Official Undergraduate Student Government
Senate Meeting Minutes
8:30 pm, TCC 350
September 25th, 2018

I. Call to order
   A. Meeting called to order at 8:32 PM

II. Reading and approval of minutes
   A. Senator Tan moves to approve the minutes
   B. Senator Halperin seconds
   C. Minutes approved as read

III. Approval of the agenda
   A. Senator Gupta moves to approve the agenda
   B. Senator Sherman seconds
   C. Voting
      1. Approval of agenda passes unanimously (12-0-0)

IV. Open Forum
   A. Milton Dimas
      1. For those of you who weren’t there earlier, there was a forum for the
         Presidential Search Advisory Committee. It went okay, but it wasn’t the
         outcome we wanted -- we want student representation. After speaking
         with someone on the committee, it looks like there are a lot of people on
         our side. But we don’t know who they are. If you have professors who
         were there who spoke up, please contact them. I would implore you to use
         your networks and resources. I think it’s important that we remain
         conscious and mindful of the times in which we are living. On October
         4th, Ben Shapiro will be coming and many of us are not in support of that.
         We should not be silent and should make sure that whatever he says does
         not set precedent so that students like ourselves don’t feel threatened and
         want to come to this institution.

V. Reports of officers and directors
   A. Debbie Lee, President
      1. Personal Updates
         a) Coffee -- I go to Dulce at least three times a day.
         b) Self-care -- Trying to eat meals regularly has been difficult, sleep
            has felt more like naps.
2. What Have I Been Up To?
   a) Meetings -- Board of Trustees, Dr. Carry, President Austin, Provost Quick, Campus Partners, student leaders, etc.
   b) Conflict Resolution -- putting out fires, and working on my platform points.
   c) Food Pantry -- Currently open M/W/F 11:30am-4pm.
   d) OT 299 -- Has been one of the greatest experiences both as a student but also as someone who’s looking at it from the grander picture to look at how we can improve the student experience.
   e) Today is National Voter Registration Day, and I want to give a shoutout to Vote SC who’s doing what they can to improve student engagement on this campus.

B. Rick Keaton, Chief of Staff
   1. We’ve been hiring -- we’ll be done in the next couple of days!

VI. Presentations
   A. None

VII. Unfinished business and general orders
   A. None

VIII. New Business
   A. Hiring of Leadership Fund Assistant Director (Hunter Quartieri)
      1. The Process
         a) Application process open for the standard amount of time.
         b) 11 applicants, 9 offered interviews, 8 interviewed.
      2. Our Hire: Trinity Moore, freshman studying Business Administration and Cinematic Arts

IX. Announcements
   A. VP Ackerman -- Thank you everyone who came, just wanted to echo what Milton said. If you were busy, that’s totally understandable.

X. Discussion
   A. Diversity Fund Bylaw Amendment
      1. Senator Kohanteb -- My update is a letter. I wanted to follow up with some of my thoughts. Recently, something was given to Senate -- how the money was used in the past. Precedent is an important way in determining how it goes forward. I personally don’t believe that this Diversity Fund, if it’s truly for diversity, should be given for political reasons. The reason it was given to students was not for political organizations. So I wanted to add that that was important.
      2. Senator Geschwind -- What were examples of political organizations that were on the budget?
      3. Senator Kohanteb -- I don’t have it in front of me.
      4. Senator Murphy -- The only one was Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). I think one was for a documentary that was one by USG in
conjunction with what is now SAGE. The amount of money was around $500, to have that on the record.

5. VP Ackerman -- Point of order, Emily is going to pull up the budget.

6. Senator Halperin -- Multiple of the things that were on the budget raised the question of, how do we balance it from being a gift from the Provost from Student Programming if the money might go to things that aren’t programming or don’t benefit all students on campus. I just think that’s something we need to keep in mind. We’ll also run into issues if we fund things that are controversial or aren’t on campus.

7. Senator Geschwind -- I don’t have a problem with political organizations requesting funds, as long as it’s fair and equal. I have no problem with it, as long as their counterpart, such as Trojans for Israel, which you were President of last year, is, too. If you weren’t given funds last year, I’d love to hear about what happened there.

8. Senator Kohanteb -- I’m the President of Trojans for Israel but I’m not making that statement due to that. I want the funds to go towards things on campus that, as Michaela was saying before, much less than political type of thing, I envision it going toward more inclusionary things.

9. VP Ackerman -- We have unlimited time to discuss. Anyone in the gallery is also allowed to discuss.

10. Anya -- A lot of times, our issues are inherently politicized. Making a reductive claim that no political organization should be able to apply is problematic. Those issues are valid.

11. Senator Sherman -- Maybe this conversation should be framed how we fund these organizations. Caution not to make an event political if it’s to be funded.

12. Senator Kohanteb -- I think what I meant and Will really highlighted it, is that it should be tailored toward cultural rather political things. I think political institutions make it more tense than it needs to be and I just didn’t want to go there.

13. Rosa -- There’s no way to depoliticize things. If anything, you should be asking people to have tolerance and to communicate with each other. Reach out and talk about being concerned with having a pro-Palestinian thing. Working to educate is a lot more productive.

14. May -- I think it’s really important that we don’t get caught up in past things that have been funded. Anything that was funded was up to the jurisdiction and best will of those who were making those decisions. This fund will kind of be a gray area fillover fund because you have to think about all of the activities and campaigns that are already being funded. So many programming things will probably come through the programming assemblies, advocacy things will happen through advocacy. So I hate to see us deter and put more restrictions on this fund than we need, because
there’s so many ways for things to happen that it’s not going to happen just through this avenue.

15. Sami -- I just think the idea that there’s a discriminatory environment when one is not funded equally. I understand that you can’t depoliticize any environment without having adverse effects, I think that all should have access to the funds and the funding approval process should be transparent. I would hate to see any movement at USC that would create a further environment of discomfort. I think this fund would be a great resource, but that being said, one thing that I think would the make or break would be transparency.

16. Guest -- Inherently, we shouldn’t really ban any organization from being able to apply. It has to be a case by case basis. We work on issues like environmental racism or environmental justice, and it would be a shame if one of our member organizations wouldn’t be able to apply.

17. Senator Kohanteb -- I asked myself what is the point of this money. I want to make very clear, this is not a question of whether this goes to one organization over another. The points you raised were very valid. Maybe another way to do this would be the CDO would presumably be the chair of this. There are a lot of ways to go about this but that would be a concern.

18. Milton -- Shany and I believe that the power should very much be within the assemblies and those who are working on the ground on these issues. I see where you’re coming from and I respect that statement, but as was noted before, cultural assemblies and the network they work within are politicized. Me being a Latino man is politicized because it’s shown through the media that I’m not supposed to be here. We have a Diversity Fund because a lot of people in cultural assemblies who want to do advocacy work don’t have the resources or capital to do work that benefits the USC population as a whole. Just because SJP got funding doesn’t mean that the rest shouldn’t get money. We respect what is on that paper for every application. That’s what’s important. As was noted before, people don’t want to limit political activity or political responses. It’s within our First amendment right to protest, to have dissent against speakers who are going to come here, just as they noted. That’s one of the purposes of the Diversity Fund, that those who feel silenced can have a voice.

19. May -- I also think it’s important to note the climate. In light of the Ben Shapiro event receiving additional funding from USC, we are already every day funding political activities so why would we now strip away that power?

20. Senator Murphy -- I understand where the concern lies in opening the door for political organizations to apply for this funding. As someone who has researched this pretty deeply, as a queer woman who is politicized, I
think the solution is not telling people they can’t apply. I think that Claire specifically made a very good point. I am personally very uncomfortable with writing within the resolution that if you fall under a certain umbrella that you are not eligible to apply. I think that should be under the discretion of the board.

21. Senator Crane -- I think it’s important to remember that USC is a nonpartisan organization and we fund students of all political backgrounds. People who were on the selection board for that event, it met our requirements for funding. I guess the fear is that something similar could happen, as much as we trust the board and that their hands could be tied.

22. Senator Lane -- There isn’t really a way to define diversity. I believe the language needs to be as specific as possible. I think the issue that we are facing is a microcosm of what we’re going through with the administration. Given that the goal of this fund is to give resources to people who don’t have those resources or who are otherwise marginalized, I think a specific solution is, if you are trying to use this fund for more objective solutions and language that steers more towards trying to protect people.

23. Senator Tan -- I feel like if we focus more on education and awareness, as well as inclusivity in the conversation, that would be very helpful.

24. Senator Chong -- I have an idea. For the Senators who are sitting on the Oversight Committee, I was thinking we could create a poll about whether a particular organization/event should receive funding.

25. President Lee -- I’m just going to clarify this Ben Shapiro funding process. In regards to USG is inherently a nonpartisan organization, USG cannot convolute funding for a student organization on the basis of political basis. They were merely doing their job in terms of following the rules in regards to giving USG funding. I know there have been rumors spreading, but this process is in no way an indication of political biases and in fact they did their job.

26. Senator Crane -- If there’s a trace of bias, they can also be appealed.

27. Treasurer Quartieri -- The directors have veto power. If there is clear indication of blatant bias, that is a case where they can decide to supercede the decision of the rest of the funding board. An appeals process would go through the pro-staff or the treasurer -- why they feel they should get funding, ask why it was done a certain way or vetoed or not funded, etc. all on the basis of whether there is bias or discrimination against this organization.

28. Milton -- Senator Kohanteb, did you want to say what your thoughts were at the end of this conversion?

29. Senator Kohanteb -- I am glad we did this in a forum. I really appreciated this conversation. It really opened up my eyes that we can’t close off to
political organizations and this will be on everyone’s radar. If we are creating this amendment, let’s not lose this dream. Thank you.

XI. Adjournment
   A. Senator Savage moves to adjourn the meeting
   B. Senator Kohanteb seconds
   C. VP Ackerman adjourns the meeting at 9:15 PM