

## STUDENT SENATE MINUTES

January 16, 2024

Senate President Brinkman called the Senate meeting to order at 7:43 pm and announced that the meeting may be filmed or audio recorded and may be available to the public. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. A land acknowledgment was given.

### **ROLL CALL:**

Roll was called and quorum was established with a total of 71 senators present.

#### **Not there for roll call:**

- Alvarez
- Dasgupta
- Diaz
- McGuire
- Rappoport
- Vance
- Wood-Barron

### **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- Syd Engstrom:
  - I am a sophomore at UF studying psychology and sociology.
  - When I grow up, I want to be a teacher or a professional.
  - Some members of the majority party may have felt that I hurt their feelings with my last post.
  - Watching individuals be questioned about how many resolutions they have written and not know the answer was concerning.
  - Usually, people despise supreme courts and the entire idea of separation of powers because it disenfranchises the people, not the senators.
  - I saw the laundry grant on the UF SG website.
  - I'm glad to see that this chamber is taking steps to invest in laundry as opposed to investing in something like alcohol at the Reitz.
  - The majority party has ignored the basic needs of students.
  - I'd think that before an Instagram post advertising a laundry grant is posted, there would be more information or transparency about how it would be funded.
  - Does this cover soap? What if students need detergent? What about students off-campus? How do I get reimbursed? Are you going to direct deposit \$1.60 into my account every time I do a load of laundry?
  - It seems odd that we have the funds to pay TikTok influencers and white supremacists but students are still paying for laundry by default in the first place.

- I want to set things straight about the resolution for gender-neutral bathrooms on campus that is being worked on by senators from both sides of the aisle.
- I expect the resolution to be unanimously passed.
- There's not a single trans senator in this room, so it should be fairly intuitive that the resolution that has been seen and approved by other trans and gender-nonconforming students on this campus is the one that manages to pass.
- I hope the majority party thinks more highly of myself and other gender-nonconforming students on campus.
- **Parliamentarian Ortiz:**
  - I wanted to speak on the ALFREDO Act.
  - I understand that the majority party has some valid concerns with the legislation still.
  - What we agreed is that we will be passing the amendment the Oversight Committee made this week.
  - I want to take a moment to congratulate the Vice-Chair of my committee, Laurel Wentworth.
  - I also feel like another member of my committee, Senator Kinggard, is exceptionally qualified for the role.
  - As someone who has been able to see Senator Kinggard in action, I believe that their qualifications on paper did not do them justice.
  - I believe Senator Amster has not only been proactive in things such as the ALFREDO Act, but also he has shown a strong disposition and interest in Students for Sustainable Drug Policy, which I am a part of.
  - I want to advise members who may hold a minority opinion that this may be a better time for you to ask questions about how people intend to prove their worth to the senate rather than dismiss them.
  - I think that it is completely acceptable to have concerns, but I don't think it is acceptable for us to try to tear each other apart.
- **Senator Monson:**
  - I want to applaud my caucus for 75 submitted bills this past weekend.
  - I also want to applaud everyone that applied to committees.
  - I want to express some disdain for the R&A committee; they said they would be objective and yet did not display this.
  - I would love for us to have democratic debate and have the chance to have pro and con.
  - Please review the bills objectively and do not look at party lines.
- **Senator Hoffer:**
  - I know that I am not much of a familiar face; I was recently appointed as a CLAS senator, and this is my first time at the podium.
  - I wanted to offer a bit of an objective perspective.

- There were 44 total interviews and 68 total considerations.
  - The R&A committee is made up of 5 Vision members and 1 Change member.
  - For the R&E committee, there were 7 Change applicants, and 11 Vision applicants. One seat went to Change, and the other 5 went to Vision.
  - For the Budget committee, there were 11 Vision applicants and 4 Change applicants. Both seats went to Vision.
  - For the I&C committee, there were 10 Vision senators and 4 Change senators who applied, yet all 4 seats went to Vision.
  - For the Judiciary committee, there were 10 Vision senators and 4 Change senators who applied. Five seats went to Vision and 2 went to Change.
  - All of the senate leadership candidates who promoted bipartisanship in R&A were Vision senators.
- Senator Naidu:
    - This is a bill I wrote over six months ago, the FED Act.
    - This bill would authorize that we collect certain data from the polling locations.
    - We do not currently have a system for this.
    - All of the information we would be collecting would not violate FERPA.
    - We will be looking at figures such as the number of voters a day, peak polling hours, and number of ballots cast per polling location.
    - You can not amend election codes within 5 weeks of elections.
    - When I submitted this bill in the summer, it passed through first reading but was then procedurally withdrawn due to the end of the semester.
    - This is the third semester that my legislation has not been passed.
    - I am upset that R&A has decided to defer all legislation to the Judiciary committee.
    - Would it really have been that hard to have this bill pass in order to have more fair elections?
  - Rey Arcenas:
    - The Alligator started in 1906 as the official newspaper of the university.
    - The system started in 1918.
    - At this point, the Alligator became the cash cow of the system.
    - They would openly embezzle funds.
    - There was a shift in the relationship between the Alligator and the system in the 1960s.
    - Florida Blue Key basically fired an entire Alligator staff.
    - After that point, when the Alligator became independent, it would expose the alignments of the group systems.
    - What made the Alligator great back in the day no longer exists.
  - Senator Serrett:

- I was the SG reporter last fall and summer, and now I have the honor of serving as your Journalism senator.
- Kindness is a virtue, and I know this is often hard to remember in the chamber.
- At the end of the day, everyone here is a person.
- I saw a lot of people on each side of the aisle struggle a lot during the summer; I think this left a little hole in everyone's heart.
- You sometimes don't know what a person is going through.
- I want our new SG reporter to have a smoother time than I did.
- A lot of time, journalists succumb to this idea of being the middleman.
- I want you all to remember that we are all here to do good things; we are senators at one of the best universities in the whole country.
- Senator Insuasti:
  - I was elected as a Graham senator last semester.
  - I hope to leave senate having worked with both sides of the aisle.
  - I was recently recommended for a seat on the Judiciary committee.
  - While I cherish the opportunity I have been given, I would like to express my disappointment with the lack of Change senators selected for committee seats.
  - I recognize the importance of diversity of thought.
  - I hope we can work together to pass legislation that will represent every student.
- Senator Budhai:
  - I am a CLAS senator elected in the Spring.
  - I am also the chair of the DEI committee.
  - We had a speaker come by UF last week, Dr. Jeffrey, who presented on the life of MLK Jr.
  - Dr. King was born on January 15, 1929; this was a very dangerous time.
  - King's professors invested in his education in hopes of creating a pacifist.
  - I have my reservations personally about the recent decisions taken by this body.
  - I hope that we restore privilege back to the communities that we have taken it from, willingly or unwillingly.
  - Please swing by if you are interested in joining the DEI committee.
  - This is a committee to reach out of your comfort zone with advocacy and research.
- Senator Richter:
  - I was appointed by one of the former CALS senators.
  - The Green caucus had our meeting in which I was elected as chair, and Conor Ruffin was elected as Vice-Chair.
  - Our next meeting time will be determined, and there will be a Zoom option.
  - The Rules & Ethics decision is very frustrating.
  - I am concerned with the newly elected Rules & Ethics chair.
  - She has never served on the committee.

- If the chair and members positions are selected...
- I believe that member positions should be open to inexperienced members, but the chair should be experienced.
- Ronin Lupien:
  - I come in a bit of a follow-up to what Syd has shared.
  - I love the Laundry Grant program, but I do have some outlined questions.
  - It is a bit concerning how it will be implemented, because the form is open for on and off-campus students.
  - I hope this is a lesson to you senators on how to communicate.
  - I think this is a pretty poor example of communication from student government.
  - I have a specific column about student government on The Alligator, so you'll get to see some of my critiques.
- Deputy Majority Party Leader Seifer:
  - Senator Monson's public comment about Florida Senate Bill 846 really stuck with me, so I'll tell you more about it and why you should care.
  - We will lose exceptional students to other universities with this bill.
  - I don't see any more international students jumping at the opportunity to come to UF.
  - What will we do without the help of these international students who come to learn and teach so much?
  - Don't you think that, given their contributions, it would be unfair to stop offering scholarships to students just because of their country of origin?
  - Everyone interested in sponsoring a resolution about this should speak to Senators Monson, Gangano, or Islam.
  - If you can give your respect to representatives that you personally disagree with, I hope you can do the same with senators in this chamber.
  - We all want the same thing: to help and bring change to the student body.
- Senator Liang:
  - Please stay safe.
  - I was a little bit appalled to see Samantha Simon on the agenda.
  - We have had extensive discussions with Samantha Simon, and I believe she is underqualified.
  - I will be embarrassed tonight if this person is passed tonight.
  - Bronson Allemand is a great and funny guy, but I would like to see a different person appointed to this position.
  - Two of the four committee seats have not even sat on the committee they have been recommended for.
- Senator Mia:
  - When it comes to this agenda we were all sent, it is completely out of order.

- Prior to this term, we enforced that all executive secretaries place their office hours on the website, and that has not been done by many.
  - The person selected to chair the R&E committee has never been in that committee.
  - I seriously doubt that if you haven't ever sat in on a committee, then you should chair that committee.
  - I understand that we are not in a majority, so it is not upon us to select the chairs.
  - I personally didn't think that the interview of the person who was selected for R&E was too crazy or too impressive.
  - The only reason I can think why this person got the chair seat is because of partisanship.
  - Of the 70 bills that were submitted, I submitted about 30 of them.
  - For reference, R&A can hear legislation; this is valid in the Rules & Procedures, so I'm not sure why they did not.
- Senator Leavengood moves to appeal the decision of the chair to not allow individuals who showed up late to senate to present their public comment.
  - In a rising vote, that motion passes.
- Cassie Urbenz:
    - I am a former senator of the College of the Arts and a current graduate assistant.
    - I am the GAU Communications Co-Chair.
    - I am also a downtown bartender.
    - A graduate assistant is a grad student performing any type of labor in exchange for a tuition relief, a stipend, and more.
    - We need to get at least 60% of grad students to become dues-paying members, and we are currently working on that.
    - Outside work is not allowed for international students due to federal law.
    - GAU has been able to get us health care.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton:
    - Many members of my caucus are wearing black in memorial of Martin Luther King Jr.
    - Sitting on the Replacement and Agenda Committee this weekend was a nightmare.
    - The R&A committee has made a mistake by placing the recommendations before reports.
    - I will be making a motion to correct this.
    - I think both sides of the aisle made it clear that they care about democracy.
    - I think this is the first true test of beating the allegations that this new party is a rebrand.

- Jonathan Stephens:
  - I will be reflecting on Judiciary nominee AJ Amster and how he did not credit/review some of the bills listed in the legislature.
  - Plagiarism is highly scrutinized in higher academia.
  - I pushed for the passing of SSB 2023-1213 to allow students a prayer space on campus.
  - Later on, SSB 2023-1278 was authored by Amster calling for a prayer space in the Reitz.
  - The fact that there was previous knowledge of my bill and lack of accountability for plagiarizing my bill presents an ethical issue for the senate.
  - We may have our disagreements on policy, but these issues are severe and I hope you all vote “no” on the confirmation of this chair.
  - I wanted to display the black attire to honor MLK today.
  - When you’re in senate, please fight for the right causes and please fight against the racial injustices across this nation, because it’s critical.

**AMENDMENTS TO THE MINUTES:**

- There were none.

**AMENDMENTS TO THE AGENDA:**

- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Bronson Allemand for SGI Agency head by unanimous consent. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Samantha Simon for Gators Going Green Agency Head by unanimous consent. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Victoria Tieze for Innovation Academy Affairs by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Senator Rafanan moves to approve Jade Gonzalez for Leadership Development & Involvement by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Isabel Ponce for Budget & Appropriations Chair by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Samantha Kinggard for Rules & Ethics Chair by unanimous consent. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Monish Vijayaraghavan for Information & Communications Chair by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to approve Aaron Amster for Judiciary committee Chair by unanimous consent. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to hear all committee seats as a bloc. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to hear all Rules & Ethics committee seats as a bloc. Objected.

- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to hear all Budget & Appropriations committee seats as a bloc. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to hear all Judiciary committee seats as a bloc. Objected.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to hear all Information and Communications committee seats as a bloc. Objected.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to approve Amendment 1 to SSB 2023-1061 by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to refer all bills under third reading to the ad-hoc committee on Government Oversight & Reform by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to adopt the agenda by unanimous consent. That motion passes.

### **STUDENT BODY OFFICER REPORTS:**

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT:**

- Senate President Brinkman:
  - I have been asked a lot about how to apply to Ad-Hoc committees.
  - I am going to make an application form available, as well as a list of current membership.
  - I will also make liaison applications available.
  - Senator Rafanan has been appointed as my Chief of Staff.
  - My office hours are Tuesdays from 8:00 am to 10:00 am.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

#### **REPLACEMENT & AGENDA:**

- Pro-Tempore Damera:
  - I want to emphasize the reminder on our agendas that we will be respectful when we disagree and that we will direct all our comments to the issues.
  - I have full faith in my committee's decision to approve certain candidates.
  - One of the beautiful things about R&A is that there is diversity of thought.
  - There have been many concerns that have been duly noted, and these concerns will be brought up today.
  - These people were nominated for a reason: they were the most qualified to be recommended for those seats.
  - I think Senator Richter mentioned that senators who have never sat on a committee should not be the chair of that committee.



- If I remember correctly, in the past, there have been some outstanding chairs who have never sat on any committee in general.
- There was nonpartisan support of these candidates in an unbiased fashion.
- I will unwaveringly support these candidates.
- Permanent Senate Seats:
  - Graduate and Family Housing
  - Off Campus
  - Building Construction
  - Dentistry
  - Design, Construction, and Planning
  - Education
  - Engineering (2)
  - Freshman
  - Graduate (8)
  - Law
  - CLAS
  - Medicine
  - Pharmacy
  - Veterinary Medicine
- Open Committee Seats:
  - Budget (1)
- **Minority Party Leader Pelton:**
  - I will go through every decision made regarding R&A committee of those who were not passed with unanimous consent.
  - Congratulations to Chairwoman Ponce on being the chair of the Budget committee.
  - There were 44 applicants that came out, and of all of those, so many went with insufficient ideas.
  - I think both parties want to shape things up, and I think the foundation of both parties is surpassing gridlock.
  - As for the executive nominations, we have Samantha Simon for Gators Going Green.
  - As of Summer 2023, this candidate was not familiar with nature centers in Gainesville or across the state, they are not majoring or minoring in any environmental-based study, and more.
  - Apparently, the Shands Sustainability Committee extended an invitation for her to sit in on a meeting and she did not attend.

- I think that someone who is directing the most important sustainability-related agency in student government should effectively be doing their job to the utmost respect.
- The bare minimum qualities have not been met for this individual, and I strongly urged this body to fail Samantha for the position.
- Former Gator Party leader Bronson Allemand defended the gerrymandered map for the at-large district.
- I'm aware that the purpose of the foundation for Vision is to move beyond the status quo.
- Senator Kinggard has not ever served in Rules & Ethics; we saw 3 other applications for this chair position.
- I think it's great that she really has a passion for Rules & Ethics, and I do not by any means intend to disrespect her.
- All of her ideas are under the confines of what an R&E chair is responsible for; she has brought forth no substantial ideas.
- For this reason, I suggest that Kinggard be failed.
- Senator Amster was elected to the student senate in Fall 2022, and since that time, this senate has presented over 300 bills brought to the chamber.
- Senator Amster has not put forth a single bill that has gotten to the floor of this senate; he has merely sponsored 12 bills in his history in senate.
- He has never served on the Judiciary committee, and he did not bring in any new ideas.
- What precedence are we setting by electing and approving someone for this position who has never passed a bill?
- I think we are passing the precedent that anyone can get anything they want without any real qualifications.
- There's a reason Senator Stephens never served on the committee before becoming Judiciary chair.
- This is no justification for putting someone else up when there are plenty of other highly qualified individuals, many of whom have at least one bill passed.
- I want everyone in this chamber to remember that there are far more qualified individuals.
- I was most concerned for Senator Ruffin's nomination for a seat in the R&E committee.
- His only idea was to execute the rules presented by the senate.
- There were ideas presented by other applications, such as service projects and perfect attendance awards, but rather than select those individuals because of their affiliation, we nominated Senator Ruffin.
- Looking beyond the partisanship of it all, we are nominating individuals who are simply unqualified for these positions.

- Following the approval of all of these nominations, Change caucus will represent 27% of all the committee seats despite having 43% of the senate.
- I'd like to comment on one of the main decisions that the R&A committee made, and that was to pass all legislation to Judiciary.
- Several of those bills related to the 700 Codes.
- By choosing to refer all of those 75 bills to Judiciary, we've essentially delayed the legislative process by another week.
- The graduate students of this university would feel more heard once that bill passed.
- I wanted to play some of the clips from last week.
- I do actually have a lot of similarities with senators from the majority side; I, too, felt that my qualifications were disregarded.
- Frankly, the cracks are beginning to appear in the majority side of the aisle; the promises that were made are not being upheld.
- Is this the Vision? It sounds a lot more like the Gator caucus.

#### **REPLACEMENT & AGENDA COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to suspend the rules and hear all of the R&E seats as a bloc. Seconded. 1
- Senator Mia moves to appeal the decision of the chair to allow the previous motion to be made. Dilatory.
- Senator Mia receives their first warning.
- In a standing vote of 47-21, that motion passes. 1
- Senator Mia moves for a five minute recess by unanimous consent. Objected.
- Senator Mia moves for a five minute recess. Seconded.
- In a rising vote, that motion passes.
- Senate President Brinkman calls the meeting back to order at 10:04pm.
- Senator Mia moves to suspend the rule for roll call by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to suspend the rules to hear all committee seats for Budget, Judiciary, and I&C as a bloc. Seconded.
- In a rising vote of 46-20, that motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to previous question to approve all R&E committee seats as a bloc. Seconded.
- In a rising vote of 47-22, that motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to previous question to approve all Judiciary, Budget, and I&C committee seats as a bloc. Seconded.
- In a rising vote of 40-20, that motion passes.
- Senator Mia moves to open the floor for nominations for the R&E Chair by unanimous consent. Objected.

- Senator Mia moves to open the floor for nominations for the R&E Chair. Seconded.
- In a rising vote of 28-34 , that motion passes.
- Senator Mia nominates Senator Richter for the R&E Chair position.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to close the floor for nominations for the R&E Chair by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Senate President Brinkman moves to a 5 minute recess by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Senate President Brinkman calls the meeting back to order at 10:27pm.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to suspend the rule to conduct roll call by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- In a rising vote of 47-21 to approve all R&E committee seats as a bloc, that motion passes.
- In a rising vote of 50-18 to approve all Judiciary, Budget, and I&C committee seats as a bloc, that motion passes.
- Senator Kinggard presents 3 minutes on their R&E Chair nomination:
  - I am a 3rd year Political Science and Economics double major.
  - I have served on the Budget committee for 9 months, and I am involved in other parts inside and outside of student government.
  - I have never served on the R&E committee before, and I understand that people have qualms with that.
  - My involvement outside of this committee has made me more than qualified with this position.
  - I've had to adapt and develop my skills with learning new skills that I think would really help me with this role.
  - In the past, there have been chairs that have not served in any committees before.
  - Two things that I will work on in this role are transparency and resourcefulness.
  - I want to implement an interactive calendar to improve constituency requirements and to make more meaningful service.
  - I want to make it a constituency requirement for senators to submit a short summary of what they did.
- There were 3 minutes of Q&A.
- Senator Richter presents 3 minutes on their R&E Chair nomination:
  - I served in R&E for 2 semesters.
  - During my time, I sat through an unusual Senate President expulsion hearing along with many other hearings.
  - I also served as a member of the I&C committee and am the founder and chair of the Green Caucus.
  - While perusing the Rules & Procedures, I found that R&E could host a town hall and I think this would be a wonderful idea.

- I want to focus on constituency, so I really liked the idea of a volunteering event to promote constituency.
- In my interview for R&A, I explained my idea that I wanted to come up and explain what breaking the rules looks like and how to avoid it.
- There were 3 minutes of Q&A.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to order the Judiciary committee to meet 24 hours before the R&A committee by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- There were 2 rounds of pro-con debate for Senator Kinggard.
- Minority Party Leader Pelton moves to suspend the rule to start the succeeding pro-con debates with pro first and then con by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer moves to previous question. Dilatory.
- Majority Party Leader Seifer receives their first warning.
  
- Senate President Brinkman clarifies the voter record.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Chairwoman Ponce:
  - Budget will be meeting on Thursday in the conference room at 11:00 am.
- Pro-Tempore Damera:
  - There is not an open I&C seat.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

- Senator Rafanan moves to use voter records as final roll call by unanimous consent. That motion passes.
- The meeting was adjourned at 10:59 pm.