



The Undergraduate Student Government of 2015-2016 is off to a strong start for the academic year. This is due to its incredibly passionate and hardworking team, early start in the summer, successes of its predecessors, and the continued support from faculty and administration within the College.

In April 2015, USG was elected on the basis of its platform, which centered around three overarching themes. We promised to advocate for students of all majors, demographics, and backgrounds, pledged to build bridges between the student body and the departments outside of USG, and vowed to create connections between USG and the student body by increasing outreach and transparency.

We uphold ourselves to all of the promises made to our voters while valuing building community, being student-centered, and continuing to enhance USG's efficiency and productivity.

USG would like to present its accomplishments thus far and some of its long-term goals for the year.

## **Advocate for All**

### **Town Hall**

On October 20, USG held its first Town Hall of the year. Constituents learned about USG's plans for the future and were able to ask questions of the USG representatives; chief among the discussion was the proposed Rational Tuition plan. The Town Hall was also broadcasted on Baruch College's radio station, WBMB, with an estimated 100 listeners—including 50 "unique" listeners. In the future we plan to continue broadcasting our Town Halls on WBMB, as well as adding a live video feed online. Students will then be able to attend in person, tune in, or watch live, which should boost awareness.

### **The Adoption of the Resolution to Support the USS' Resolution to Preserve the Affordability and Accessibility of Higher Education within CUNY**

On May 3, 2015, USS adopted the resolution to "Resolution to Preserve the Affordability and Accessibility of Higher Education within CUNY" by a unanimous vote. Several student governments at other CUNY campuses have recently adopted resolutions in support of the USS Resolution, which prompted Baruch USG to also hold a vote. On October 21, the Senate passed the USS Resolution by a 13-2-3 vote.

The Senators who voted in favor of the Resolution cited three main reasons:

- 1) 68% of Baruch College's eligible student body receives some form of financial aid, which does not include students with private college loans or undocumented students who cannot receive government aid. Concerns were expressed regarding the change of

financial aid in proportion to higher tuition costs. Should financial aid remain unchanged, the Senators were concerned about how that limited amount of money would then be allocated to the students who need financial aid.

- 2) They also expressed concern that agreeing to a rational tuition hike one year after the last tuition hike period ended would send legislators the wrong message. The Senators believe that the gap in the CUNY budget was created due to the state government's cuts to higher education, and that it should be held responsible for the resulting gap in funding. They stated that by agreeing to fill the state's gap—especially immediately after the first rational tuition increase—we would not be holding the state accountable for its actions.
- 3) The Senators cited upholding CUNY's mission and representing the students that attend CUNY as a reason to support a tuition freeze. CUNY was originally established to provide a free, quality higher education to lower income minorities. Although no longer free, CUNY is still a quality, affordable option for people of lower income. The Senators reasonably feared that with the increase of tuition, less people from low incomes—especially those of minority groups—will be able to attend CUNY and will in fact disenfranchise minorities even further, which represents a blatant departure from CUNY's original mission. Raising tuition does not serve the student body, which is USG's primary responsibility.

The Senators who voted in opposition to the resolution cited reasons included rising costs and the fear that the gap in the CUNY budget will not be funded from other sources.

### **Project Suggestions**

For many years, USG has wanted to improve student feedback. This effort began on October 20, 2015 with the launch of Project Suggestions. Project Suggestions is a marketing campaign centered around a new e-mail, [suggestions@usgbaruch.com](mailto:suggestions@usgbaruch.com), exclusively designed for students to submit suggestions and thoughts on how to improve USG and/or Baruch as a whole. We have launched a well-branded marketing campaign that includes large physical suggestion boxes, business cards, comment slips, Facebook cover photos, and fliers that are all branded with the Project Suggestions e-mail and survey link.

In order to receive as much feedback as possible, USG has made this project very accessible for students. Students may conveniently submit suggestions via the USG website, the physical suggestion boxes, or our online survey, which ensures that their voices will be heard.

### **Advocating for All: Moving Forward**

We are eagerly awaiting our annual trip to the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators Caucus in February to lobby legislators face-to-face for the interests of our fellow Baruch students. In addition, we are hoping to replicate the participatory budgeting process at Baruch College this year to allow students to provide input towards how their activity fee is spent.

## **Building Bridges**

### **Club Relations**

USG works closely with clubs throughout the year regarding events, campus life, and budgets. Our working partnership with clubs comes down to customer service. We want to continue improving this aspect of our relationship to build a more personal and efficient partnership with clubs.

Over the summer we released a survey and held a focus group with past and present club leaders regarding their opinion of USG's functionality and their perception of our working relationship with them. Since then, we have altered some of our processes when it comes to communicating with and assisting clubs.

Another improvement requested by clubs was additional "ABC Workshops," which are held by USG to review how the appeals, budgeting, and co-sponsorship processes work. We have held two ABC workshops this semester: one on August 21 and another on October 13. The first one was in conjunction with Club Leaders Day, designed as an opportunity for students to bond with their USG representatives and as a celebration of the year ahead.

### **9/11 Memorial and Veteran Students Association**

On September 11, we held our traditional light ceremony on the plaza in the evening. The Student Services committee held an event during the day in memory of the lives lost on 9/11. They set up a table on the second floor atrium of the VC with a bulletin board and people passing by were asked to post a message. We amassed hundreds of messages and the board was given to the Student Veterans' Association as a thank-you for their service to our country.

### **Baruch College's First Homecoming**

On October 22 we partnered with Athletics and the Office of Student Life to hold Baruch College's first Homecoming. The event, which was held on the plaza, featured a club parade, an athletics rally, competitions, a celebrity host, giveaways, and refreshments. We ended the night with our Fall Festival that included apple cider, pumpkin decorating, and square dancing. We also provided a showing of "Hocus Pocus" in the plaza at night.

### **Building Bridges: Moving Forward**

As academics are the most vital aspect of any college, USG aims to work much closer with faculty this year. Baruch's great reputation is due to its academic reputation and its dedicated faculty, so it is important to optimize our partnership with faculty. If both groups aid each other's initiatives, we can provide our students with better academic resources. We also hope to help faculty build a closer and more beneficial relationship with its students through mentorship.

We want to expand efforts to help students who are interested in attending graduate school. We hope to build a mentorship program between professors and their students, make graduate

school admissions exam classes more affordable for Baruch College students, and offer a graduate school counselor to our undergraduate students.

## **Creating Connections**

Creating Connections centers around USG building its relationship with the student body. For the first time in history, Baruch USG created the Chair of Public Relations position whose overarching mission is to connect USG with the student body. The Chair achieves this mission by increasing USG's outreach through the maintenance of our temporary website and dissemination of the weekly electronic newsletter while generating interest about USG. With 450 subscribers, the weekly newsletter is accessed by 75% of its subscribers who also click on at least one of the links included.

We have created a temporary website until the new website is available. Our website is [www.usg-bearcat.com](http://www.usg-bearcat.com), which includes resources for everyday students and club leaders. The site features information about USG, a USG archive, club budgets, club information, important deadlines, resources and opportunities for students, an extensive events calendar, and the minutes of the weekly Senate Meetings. Our website averages 125 hits a day.

## **Social Media**

USG re-launched its Instagram account in addition to enhancing its Twitter and Facebook presence. Our Instagram page was last used in 2013 and only had 14 posts. As of October 21 @usgbaruch has had a total of 116 posts and 786 followers. Our Twitter account has 1,311 followers and our Facebook page has 3,535 likes, which is 536 likes up year-to-date.

In 2014, USG launched the Baruch Feels Facebook page, which allows Baruch students to publicly or anonymously share their kind words and compliments for their fellow students. Baruch Feels builds a sense of community among Baruch students online while spreading positivity and as of October 20 we have surpassed 500 likes.

## **Other Services for Students**

In tradition with previous years, USG has successfully executed two barbeques in July and August for summer students as well as Welcome Week to celebrate the start of the Fall 2015 semester. We also published the fourth issue of the Undergraduate Survival Guide and distributed about 900 copies of the magazine to new students.

On October 19, we distributed 200 giveaway bags filled with stress relief items for our evening students to use during midterms week.

Lastly, we are bringing back USG's Registration Domination event—a partnership with Academic Advisement to facilitate students in selecting and registering for their classes. We are targeting new students by advertising to the FRO Seminars and are scheduling the event around the registration date for freshmen.

As the President of the student body I would like to thank you for your continued time and dedication to Baruch College. I hope to present you with a report of USG's many successes come April. I look forward to partnering with you to make Baruch College the institution we want it to be for our students.

Please feel free to contact me with any inquiries or concerns.

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