



Associated Students of Columbia University

G.S. STUDENT COUNCIL

Website: <https://gssc.gs.columbia.edu/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/yourgssc/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/yourgssc>

Contact Email: GSSC@columbia.edu

Meeting Location:

Remote Online, Zoom Link:

<https://columbiauniversity.zoom.us/j/7210329403>

GENERAL STUDIES STUDENT COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

December 1st 8:15PM

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the **General Studies Student Council of Columbia University** will hold a **REGULAR** meeting on **December 1st at 8:15PM**. The meeting information is noted below. The General Studies Student Council reserves the right to suspend the orders of the day if necessary to conduct business. All General Studies Student Council meetings are held in locations that are wheelchair accessible. Other disability-related accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities upon request. Persons requesting such accommodations should notify the General Studies Student Council Chair at jane.jeong@columbia.edu no less than three (3) working days prior to the meeting. The General Studies Student Council will make efforts to meet requests made after such date, if possible. Please also contact the General Studies Student Council Chair for any agenda related questions.

I. ORDER OF BUSINESS

A. Call To Order

B. Roll Call (* → indicates non-voting | ~ → indicates Interim Position)

OFFICERS	STATUS	OFFICERS	STATUS
*President Jane Jeong	P	VP of Finance Josh Brown	P
Chief of Finance Ryan Wee	U	VP of Policy Serengeti Timungwa	P
Chief of Policy Jerome Brackins	P	VP of Campus Life Liam McGrane	P
Chief of Campus Life		VP of Communications Pao Durán	P
Chief of Communications Noéllly Flôr	P	Veteran Student Rep Tony Costanzo	E
Int'l Student Rep Rhe-Anne Tan	P	Senator Jeremy Wahl	P
Senior Class President Safia Southey	P	Senior Class VP Roberto Uribe	P
Senior Class Treasurer Michal Chertock	P	1st Year Class President Kambi Gathesha	P
1st Year Class VP Rachel Harris	P	Health & Wellness Representative Savannah Melcher	P
Special Events Chair Jason You	P	Family and Working Students Rep Sofia Wyszynski	P

Alumni Affairs Rep Cole Wagner	P	Dual B.A./ Joint Program Rep Nicholas Li	P
Community Service/Sustainability Rep Claire Kang	P	Treasurer Alex Ariunbold	P
JTS Rep Josh Brunnlehrmann	P	Student Services/Academic Affairs Rep Bern Gostelow	P
Equity & Inclusion Chair		Students w/Disabilities Rep Joan Bolanos Martinez	P
*Tech Chair Dylan Lee	P	Social Media Rep Brian Laurito	P
*Legislative Assistant Katya Sharma	P	*Legislative Assistant Jené Stefaniak	P
*Advisor Sean Trulby			
*Advisor Ashley Johnson		Voting Members: 26 / Quorum: → 18 / Total: 28	

C. Adoption of the Current Agenda for December 1st, 2020 - PASSED

D. Adoption of Meeting Minutes from November 17th, 2020 - PASSED

II. REPORTS

A. President

1. GS Town Hall (56 total participants)

a) Policy Questions:

- (1)** Next semester, will students have the same opportunity as this semester to p/d/f classes, and if so, would there be a chance to p/d/f more than one.

(a) The recent policy that passed, came from CC/GS Committee of Instruction headed by Dean Valentini and Dean Rosen-Metsch - Dean Rosner states that a PDF policy for the entire academic year is possible, but they are still awaiting impact that results from the Fall 2020 PDF policy.

- (2)** Before Thanksgiving, GSers learned that CC and SEAS students will have access to free summer classes in 2021. Will this also apply to GS and if not, why? If GS students grappling with financial insecurity do not have access to this resource, what other resources are available to them to equalize the playing field?

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch: President Bollinger's decision to go into a three semester academic calendar was to reduce student density on campus - the free summer classes for CC/SEAS was derived from this decision, as they pay a flat fee for an academic year, whereas GS pays per credit. CC and SEAS can take up to 40 credits, and get the free semester, whereas GS, should they take 40 credits, would have to pay for those credits.

(b) Response from Director Rodriguez: Financial aid is being boosted to compensate, and the institutional aid is already budgeted to be higher than most summers.

(c) Follow-up Question from Rhe-Anne Tan

(i) Given that the flat fee rationale makes sense, but as Dean Rosen-Metsch and Director Rodriguez, wouldn't GSers who pay near to the same flat fee that CC/SEAS pay, and still stay under the 40 hour limit be paying more than CC/SEAS?

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch: The decision was made with the idea that most GSers would be protected for the per-credit

(b) Response from Dean Rodgers: The flat rate for CC/SEAS is 15-credit semesters, 30-credit academic years at \$58,000, is based on an equivalency to the GS point cost system.

b) Health Questions:

(1) Given that most students are not on campus, have there been any moves to lower or remove the health service fee specifically for those living outside of NY and receiving healthcare elsewhere?

(a) Response from Director Rodriguez: Fee includes tele-health services this semester to expand to remote students. In addition, this specific issue has been raised to higher level administration.

c) Financial Aid Questions:

(1) Will more financial aid be offered to students next semester because of the increase in donations on Giving Week/Day?

(a) Response from Daniel Rodriguez: We set our budget at the beginning of the year. And any gifts that receive from events like Giving Day, we take that and we set our budget for it. Luckily, we've been able to add or increase our budget every year because of the amounts that we receive throughout events like this during the year.

(b) Dean Rodgers: Giving Day is an event that is planned several months in advance, so all financial aid policies are predictive, based on the expected success of Giving Day, so speculatively the roll over from this year will benefit the following year's financial packages.

(2) GS students have expressed a need for more transparency around the qualifications for and distributions of scholarships and financial aid packages. What is being done about this?

(a) Response from Dean Rodriguez:

- (i)** Since we have a large diversity of students, with various nuances, it's difficult to apply a one-size-fits-all approach and provide something clear for anyone - it's better that the Office of Educational Financing provides nuanced financial aid for each student. In addition, new financial profiles will provide the team a better holistic picture of each student's financial needs to better adapt the resources GS has.

(3) Will additional financial aid and scholarships for summer semesters be made available to balance out Columbia's promise to CC and SEAS students for free summer classes?

(a) Response from Dean Rodriguez:

- (i)** Needs will be provided, just like this past summer, which summer financial aid was boosted in regards to this pandemic to further support GS students.

(b) Response from Dean Rodgers:

- (i)** Budgeting is half of Summer 2020 and half of Summer 2021 - making budgeting for GS Financial Aid rather difficult. Budgeting occurs from the beginning of December to the beginning of March, so as of right now, it's difficult to say what is possible with the funds available.

(c) Point from Josh, GSer who started the petition:

- (i)** The naivety of believing CC and SEAS students would spread their credits and taking less - Josh strongly believes that each CC/SEAS student will go over the 40, and thus, each CC/SEAS student essentially gets 10 credits free. We've been told that more would be done - what does more in this context?

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch:

- (i)** Discussion is ongoing with Arts and Sciences - some discussion points include the possibility that students would be "Zoomed out", and would spread their course load out a bit more, and this was simply a way to relieve some of that stress.

(b) Dean Rodgers:

- (i) The decision simply wasn't theirs - all they can do is to take what budget that's left to divert to GSers who need aid budgeting. Dean Rodgers still recognizes that there is a large deficit between GS and CC/SEAS if the CC/SEAS students take 40-hours.
- (c) Response from Jeremy Wahl - Senator
 - (i) Thanks and gratitude to the administration present
- (d) Response from Serengeti - VP of Policy
 - (i) Would the administration be willing to implement a cap, so that at some point GS students would be paying the same amount that CC/SEAS students would be paying at that 40 hour limit.
- (e) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch
 - (i) A lot of proposals were brought to the table upon the discussion of this free semester, including the very one Serengeti proposed. The belief is that the current existing system is what would best benefit the most GS students.
- (f) Response from Dean Rodgers
 - (i) The difficulty of managing fall/spring/summer is being informed by historical experience with these various programs. The per-credit value is calculated by the average credit load taken by CC/SEAS students historically.
- (g) Response from Jane Jeong - President
 - (i) What can we do as students to help GS administration advocate to Arts and Sciences
- (4)** Will GS continue to provide COVID-19 relief fund scholarships through the summer and next Fall?

(5) If Columbia University accepts the \$12.8 million in CARES Act grants, how does GS envision its distribution? Are there efforts to advocate the prioritization of GS students given their unique financial situations?

(a) By law, 50% of the funding would go to COVID relief. Unfortunately, as of now, the CARES act money has not been accepted. While the GS Administration recognizes how useful that would be to our school specifically, they cannot confirm that anything will happen as things are still very much speculative.

(6) Would it be possible to get more transparency with regards to the advocacy efforts by the GS administration? It seems we have a lot of work being done behind the scenes, but we were unaware as students and would always appreciate seeing the work you as administration put in.

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch: I will say as a dean since day one...I speak for all admin here. The relationship between students and admin has always been really strong, built on transparency. I think, if Josh (*asked the question*) is more direct...we're in a large town hall meeting... there's nothing more important...we need to do better in meeting the financial needs of our students and it's something that we work on everyday. We don't stop until we try to do the best we can. At the end of the day, there are certain decisions that need to be made. In the bigger context as we move into this second semester...what did she end with. In this particular situation, this really was not presented to me formally. As a dean to such a large school -- I don't think I can respond to every reddit post out there. However, I think that this is something that was decided last spring -- that each dean clearly communicates the policies of their school with their students. These details were decided school by school and as soon as I learned about it, I was advocating for our GS students. Vice Dean Rodgers can tell you that we've continued to work on this. Along that line, students should be assured that we're listening to what you're trying to convey. We hear you from all the different avenues: student councils, etc. In addition, we're looking at the Financial Aid reward for Covid that was received this year to also be there next year.

(b) Response from Dean Rodgers: The conversations that were happening were not just regarding financial aid - these discussions were happening while the pandemic was still developing, and thus the GS

administration had many discussions going on at once. Much of the concern also surrounded how the school would approach the system. Regarding leveling the playing field, we simply cannot - CC has the endowment and resources to provide full need based financial aid, whereas GS simply isn't even close to the financial resources that CC has. So as of right now, there simply is not possibility to level the playing field in this context as of right now.

(c) From Jeremy Wahl:

- (i)** Can we use the GSSC budget to take a whack at the financial problem that we face?

(d) Response from Dean Rodgers:

- (i)** It's complicated - we cannot reallocate funds that have already been allocated to a certain task. The GS Financial Aid system gave \$32 million in support this year alone - \$100,000 that GSSC has would hardly even put a dent into that behemoth.

(7) Many students are asking for and signing a petition for tuition reduction, are there any efforts to express this need for a lower reduction, especially in another online semester?

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch:

- (i)** Financial strains will be quite severe on the university due to healthcare costs, as well as loss of housing and international students. All pandemic strategies in play also incur costs that strain the university's financial resources. This upcoming summer, the GS Administration will do their best to address the financial distress of the students in GS

(b) Response from Dean Rodgers:

- (i)** A reduction was proposed due to the possibility of online modalities. We'll see how things pan out, but the funding for COVID relief came out through both GS Alumni (\$500 travel cost reimbursement), as well as the GS Board of Visitors (about \$250,000)

d) Covid Planning Questions:

(1) What are the university's plans regarding the University Commencement?

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch

- (i)** No final decisions, although the university is in the planning phase. What we do know is that commencement is going to be earlier - in

April. Beyond that, there are no specific plans announced for commencement.

(ii) Response from Dean Delva:

(a) We will do our best, but as Dean Rosen-Metsch mentioned, it's difficult to know for sure as of right now.

(iii) Follow up from Serengeti:

(a) Public Health has recently announced that 70 percent of Americans will have vaccines by May - perhaps pushing commencement back to then would be useful.

(iv) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch:

(a) These sorts of plans are above her paygrade, but she can say that she's pretty certain that this academic calendar is set. Dean Rosen-Metsch believes the distribution of this vaccine will be incredibly challenging, so we shouldn't expect too much from what is being speculated as of right now.

(2) How does GS plan on being deliberate about supporting and including current and future GS alumni who graduated/will graduate under Covid-19?

(a) Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch: So we have a really amazing alumni team and board. All of these people are really committed to working with our students. We've been very conscious about the employment opportunities and worked with the career center in regards to this. We're trying everything we can to have our graduates be successful. In terms of events that we're going to have in the future...I want to acknowledge that this is not how any of us wanted any of this to turn out. Also, I want to mention that our Deans have also reached out to our students to work on tackling this issue.

(b) Response from Dean Delva: We have a great team and we're trying our hand at everything -- making sure that alumni are also included in a lot of student events, where they can fit in.

(c) Question from Savannah: Regarding something special for seniors, would the administration consider opening a mock stage for a photoshoot for seniors near the area.

(i) Dean Rosen-Metsch:

(a) The deans are in agreement that this sounds like a great idea. This might be

able to happen, they absolutely want us to keep the ideas coming. While it's difficult to say for sure whether this will actually happen given the delicate situation of COVID-19 on campus, but Dean Delva is excited to consider the idea.

(3) GSSC Open Questions:

(a) Bernadette Gostelow (Student Services & Academic Affairs Rep.): As an international student, I'm very grateful for the WeWork spaces...but wanted to know if there are plans to expand this?

(i) Response from Dean Rodgers:

(a) There are complexities to make payments to international addresses.

(ii) Response from Dean Rodriguez:

(a) Stipends are also an issue, credit and refund is difficult with direct deposit. International banks provide yet another barrier to international students. The university has also begun setting up a program with Western Union to help directly transfer money to international students at no cost to the student. Beyond that, the only alternative is paper checks unfortunately. It's not the perfect system, but it's an improvement over prior situations.

(4) Open Comment Questions from the Floor:

(a) Neta Elyahu (1st Year Int'l Student)

(i) I've had questions about the Spring 2021 semester, but responses have been very ambiguous. Will this upcoming semester be hybrid, or fully online - how will visas work for international students?

(ii) Response from Dean Rosner:

(a) University policy for Fall 2020 was a requirement of all online undergraduate classes. Now, faculty has the individual option to teach in a hybrid format. There is certainly an expectation that there will be a rise in the number of available hybrid courses in Spring '21

(iii) Response from Dean Rodgers:

- (a) Regarding visas, there are a number of scenarios. New students starting online, versus returning students studying online, and such. ISSO has a useful FAQ, but there is recognition that each individual will have different situations. Columbia will be able to get international students F-1 visas as long as the university offers any classes online. For continuing students, as long as you want to, you can continue to take courses online outside the US, and follow the policies regarding I-20. ISSO will be able to provide more information regarding I-20 should there be a need.
- (b)** Romy J. Malu (1st Year Transfer Student)
 - (i)** First-year from Fordham - will this online format stick around? This format has been very helpful for some students working full-time.
 - (ii)** Response from Dean Rosen-Metsch:
 - (a) What makes GS special is that we are the unique program in the Ivy League that offers the Morningside Campus experience for a school like this. However, GS Administration recognizes that not needing to live in Manhattan is incredibly useful for saving money. These things are in discussion.
 - (iii)** Response from Dean Rosner:
 - (a) There's a general consensus that in-person teaching was working well. Now that we've had the online experience, what can we do to take the great parts of online classes and incorporate them into our standard teaching model? This also goes beyond the classroom - what else has worked in the current situation, and how can we implement them long term?
- (c)** Chat Submitted Question: How is the financial situation looking for the school this year?
 - (i)** Response from Dean Rodgers:

- (a) Columbia University Scholarship for Displaced Students provides funding for those who were displaced from war, civil war, major disruptions in their countries, providing full scholarships. As of right now, there are three students being provided with full scholarship.
- 2. Tuition Strike
 - a) Discussed during Dean Town Hall
- 3. Chief of Campus Life Appointment

B. Policy Committee

- 1. CARES Act Updates
 - a) Advocacy is continuing, escalation has collaborated with eight other councils, and CCSC has explicitly confirmed their approval as well
- 2. Mental Health App Partnerships
 - a) We have confirmation that we can work with Mental Health apps as GSSC - three applications will be working with us so far, but please feel free to submit other possibilities
- 3. Media Subscriptions for GS Students
 - a) CCSC and ESC used to cover this, and may still do so - we may consider adding this to our budget to confirm this sort of plan.
- 4. Upcoming Meetings with Admin
 - a) Updated passed due to time constraints - but essentially, more meetings.

C. Communications Committee

- 1. Advertisements
 - a) Current:
 - (1) HipHop Dance Class
 - (2) Student Veteran Virtual Lounges
 - (3) Virtual Tree Lighting Ceremony
 - b) Upcoming:
 - (1) Alumni in Conversations: Careers in Consulting

D. Finance Committee

- 1. No Updates

E. Campus Life Committee

- 1. Events
 - a) Virtual Tree Lighting
 - (1) A video of the trees being lit up will be available: <https://fb.me/e/3msAJ1Jak>
 - (2) Can win up to \$100 by submitting a photo of your holiday lights!
- 2. Chief of Campus Life Nomination

F. University Senator

1. No Updates

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Chief of Campus Life Nomination -

1. Sofia Trujillo

- a) Given the situation, she wants to join the community because it's so difficult. This isn't just a fun thing, or something just additional - rather, this is fundamental to the university. As a result, she believes that it's crucial to have a strong team in these times.
- b) Serengeti: Prior experience?
 - (1) Response: A community college transfer, held leadership positions in Women in STEM programs, as well as the Honors Program there. Organized many events, and has fundraising experience.
- c) Dylan: In-Person to Virtual?
 - (1) Response: Keep the goal in mind - helping people feel connected even when they can't be together. Holding virtual events, but in a way that people can interact.

IV. STANDING BUSINESS

V. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE FLOOR

This time is reserved for any General Studies Student Council Members to make announcements on items not on the agenda. A time limit of three (3) minutes per speaker and (25) twenty five minutes total shall be observed. **NO** action will be taken and the total time limit for this item shall not be extended.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

This segment of the meeting is reserved for persons desiring to address the General Studies Student Council on any matter of concern that is not stated on the agenda. A time limit of three (3) minutes per speaker and ten (10) minutes per topic shall be observed. The law does not permit any action to be taken, nor extended discussion of any items not on the agenda. The General Studies Student Council may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed, however, for further information, please contact the General Studies Student Council Chair at jane.jeong@columbia.edu for the item of discussion to be placed on a future agenda. (Brown Act §54954.3)

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

This closed session is reserved for any General Studies Student Council Members to discuss and possibly take action on voting in the nominees for various, posted, council vacancies. The public, and the nominees, will be asked to step out of the room while the council conducts this business.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT