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DSC Restructures Student Newspaper

By Jeanne A. Marre
Special to The Advocate

"Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech or of the press," Article I of the Bill of Rights so proudly proclaims. The Doctoral Students' Council, however, knows no such limitations. On December 19th of last year, the DSC Steering Committee resolved to suspend the student newspaper for the month of January and to dismiss the editors, Victoria Gillen and George McClintock III. Noting *The Advocate's*, "slow rate of publication" in the resolution sent to the editors as well as to President Proshansky, Dean Moreland and the Graduate School business office, committee members concluded that "the current editorial structure of the newspaper is unworkable." In keeping with the Christmas spirit, the resolution also stated the decision to suspend the newspaper was "in no way an attack on the professionalism" of the editors, who were encouraged "to reapply once the new structure has been established, if they feel that they will be able to work professionally and independently of the DSC within the new structure."

The DSC called emergency meetings of the Media Board during the semester break. Presided by Co-Chair Manjula Giri, representatives Dany Choriki, Dima Mehta and Michael Glassman (in absentia) devised a new hierarchical structure for the management of the paper. Now, instead of three equal co-editors, there is one editor and three associate editors, who are to be hired by the editor. "It was a decision made by a bunch of people who found themselves in a difficult situation, who were trying to find a way to solve it without sticking their necks out," Mr. Choriki said when asked about the DSC resolution. "They put up a totally transparent smokescreen that anybody who looks at it would see right through, at the price of a precedent which makes its look like the student government can do whatever it wants to with the newspaper. They should have dealt directly with whatever personnel problem there was," Mr. Choriki added resolutely. Manjula Giri was more positive about the Media Board's proposals. "We need the newspaper on a permanent basis," Ms. Giri told *The Advocate*. There were problems in the past, irregularities in the publication schedule and conflicts between the editors. We are proposing a referendum to the Constitution to institutionalize the newspaper, which should solve some of these problems." Ms. Giri

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CUNY Audits 1987-1988 Doctoral Students' Council "Serious Shortcomings" or Gross Mismanagement?

By Al Cofribas

Graduate students make poor managers, apparently. The Office of Internal Audit recently completed the final draft of its Managerial Review of the 1987-1988 Doctoral Students' Organization. Part of a larger review of CUNY college associations, the twenty-page report, that *The Advocate* received from DSC Co-Chair for Business Affairs Megan McCormick, presents a series of "findings" concerning the 1987-1988 DSC's operational procedures. Using the DSC Constitution "as the standard for compliance to the requirements for meetings and quorums" and based on the regulations specified in the 1984 University Fiscal Handbook for the Control and Accountability of Student Activity Fees, the audit was prepared in order to "determine compliance with the Handbook and the exercise of prudent fiscal management." Auditors reviewed the minutes of the general assembly and Steering Committee, the nine-member governing body of the DSC, as well as studied DSC financial statements prepared by an independent accounting firm, and the DSC's ledgers, bank statements and cancelled checks.

Floyd L. Moreland, Dean for Student Affairs and DSC Co-Chair McCormick both reviewed the draft report and sent a response to Mr. Howard Helfgott, Assistant Vice President for Finance at the Graduate School.

Bleak Picture

"Prudent fiscal management procedures," as defined in the report, "ensure fiscal responsibility and provide adequate internal controls." The Summary of Audit Findings presents a rather bleak picture of DSC procedures. Although "the operation was governed by its Constitution," CUNY auditors discovered "several areas that require strengthening," and listed "the more serious shortcomings" of the 1987-1988 DSC:

- 1) Student Council meetings were not held as often as required and quorum requirements were not always met.
- 2) Controls over vouchering and supporting documentation were inadequate.
- 3) Stipend payments were not in compliance with Board policy.
- 4) The recordkeeping for student activities was inadequate.

5) Financial Disclosure requirements were not met.

6) Prior years' surplus' were used to fund the current budget without proper approval.

No Time for Minutes

If the proper number of DSC meetings were held in 1987-1988, there are no minutes to prove it. The DSC had 75 elected representatives in 1987-1988. Auditors "failed to document the required meetings" for four months. "Of the five Council meetings held during the fiscal year," they wrote, "the list of attendees was available for only three meetings. The quorum requirement of 19 members was only met at one of the three meetings." The DSC Constitution provides for two quorums, "25% of the representatives except for elections, recall, amendment, and approval where a quorum shall consist of 33 1/3%."

The Steering Committee also neglected to maintain minutes of their meetings. "Only one set of minutes was prepared for the fiscal year," auditors noted that "the names of attendees and the results of referendums [sic] were not mentioned," and recommended that "[t]he minutes of all Steering Committee meetings should be maintained and should indicate the names of all the attendees and Committee members who voted for or against resolutions."

The auditors' recommendation against the DSC practice of voting by secret ballot was not well received by DSC officials, who are otherwise working hard to correct the errors of their predecessors. Co-Chair McCormick stated resolutely in her letter to Mr. Helfgott that the DSC "will not... indicate in any form, who voted for or against any resolution, either in general meetings or in steering. We record the numbers of yeas, nays and abstentions and the attendees for each meeting. There is nothing, either in the DSC Constitution, By-laws nor in the University Fiscal Handbook, which states that votes are anything but private."

Fiscal Mystery

The DSC's primary source of revenue is the student activity fee of \$7.50 (plus another eight-five cents for the University Student Senate), collected by the Bursar from all registered students. Interest earned

on these fees is another source of DSC income. The Graduate School business office issues checks from the Student Activity Account after receiving check request forms approved by the DSC Co-Chair for Business Affairs.

The 1987-1988 Council's failure to maintain proper records of its activities is just one example of mismanagement. The Council's 1987-1988 fiscal records lack many payment vouchers—receipts for money spent on DSC functions such as program allotments, chartered student organizations and cultural affairs programs. "In order to test the documentation in support of payment requests," the auditors wrote, "we selected a sample of 41 payments. In 23 instances neither copies of the approved check request forms nor the supporting documentation were available at the DSO office."

What may be more significant, however, is the fact that the University Fiscal Handbook includes \$200,000 in "miscellaneous budget" for student government discretionary funds, called "miscellaneous budget" categories. "Our review of the DSC Budget," the auditors wrote, "disclosed that the DSC Discretionary Fund (\$2,000) and the Steering Committee Discretionary Fund (\$850) were in violation of this requirement."

Ironically, the 1987-1988 DSC fiscal summary sheet of April 28, 1988 indicates that of the \$2,500 budgeted for the the DSC Discretionary Fund, no money was spent. The same document reveals, however, that \$828 of the \$850 Steering Committee Discretionary Fund were spent. In contrast with the 1987-1988 Council's relatively conservative discretionary spending practices, the 1986-1987 Council was far more liberal with the student activity fee. The DSC fiscal summary sheet of August 21, 1987 indicates that \$2,884 of the \$3,921 budgeted for the DSC Discretionary Fund were spent, along with \$193 of the \$1,000 allotted to the Steering Committee Discretionary Fund.

Nonexistent Bylaws

Minutes and budget vouchers are not the only documents missing from the DSC files. Finding No. 4 of the auditors' review

Audit continued on page 14.

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MLA Memories
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Thomas Smith:
Horror and Lies
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Gary Paul Gilbert:
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Christine Hutchins:
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Carol Siri Johnson:
A Cigar for Doom in Academe
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Around & About The Center

The Doctoral Students' Council: A Report

Special to The Advocate

The Christmas general meeting of the Doctoral Students' Council was convened December 12, at 4.30 P.M in the Basement Mezzanine 10. Carina Yervasi, Co-Chair for Communications, presided.

First on the agenda was a discussion with Mr. Robert Gillece, who was to field questions concerning Financial Aid. Mr. Gillece was not able to attend the meeting, however, due to "imminent snowfall."

The election of a new Steering Committee member was next on the agenda. Megan McCormick, Co-Chair for Business Affairs, nominated Gordon Fendall, DSC representative from the Mathematics Program. Mr. Fendall was elected to the Steering Committee by acclamation.

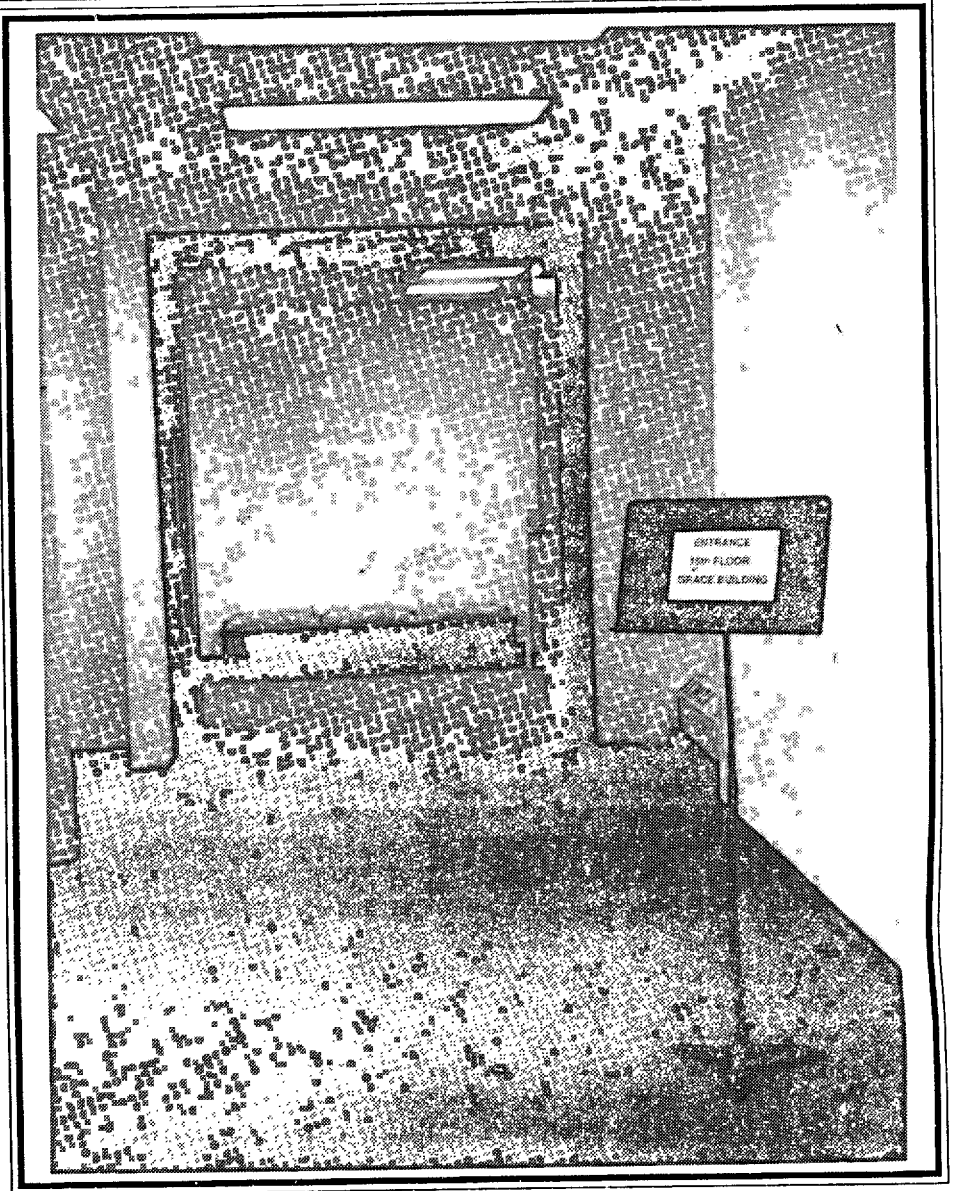
The representatives were then asked to resolve the problem posed by DSC bylaw I.B.1, which states that the student newspaper, *The Graduate Student Advocate*, "shall be operated by a three-member editorial board with equal vote on editorial decisions and equal salary." The bylaw may be repealed by a 2/3 majority vote. *The Advocate* had been produced by two editors since editor Greg Pinney resigned last September. Ms. Yervasi stated that the Media Board had recommended that the editors look through the files of the old applicants and interview a candidate for the vacant editorial position.

When representatives questioned the advantages and disadvantages of a three-member editorial board, Victoria Gillen, co-editor of *The Advocate*, addressed the body. Ms. Gillen explained that the purpose of the newspaper is to encourage community for students at the Graduate School. Citing the incompatibility of the different vocabularies and terminology used by diverse disciplines, Ms. Gillen declared that "by taking the jargon out of people's skills," constructive dialogue would be created between students from all disciplines. Ms. Gillen cited the October issue of *The Advocate* as an example of interdisciplinary community. The October *Advocate* contained, she said, "a Sociology supplement on deviance," although the supplement, "Voices from the Edge," was not identified as such. Describing what she called the "structural problem" of a three-member editorial board, Ms. Gillen stated

that because three people cannot agree on everything, an editorial triad "fosters paranoia." She cited Greg Pinney's resignation as a case in point. Circumstances caused Mr. Pinney to be absent for two weeks while the first issue was in preparation. When he returned, Ms. Gillen said, he felt "like an outsider." Two people, however, can negotiate a compromise more easily, Ms. Gillen continued. Recalling the accusations of "inflammatory" writing leveled at the editors after they published the Halloween edition's "Trick or Treat" editorial, Ms. Gillen said she opposed such writing, "There were irresponsible editorials. My co-editor wanted to include editorials which I found inflammatory, but they were not litigable." Notwithstanding the editorials, Ms. Gillen assumed responsibility for *The Advocate*, and appealed to the representatives to repeal the by-law. "The two issues—it is my doing. I can't start over again, with a third editor. Ideally, one editor works best," she said, although she did not encourage the representatives to create the position this year, because co-editor George McClintock had "worked very hard." At this point, Mr. McClintock stated that whether he had worked hard or not was not relevant to the discussion. "What is important," Mr. McClintock said, "is that the newspaper's structure work from year to year."

Steering Committee member Cheryl Fish interjected, stating that the bylaw requires three editors, and asked Ms. Gillen if she wished to remain on the editorial board of *The Advocate*. Ms. Gillen replied that she would continue to work for the newspaper if the the bylaw was repealed. Greg Pinney, Steering Committee member and former editor of the student newspaper, suggested that the question is not of two or three editors, but whether more than one managing editor is needed. Mr. Pinney stated that a three-member editorial board had worked last year, and contradicted Ms. Gillen's explanation for his resignation, saying that if people wanted to know why he resigned, they could speak to him later.

Krishnan Gupta of the Business Program said that the newspaper could not be found not at Baruch College. Ms. Yervasi then explained that efforts were being made



Hallway to Heaven

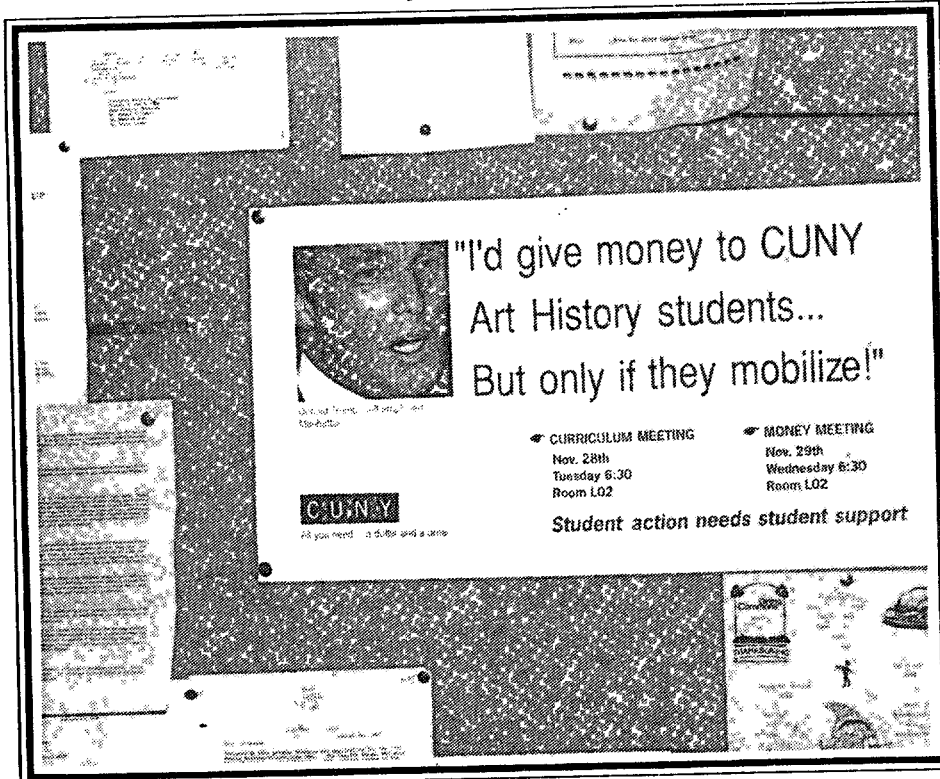
to get *The Advocate* to colleges offering CUNY graduate programs. Representative Dana Fenton (Sociology) suggested that the salaries allotted to the three-member editorial board be divided among the two current editors, given their increased responsibilities. Representative Barbara Roseman (English) opposed the measure, and proposed that the two-member editorial board continue, without an increase in editors' salaries, until the Media Board makes its recommendations and salaries are determined by the Steering Committee. Finally, a proposal was made to repeal the bylaw. When there were no objections, the by-law was repealed, pending the recommendations of the Media Board and the

Steering Committee.

Megan McMormick, Co-Chair for Business Affairs announced that the vending machines will be returned to the Student Center in January, and asked if anyone had questions about the recent audit of the Council's financial affairs. When the representatives expressed no interest, Ms. McCormick said that the audit would be on the February agenda.

Other topics of interest included the necessity to facilitate DSC election procedures with a comprehensive mailing list of all registered graduate students, as well as a survey to determine the need for extended hours in the Mina Rees Library. The meeting was adjourned at 5.30 P.M.

Wishful Thinking



What's in a name, anyway?

The Doctoral Students' Council is trying to build a Student Center for the Graduate School community. We think that it is time to get rid of the abbreviation "BM." Although this shorter version of Basement Mezzanine has served in the past, we feel the appellation should imply more of a student area rather than a floor-in-the-middle area.

I only mention the scatological significance of this abbreviation to prove the importance of changing it. I'm frankly tired of people looking at me strangely when I repeat: "Office BM-01." In fact, when I became Co-Chair for Communications, I tried to stop myself from using this expression, but then I found that no one knew how to spell Mezzanine. I was forced to say, "You can just write capital B (period) M (period)." So now the DSC has opted for an entirely different nomenclature. We are ready to call that in-between-place

the Student Center. For example, I now say: "The next meeting will be held in Student Center Room 10, or in Student Center Office 1." It has a nice ring to it and doesn't create any orthographic hazards.

But what is more important is that this name identifies the milieu and does not merely state the undesirable in-betweenness of "mezzanine": Student Center means big chairs, sofas, good lighting for reading, relaxing before class, having a stimulating conversation, reading the newspaper, grabbing some munchies from the vending machine, meeting for a cup of coffee, and ultimately student participation in the Graduate School community. The DSC envisions a welcome place where students can hang-out comfortably. We hope that the Administration will make an effort to recognize our need for this space and its new name.

—Carina Yervasi