TCU Senate Update

The Tufts Community Union (TCU) Senate began its final meeting of the school year by debating a resolution calling for the creation of an International Community Representative.

Gauri Seth, one of the co-authors of the resolution, argued that such a representative would be able to help international students overcome certain hardships, such as culture shock, forced acculturation and language barriers.

"The international community does face marginalization on this campus and so is deserving of a representative on this senate," Seth, a freshman, said. "Tufts prides itself on its international student body, and 15 percent of campus is international. An international student representative is a necessity on the TCU Senate."

After the Senate discussed the merits of such a position, the resolution was passed by a vote of 25-2-1. An international student representative will be a member of the senate going forward, starting in Fall 2014.

"I'm very happy it passed, as it's something I've been working on for a while," Seth said. "I think that the international voice has been really lacking on the Senate, from what I've seen this year. I really hope that this representative will solve that issue and address the needs of the international community."

Senators then reviewed a budget appeal from the Muslim Students Association (MSA). Two members from the group's executive board explained how they would put their additional funds to use, which included renting three vans to be used during fall and spring retreats, buying food and supplies for their year-end senior dinner and hosting a series of events during "Spring Into Islam," a month devoted to increasing Islamic awareness on campus. The Senate, however, voted 16-9-1 to deny the budget increase and keep it at the originally allocated $4,640.

The Senate received reports from the eight individual council representatives and determined each council's budget for the 2014-2015 academic year. In total, senators budgeted approximately $1.8 million for that period. During the Allocations Board report, TCU Treasurer Adam Kochman, a sophomore, thanked the rest of the Senate for its support throughout the year.

TCU President Joe Thibodeau reviewed the Senate's yearlong achievements during the President's Report and he identified the numerous resolutions and policies that were passed and created this school year. He expressed gratitude that the Senate has been able to maintain the open and collaborative environment he had hoped to achieve upon assuming his role as president.

"As someone who has been on the Senate for the past four years, I have to say that has been an extraordinarily productive year," Thibodeau, a senior, said. "People have been listening to and collaborating with one another in a lot of ways this year. It's really been a partnership process."

Other senators further outlined the Senate's progress, including Administration and Policy Committee Chair Danya Headen, a junior, who spoke about the Senate's efforts to provide more rental sports equipment for students in the Tisch Sports and Fitness Center. Freshman Isabella Kathakis, co-chair of the Services Committee, noted her group's success in operating the Turkey Shuttle and Sprig Shuttle services, as well as working Dining Services to provide late-night dining options for students.

The Trustee Representatives in attendance, seniors Lee Weintraub and Rose Mendelsohn, also provided updates regarding their projects. Both said they are maintaining contact with the administrators who are supporting them in this process and will continue their work through the end of the semester.

After the meeting ended, Thibodeau discussed the Senate's final meeting of the year, which he believes was filled with promise for the future.

"I think that we saw the conclusion of some great projects and initiatives," he said. "I think people have worked really hard this year and that there has been a lot of collaboration between members of the Senate, student body, administration, faculty and staff. We've had a lot of initiatives completed [and] this has been a really great year."

--by Josh Weiner