
         a. The link https://thefoodpantry.us/shop/ shows what students need in orders. The panty also distributes a voucher for people to obtain fresh produce at no cost

      2. Monthly data is also shown:
         https://thefoodpantry.studentgroups.columbia.edu/content/arts-scienc

         a. Plans to further disaggregate the data per school
         b. GSAS use has significantly increased
            i. On average, 20 disbursements given out to GSAS students
iv. ASGC is promoting Food Pantry heavily and we want you to keep doing that to help break down the stereotype and stigma and help people feel more comfortable using this
   1. The Food Pantry is happy to provide support if there is any kind of event, promotion, logo, etc.

v. While comfortable in terms of finance, the Food Pantry operates more as small nonprofit rather than regular student group, so it is grateful for any excess funding anyone wants to send that way.

vi. Questions?
   1. N/A
   2. Feel free to contact Michael directly at mh3219@columbia.edu or the Food Pantry at its general email: thefoodpantry@columbia.edu.

3. Sign-in Instructions (Communications Chair, Mariah Noble, asgc.communications@columbia.edu)

4. Updates
   a. President, Ashley Wells (asgc.president@columbia.edu)
      i. ASGC Executive Board Elections next month
         1. All positions are open for applications, aside from Masters Affairs Chair: https://council.gsas.columbia.edu/form/asgc-exec-board-application
            a. This includes President, Vice President for Administration, Vice President for External Affairs, Finance Chair, Communications Chair, two Events Co-chairs, Media Chair, Quality of Life Chair, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair
         2. Anyone with questions on any of these positions is welcome to contact Ashley by email: asgc.president@columbia.edu
         3. We will promote this in next week’s newsletter
         4. In terms of expectations, Executive Board members are expected to attend three monthly meetings: one with the ASGC Executive Board, one between the ASGC Executive Board and GSAS Administration, and the monthly Plenary Meetings
      ii. Current Covid Restrictions and Spring Semester Plans
          1. February 7, 2022: Social gatherings were allowed with no capacity restrictions
          2. February 14, 2022: Eating/drinking onsite (indoors or outdoors) is allowed at gatherings with minimizing of removal of masks
             a. This means events are back on and events chairs are beginning to plan in person events again
      b. VP, Administration, Laura DiNardo (asgc.vpadministration@columbia.edu)
         i. Student Group Vote - Multi-Verse: poetry beyond borders (Columbia University Poetry Club)
            1. Giovanni Lovisetto, Martina Botti, and Luca Abbattista spoke on behalf of the club.
            2. Giovanni Lovisetto explained how they chose the name for the club. The idea came from conversations among the three co-founders of the club, who share a passion for poetry beyond the borders of academic interest. As international students, they feel in between the worlds of their old
nation and academic life as student at Columbia, dealing with issues of translation of those identities. When they received more than 50 responses expressing interest in the groups, they recognized a poetry community beyond the borders of specific areas with a fluidity between different languages, backgrounds, cultures, etc. They wanted this club to fill a void among the officially recognized clubs, due to the fluidity of poetry, which allows for students to write in own languages, etc. It reflects diversity at Columbia, going beyond borders of different disciplines, and bridges the dialogue to allow for an intellectual exchange that goes beyond those borders.

3. Martina Botti noted that the structure would hopefully be to have a main plenary meeting to include all of the members and also allow for working pods that could cater to anyone working in the same languages, a particular literature, or shared interests. They want to help create a kind of permanence at Columbia to leave a legacy there.

4. The co-founders were invited to leave and the ASGC voted to approve the club to be recognized as an official ASGC Club (27-1).

ii. Vote on newly proposed bylaw (language in appendix)
   1. Department Reps were given time to read over the new proposed bylaw (which can be viewed at the end of this document). There were no questions, and the measure passed (19-0 with 7 abstentions).

iii. End of Semester Dept. Rep Mixer - April 19th after our plenary meeting
   1. We are planning for this to be in person after the plenary meeting on April 19, so Department Reps are asked to mark their calendars.

c. VP, External Affairs, Bhargav Gopal (asgc.vpexternalaffairs@columbia.edu)
   i. Senate Election Updates are forthcoming

d. Finance, Tea Crnkovic (asgc.finance@columbia.edu)
   i. Travel Grants
      1. Six applications were approved
   ii. Student Initiative Grants
      1. There is a deadline by the end of this week, so please encourage constituents to apply for it.
   iii. Note that the Finance Chair position will be open in the coming year, as Tea is not running again, but with upcoming elections next month, anyone curious about the position is encouraged to contact Tea.

e. Quality of Life, Megan Reddy (asgc.qualityoflife@columbia.edu)
   i. QoL survey planning
      1. No updates shared.

f. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Arden Lee (ga2448@columbia.edu)
   i. Diversity Initiative Grants
      1. There are no updates at this time, but please encourage people from your departments to apply for them.

g. Events, PJ Robinson and Thu Hai Pham events.asgc@columbia.edu
   i. February Events
      1. None have been planned yet.
   ii. Further out
      1. April show of “Funny Girl”
2. Need to purchase other tickets and plan other events
   iii. Upcoming Event with Yale’s Student Senate
      1. Will be virtual with Yale and a few other schools
   h. Masters Affairs, Hannah May (hmm2192@columbia.edu)
      i. Upcoming initiative
         1. No updates shared.
5. External Representative Updates (VP, External Affairs, Bhargav Gopal, asgc.vpexternalaffairs@columbia.edu):
   a. Health, Bhargav Gopal (asgc.vpexternalaffairs@columbia.edu), Pragya Gupta (pg2705@columbia.edu)
      i. There was a Student Health Advisory Committee meeting on Friday with Melanie Bernitz. Annual updates to the insurance policy will occur next year, and students will see usual year-over-year increases in the premium.
   b. Libraries, Rahim Hashim (rh2898@columbia.edu)
      i. There was a point of conversation regarding more work space in libraries, which has been communicated. Additionally, related to a conversation at the last Plenary Meeting, Rahim found out that there is a library on Manhattanville Campus that will be open for all Columbia students in the David Geffen Hall building. Additionally, regarding the Uris Hall vision committee, the University has hired architect and although they are still making decisions about the library, they welcome input from students. Rahim can send a link to any students interested in getting in touch with the committee.
   c. ISSO, Anzhen Tang (at3399@columbia.edu)
      i. No updates shared.
   d. Student Workers of Columbia (UAW)/Union, Alex Jensen (caj2167@columbia.edu)
      i. There was a GBM happening simultaneously to this Plenary Meeting.
   e. IGB, Colton Klein (colton.klein@columbia.edu)
      i. At the IGB’s last meeting, they shared letters of support to rename a building at the Teachers’ College after Edmund W. Gordon. There was a student group applying for recognition, but they must first find a faculty rep more in line with their mission before the IGB will approve them.
   f. PhDC, Brett Stine (bls2187@columbia.edu), Karen Perez (kip2105@columbia.edu), Sara Shabani (ss5558@columbia.edu)
      i. The PhDC met today. An item of note was a discussion of a pilot program being pushed through GSAS regarding requirements to setting regular meetings for advising. They are trying to set up a safety system to ensure those are happening to students’ benefit, but they are still looking into aspects like repercussions if those meetings don’t happen, etc. There is a meeting with the Deans next week regarding the structure, to make sure it’s helpful rather than just another box to check, etc.
6. Senators’ Updates
   a. N/A
7. New Business (Open Forum)
   a. N/A

8. Adjournment (President, Ashley Wells, asgc.president@columbia.edu)
   a. Anyone with elections-related questions should contact Ashley at asgc.president@columbia.edu.

ASGC plenary meetings are conducted in the style of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th Edition)

Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to raise your department placard when the person speaking has finished. You must be recognized by the Chair before speaking.

· No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once.
· The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations. When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes can occur.

Appendix: Proposed (and Approved) Bylaws Change

Proposed to be voted on during the February Plenary.

This change accomplish two things:
   ● Outlines the ASGC’s general guidelines for time-sensitive voting requests
   ● Creates formalized minimum time brackets for voting to allow for more transparent and robust discussion among department representatives and the executive board

Article V. External Advocacy Requests

The ASGC serves as a channel of communication between the graduate students it represents and various Columbia University offices. ASGC fulfills this role first and foremost through advocacy and productive dialogue with these different offices and its constituents. However, there are times when ASGC is called upon to advocate by other means, whether it be with a statement, or the signing on to a letter, or otherwise. In circumstances such as these, the ASGC will follow the below procedure:

1. The Executive Board will bring the issue to the attention of department representatives at the next plenary meeting, with a vote then occurring regarding the action requested following Robert’s Rules of Order.

2. If the President of the Council deems the issue to be of high priority, or if the circumstances do not allow for the timeline specified in (1) above, the following turnaround time will be followed at a minimum:
   a. The Executive Board will take at least two business days to discuss and vote whether to proceed with the advocacy requested.
   b. If approved by the board, the matter will then be communicated to department representatives via email with at least three business days allotted for feedback and/or voting, with the same quorum requirements necessary as any vote occurring during a plenary session. If quorum requirements are not reached in three business days, voting will be extended at the discretion of ASGC’s Executive Board.