Brooklyn Parslow  
Senior Reporters

On Monday, December 4, the Student Senate heard presentations on potential updates to parking fines and making candidate nominations electronic, and passed a resolution regarding the recent judicial actions taken against students.

In new business, a resolution acknowledging the “judicial processes underway involving members of the Rensselaer Union in relation to the peaceful demonstration that occurred on October 13, 2017” and urging “for the immediate cancellation of judicial processes involving the peaceful demonstration” was passed with a vote of 16-5-2.

It also recognized “the actions taken by the Dean of Students Office as violations of the Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities, specifically the ‘Student Bill of Rights,’ Article V, Section D.”

When the resolution was moved by Hannah Merow ’18, she yielded her time to Bryan Johns ’19, one of the two students who is being charged with “trespassing,” “violation of a published Rensselaer/student government policy or regulation,” and “failure to comply.”

Johns was the original applicant for the peaceful demonstration that was denied, but he shared that he did not follow up on the application and attended the protest solely as a participant. The other student facing judicial inquiries, Graduate Senator Michael Gardner, was also present.

Johns distributed a variety of documents, including his case and an incident summary. He began by stating that the cases are “an attack on student rights” that are “particularly directed at [Gardner] and I, to target us.”

Johns then went through the incident summary prepared by Director of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Judicial Affairs Michael Arno and addressed statements he viewed as false; these included his identification as a leader of the protest and the claim that he was on WRGB CBS 6 News promoting the protest. He felt that most of the information in the summary was inaccurate and irrelevant to the actual evidence presented in the case.

Johns stated that his hearing officer said his specific trespassing violations were “unauthorized entry” and “trespass” and that he would not be able to release any property when ordered to do so by the person having jurisdiction over it.” Johns claimed that the administration “flip-flopped” on their reasoning for the fence, citing contradictory statements released in various articles, and that they didn’t publicly state that the area was restricted before the protest.

“If they’re charging me with trespassing, they should be charging all the other 900 students with trespassing,” stated Johns. He also shared that he was not at the protest when the fence was moved, and that, when he arrived and went through the fence, the Public Safety officers present didn’t stop him.

“One of the things they mentioned in the incident report is that both Michael and I, first, did not do anything to tell people not to go through the fence, and also once people were through the fence we didn’t tell them to leave,” stated Johns on the topic of his “violation of a published Rensselaer/student government policy or regulation.”

Johns then referenced the Student Handbook, specifically its statement that “judgment as to whether the regulations are being observed shall be made at the scene by the Dean of Students or designee.” He later continued, citing the Handbook again. “Responsibility for exercising such judgment shall rest solely with the Dean of Students or designee.” It must be emphasized that judgment as to whether the regulations are being observed shall not be exercised by demonstrators, those demonstrated against, or spectators in contradiction to the expressed judgment of the Dean of Students or designee, except at the risk of such individuals.”

According to the Handbook, violations are breached, “[the Dean of Students or designee] will request the participants to modify their conduct so as to comply with the regulations,” indicating briefly and informally the nature of the breach of regulations.

“extremely reckless for us to process coming to a conclusion without the actual evidence present at the start of the case” with a vote of 12-9-2.

The amendment to strike this section was moved by Graduate Senator Kinshuk Panda, who shared that it was “amazingly abrassive” and that it would be “extremely reckless to not, to pass judgment without the judicial process coming to a conclusion with the events that happened.”

He continued, “By doing this, we are only antagonizing the administration even further.”

Later in the discussion, Class of 2018 Senator Steve Sperazza shared that it was “amazingly abrassive” and that it would be “extremely reckless to not, to pass judgment without the judicial process coming to a conclusion with the events that happened.”

He continued, “By doing this, we are only antagonizing the administration even further.”

The final motion and the roll call of votes can be viewed at poly.rpi.edu/sqfd4. The initial drafted version that was sent out to the Senate with the agenda for the meeting can be viewed at poly.rpi.edu/sqfd5.
She also presented the proposed routes that will be tested over winter break; they aim to make the routes more even by moving the Alpha Gamma Delta sorority stop to the West shuttle route, therefore eliminating the loop that passes B-Lot twice. There are some concerns about the doors being on the wrong side of the street, but these will be addressed in the testing phase.

Web Technologies Group Chairperson Sidney Kochman ’19 and Rules and Elections Committee Chairperson Caleb Caraway ’19 then presented on potential changes to how candidate nominations for elections are submitted and processed. Currently, candidates solicit the proper number of nominations on paper forms. They are then submitted to the Rules and Elections Committee, which enters the information into their system. According to Caraway, this is a tedious process for the few people on the committee.

Kochman and Caraway plan to have candidates continue to fill out a sheet, but also enter that information into the elections site themselves. The logistics are still being figured out, but candidates would still have to submit physical sheets so that R&E can verify them and ensure that all of the nominations are not written in the same handwriting or that no errors were made. Grand Marshal Justin Erzine ’18 added that there is no motion at this point, since this has not been implemented, but it will be part of the next GM Week handbook proposed in early February 2018. During committee reports, Academic Affairs Chairperson Risheel Gabbireddy ’18 shared that the Advising & Learning Assistance Center will be testing drop-in tutoring with organic chemistry. Student Life Committee Chairperson Hannah Merrow ’18 said that she and Erzine had their meeting with the Board of Trustees, and that it was “interesting at best.” Kochman stated that the Shuttle Signups project is on track to be deployed next semester. He also shared that a lot of Institute-related websites will have to change because of a new web accessibility policy from the Division of the Chief Information Officer. WebTech will be looking at, and potentially evaluating, these changes over Winter Break.

The Senate will have its last meeting of the semester next Monday at 8 pm in the Shelnutt Gallery.
CRYPTOQUOTE

A Cryptoquote is a simple substitution code where each letter that appears may stand for a different letter. The substitutions are consistent throughout the puzzle. Punctuation is not translated.
For example: SIVOISSWC = ENGINEERS

- Bcqpq,
Uipbxf Uiaqpn

MONDAY PUNDAY

by Matthew Broussard

Come dance with RPI Ballroom at our
Social Dance
Country Two-Step

Saturday, December 9 @ 7 PM
Academy Hall Auditorium

$2 Early Bird Sign-Up: tinyurl.com/dec9social
$5 at the door
No partner or experience necessary!
The film Coco follows the story of a young Mexican boy named Miguel who has one dream: to become the next biggest musician. He idolizes an artist named Ernesto de la Cruz—who shares a striking resemblance to Pedro Infante—and has a seemingly natural talent for playing the guitar. However, his family has banned him from even listening to music. I found that very strange because Mexican culture is rich in music. On his journey through the land of the dead, Miguel learns the true meaning of the Mexican holiday, and he comes to realize the true importance of family. It’s a very beautiful story, with detailed, colorful visuals, and a lovely narrative that takes a family-friendly approach to the questions of life after death. It really is worth watching it. However, the rave reviews and I completely agree that this film was culturally accurate and respectful to the Mexican holiday. Coco hired a small group of cultural consultants, including Lalo Alcaraz, the well-known cartoonist from Mexico. Alcaraz said he and the other consultants accomplished their mission to “Keep Coco from being whitewashed.” To further prove that the film tried to do everything right, the hired cast was made up of almost all Latino voices, with 12-year-old Anthony Gonzales as the protagonist Miguel.

Olaf loses charm second time around

Serge Piskun
Senior Reviewer

Over Thanksgiving break, I found myself in a movie theater late at night waiting to see Coco with a group of my friends. The theater lights dimmed, the audience came to a hush, and...
Coco: A tale of family, love, music

From Page 4

Apart from hiring the cultural consultants and Latino cast, a lot went into making the film so accurate and wonderful. Coco’s music consultant was Camilo Lara, from the group Mexican Institute of Sound. He helped gather musicians for what he called “the crème de la crème from Mexico.” Lara also worked with composer Germaine Franco, who said she worked to infuse the folklore music she grew up with. The filmmakers were amazing at portraying so many different styles of authentically Mexican music. While watching the film, I got a feeling of nostalgia, as the music played by Miguel’s Idol, Ernesto de la Cruz, was reminiscent of the music I grew up with from the golden age of Mexican cinema, the Pedro Infante films. Not only was the style of music accurate, but as soon as I saw the character, I knew he was based off of Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete.

The music, the visuals, the history—all of it was perfect, but what made the movie amazing was that the characters were genuine. According to director Lee Unkrich, he and his creative team took multiple trips to Mexico—spanning six years—for inspiration and research. They visited with families and asked for their traditions, and from their time talking to families, they were able to create characters with mannerisms and small details that resonated with so many people, including me. I was able to see my great grandmother in Coco, my grandmother in Mama Imelda, my uncle Aldo in Miguel’s own uncles, and the similarities only continued. The movie made me miss my family, and I wished I had been watching it with them so we could have laughed together at all of the similarities and inside jokes the film managed to hide in the dialogue. The film also made me want to become more active in my family’s traditions on the Day of the Dead, to do work because you don’t have to worry if the chairs are uncomfortable, if there is Wi-Fi, if the window glare will be too much, or if the coffee will taste bad. It is nice in its consistency, and that is both comforting and useful. In addition to the consistency of environment, the interior is always clean and well maintained, and mobile orders make it so you don’t even have to leave your seat or speak to other people to order—for perfect for those of us who want to avoid social interaction. The mobile order system makes Starbucks the perfect utilitarian space if you want it to be, as you don’t have to interact with anyone, or anyone except a computer if you don’t want to.

So, when looking for one of these “hip” new places to go, keep in mind old faithful, the place you can always expect to have everything you need to get through your homework or side project, or just to chill and read: Starbucks.

Editor’s note: the author of this article is employed by Starbucks Corporation.

The atmosphere of nearly every Starbucks is extremely similar, generally featuring earthy colors, lots of table space, and occasionally, a few cushioned chairs. There’s also always a solid wireless network connection. This makes it easy to go, find a place to sit, and get to work. There’s none of the normal uncertainty associated with going to a new place, as you don’t have to worry if the chairs are uncomfortable, if there is Wi-Fi, if the window glare will be too much, or if the coffee will taste bad. It is nice in its consistency, and that is both comforting and useful. In addition to the consistency of environment, the interior is always clean and well maintained, and mobile orders make it so you don’t even have to leave your seat or speak to other people to order—for perfect for those of us who like to avoid social interaction. The mobile order system makes Starbucks the perfect utilitarian space if you want it to be, as you don’t have to interact with anyone, or anyone except a computer if you don’t want to.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Save the Union takes pride in accuracy

Last week, Assistant Vice President and Dean of Students Travis Appgar wrote a letter to the editor of The Polytechnic (poly.rpi.edu/5bmq2). In his letter, Appgar accused an unnamed group, which we can only assume is Save the Union, of spreading misinformation and engaging in attacks of rhetoric. Appgar wrote, “This community deserves to know the full story.” We could not agree more. The full story needs to be told, the facts displayed for all to see. We ask the RPI community to compare not just the rhetoric, but also the actions of all those involved in this ongoing situation.

Appgar wrote that this unnamed group has “taken advantage of the community by maliciously promoting inflammatory, at times threatening, and often insulting misinformation about the University administration.” Upon reading this, we immediately reached out to him and Vice President for Strategic Communications and External Relations Richie Hunter requesting that they “please engage in a discussion with us.” As we take great pride in our accuracy, we asked them to provide specific examples in which we have promoted inflammatory, threatening, or insulting misinformation about the RPI administration. We committed to address any legitimate concerns they and other members of the administration might have. We even offered to make corrections to our website (www.savetheunion.xyz) and reach out to other media outlets if necessary. To date, they have not cited any specific instances of misinformation. They have forgone the opportunity to engage with us, despite repeated questions included in our email to Appgar and Hunter, it went unanswered.

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Appgar seems to consider much of what we say simply as “rhetoric” we’re pushing to “grab slight attention from the media.” Alas, it is the administration’s failure to uphold its own policies and commitment to freedom of expression that has thrust it into the national spotlight. We have not yet initiated contact with the national media ourselves. But going so far as to punish its own students for peacefully expressing a dissenting opinion over the operation of the Student Union, the Institute is bringing this unwanted attention upon itself. However, local and national outlets are increasingly seeing through the Institute’s tired rhetoric and reporting on their alarming actions. Topics like students’ careers hanging in the balance over opposing their school’s administration, the trampling of student rights on a college campus, or the Higher Education Act are worthy topics that clearly deserve the light of day.

That aside, Appgar again proclaimed, “The Rensselaer Union continues to be student led and student run.” Unfortunately, this statement is nothing new. If only repeating a statement over and over would make it true, but those pesky facts come back into play. Time and time again, we have asked both Appgar and other members of the administration to clarify this and similar statements with respect to the Trustees’ September resolution. A tenant of Save the Union has always been that responsibilities were wrested from students over the past several years, yet students want to have and embrace those responsibilities. We seek to restore them. We are a movement born from students who want to learn and grow from the unique opportunities the Union once afforded. The administration has yet to provide any sufficient explanation, and Appgar’s letter represents another missed opportunity.

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The Poly wishes you the best of luck during the final weeks of the semester!

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FEATURING

Joe List & Phil Hanley
Hello everyone! I apologize for not having written in a few weeks, a very tight schedule caused me to miss a deadline or two (sorry, members of The Poly). I hope that you all are doing well, and that you all are buckling down for the end of the semester and finals season. I know I am. I know that, right now, each and every one of you is currently swamped with the last homeworks of the semester, trying to wrap up final projects, and studying for the last tests of the regular academic year. I wish you all the best of luck during this time, and hope that you all earn the great grades that you’ve worked all semester for!

This past weekend, the Executive Board spent the whole weekend budgeting for all of our Rensselaer Union funded clubs and organizations on campus, and I am pleased to announce that the club budgeting process for Fiscal Year 2019 has concluded!

The Executive Board spent this past weekend reviewing every line of every club budget submitted. Budgeting groups looked to maintain consistency between budgets while ensuring that funds were allocated toward club purpose statements and the Union’s mission. Above all, the Board tried to support clubs that would enrich the opportunities for the entire student body. The Executive Board wholeheartedly believes that Activity Fee dollars should be spent to benefit the entire Rensselaer community, whether that be through general programming or club-specific funding. Above all, the Executive Board strives for equity, while allowing all members of our community to pursue their passions to the best of their abilities.

This year, we saw large increases in payroll budgets due to the Federal Labor Standards Act, and an increase in the New York State minimum wage. The Board also adopted the initiative to increase reception funds and funds allocated for hotel costs as a means of keeping up with inflation. However, we were able to provide over $50,000 extra to our clubs this year over the current fiscal year. We were able to support clubs as they work to expand their programming and upgrade their equipment to better service the RPI community. We also included funding for clubs who might operate during the Arch Summer Semester.

As budgeting is a human-driven, subjective process, there is clearly room for disagreement and error. Therefore, each club is given an opportunity to appeal the decisions of the E-Board. Although every decision made during budgeting has logical reasons behind it, there may be cases where the Board did not fully understand a club’s intention, or there could be simple errors made during the process. Appealing a budget will open the entire budget to be reconsidered by the E-Board, and funds already allocated may be reallocated or removed to facilitate the needs of your appeal.

The Executive Board is very excited by the budget we have put together for Fiscal Year 2019. We were able to support clubs in starting new programs, create more opportunities for campus-wide programming, and continue to support student employment in our facilities to ensure they remain open and operational, despite increasing minimum wages.

The Union Annual Report will better detail the entirety of the budgeting process. That document will be released early next semester. When that document debuts, I encourage you all to read it and understand all of the budgeting implementations the Executive Board committed to in order to enhance your student experience. Until then, best of luck on your schoolwork, and, as always, feel free to reach out with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Matthew Rand
128th President of the Union