

USG supports Greek life

BY BIANCA MONTEIRO
SENIOR STAFF WRITER

The Undergraduate Student Government senate officially passed a resolution in support of ending the moratorium on fraternity activities during its Feb. 27 meeting. The resolution came just prior to a March 2 deadline imposed by David Christy, provost and senior vice president of academic affairs. Christy, while asking for USG's stance on the matter, is ultimately responsible in making the final decision for the moratorium. The provost's final deadline for making the decision is on June 1 and he is free to decide on a course of action at any time beforehand.

Authorized by Andrew Windsor, co-chair of the Constitutional Review Committee, the fraternity resolution was officially co-sponsored by 10 members of the senate: Suleman Aleem, David Barros, Arvis Chen, Alexander Dimcevski, Aaron D'Souza, Emma Jorgensen, Rachel Liang, Brandon Paillere, Nicole Taniguchi and Erica Yang. The senators signed their names to the document, which primarily urged the provost to end the ban on chartering, recruiting for or operating for social Greek life clubs on campus.

In a statement to *The Ticker*, Windsor said, "I do not believe it just for the administration to prohibit thousands of innocent undergraduates from joining a certain sect of student life because of the tragic actions of a separate group."

The current senate table was officially informed of its upcoming March decision by the provost just prior to its Nov. 14 senate meeting. Since this time, USG hosted a Greek life forum on Dec. 5 in order to gauge how the student body felt, inviting current students as well as former members of Baruch Greek life to engage in discussion.

Chen, the chair of the Clubs and Organizations Committee, also circulated a survey starting Feb. 22, eight days before the deadline, via USG's social media platforms.

While Chen had tabled for the first time on Feb. 27, according to him, he had problems securing tabling after creating the survey. He had unofficially asked a Student Life staff member to secure tabling for the week of Feb. 26 and discovered that USG had not been given tables.

Due to an empty booked table, USG was able to table on the second floor lobby on Feb. 27.

The survey was produced in conjunction with Baseline — an outside survey company — in order to create the most functional and least biased questionnaire. The survey, however, has not been approved by the CUNY legal office. As of press time, the survey garnered 345 responses.

Originally, Chen asked Christy for an extension on the deadline through March 9, but was denied because the provost did not want the fraternity issue to become a talking point in USG's upcoming election season in March.

The survey was meant to officially gather an idea of what the student body felt about social Greek life and whether or not students believed it should come back to campus. The questions asked whether students supported lifting the moratorium, what their opinion on social Greeks were and if students were willing to pay more in their student activity fees for Greek life, among others.

As of Chen's report during the senate meeting, responses were around 68 percent in support of bringing social Greek life on campus, 20 percent against and 12 percent unsure.

Chen concedes, however, that not every response included a stu-

dent's EMPL ID number or other important identifying factors. Chen also explains that the ideal sample size should be between 1,200 and 1,500 responses, with the current sample size being disproportionate to those figures.

"I'm worried that this vote isn't indicative of what the student body really thinks," President Isabel Arias explained. She added that "just yesterday the survey result was fifty-fifty."

Damali Smith, the director of Student Life, also explained during the meeting that "every single semester we have had a case of hazing." Smith, however, declined to comment on either the meeting or the hazing to which she alluded.

Windsor, who read the document line by line in order to ensure that the wording was sufficient for the table and co-sponsors, argued that if USG was "truly concerned, they would actually regulate them than let this continue in an 'underground club market.'"

The document primarily cited the declining Relay for Life funds following the moratorium, the provost's mission to enrich students as leaders and other documents. The document ultimately argues to lift the moratorium and to prevent other moratoriums from occurring under similar circumstances, in which organizations of the same kind are banned because of an individual club's actions.

While the voting majority of the table was in support of the resolution, Representative Sen. Tarak Chowdhury, as well as Treasurer Suzanna Egan and Arias expressed opposition.

As the senate meeting discussions proceeded, however, several senators expressed that the surveys, as well as the senators themselves, cannot always represent the majority of students accurately. Many members argued that it was their duty to not only represent the majority, but to support the niche groups of students and give those groups a voice.

In an interview with *The Ticker*, Yang explained her standpoint: "As of this moment, we do not know what the majority of students feel about social Greek life and whether they would want it to be allowed back on campus. We may never know what the majority of students think. What we have seen is a sizeable number of students who do want to see social Greek life back on campus. I believe that it is our responsibility to support these students."

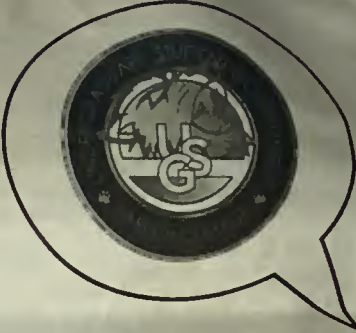
In discussion, Yang argued that by bringing fraternities into the spotlight, they could begin regulating them instead of allowing them to operate underground on their own, free from accountability and rules. Greek organizations would be subject to more scrutiny than other clubs — in addition to the hoops that clubs must jump through in order to get chartered and stay active on campus, fraternities would also need to correspond with the chair of clubs and organizations heavily.

Representative Sen. Brian Ronquillo, however, disagreed. "Hasn't that system failed us already? When someone charters a social frat and has hazing — any degree of hazing — it could grow year by year. Measuring that is hard and, personally, I can't oversee that."

Referring to the death of Chun Hsien "Michael" Deng, a student who passed away because of hazing activities by the fraternity Pi Delta Psi, Arias also contested the sentiment, asking Yang, "Tell me how you regulate them so this never happens again. I don't think an [Office of Student Life] advisor can make sure this will never happen again."

Arias later argued against allowing fraternities to get chartered just so OSL can formally regulate them.

USG talks: Co-sponsoring senators weigh in on resolution against the social Greek life moratorium



Suleman Aleem

Our job is not to represent the majority, but to represent students of any niche group we can reach. So I believe that even if there are only 10 students on campus interested in forming a social Greek [fraternity], then as a student representative, I should help them accomplish that to the best of my ability.

Some members of the senate were not comfortable with supporting views that this table wanted to vote on. I was disappointed in the fact that personal discomfort of some senators got in the way of them doing their due diligence to the student body, and believe that if they can't make objective and fair choices for their constituents under these circumstances, or accept the outcome of this democracy, then they don't belong at this table.

David Barros

David Barros declined to comment.

Arvis Chen

On Feb. 22, I started a Baruch-wide survey to see how students felt about social Greek life. When I cosponsored the fraternity resolution on Feb. 28th, the data I collected showed 68 percent of the students saying they were in support of ending the ban. This was out of 270 responses, most of which were active club members. It is my job to represent their voices, and I've addressed their opinions, both in support and against ending the ban, to the table.

Before the survey, there was a lot of speculation as to how many people wanted social Greek life to come back. If only 10 people wanted to join social Greek life, was this need worth the tens of thousands of dollars we had to spend? Now we can listen to what the student body — not special interest groups — has to say.

I've been requesting a table on the second floor for quite some time now. I've only been able to get one since another club happened to not be there. I'm trying hard to get the survey to the masses, but it's going to be an uphill battle.

Alexander Dimcevski

Alexander Dimcevski declined to comment.

Aaron D'Souza

I feel that all the frats have been punished by the moratorium, and I feel that deprives students access to a social frat that they may want to join, and I felt that the resolution was a good first step to hopefully hearing out any students who do want to start them up again. A key thing is that this doesn't bring them back. It only allows social frats the opportunity to go through the process of becoming a "club" and therefore be subjected to the approval of USG in the future.

I believe it is the right of students to be able to create that if they want to. Still being subject to approval.

Emma Jorgensen

Emma Jorgensen declined to comment.

Rachel Liang

I believe in giving the students a right to voice their opinions, which is why I agreed with the social Greek survey sent out by Arvis Chen, but I also believe that USG has to take a stand about the topic as well. I have my own biases in that I personally would love to see the social Greeks come back. Additionally, my fellow senators brought it to my attention that we, as USG, don't always support the majority. If 10 students want to form a club, we allow them to. I don't see a difference between that and a social Greek being given the opportunity to form again on campus if they so wish. The tragedy in 2013 was a tragedy, but those who weren't involved shouldn't be blamed for the action of others.

The resolution was eventually passed, but not without a long debate. I knew there would be conflicting opinions on the table, but I understand the opinions of those who did not vote for the resolution, which is why only a couple of us put our actual names on the resolution itself.

As Sen. Windsor said during the meeting, we listened and debated with those on the table in the minority who did not wish to support ending the moratorium, and we should give that same opportunity to listen to students if they wish to form a social Greek on campus. I want to make it clear that this resolution does not condone hazing, nor even support social Greeks on campus, but it allows students the opportunity to charter and join social Greeks if they wish to do so.

Brandon Paillere

I support this resolution because both the college and students are well-aware that students are still being hurt in hazing incidents.

Banning Greek life on campus hasn't solved the issue of hazing. The moratorium has forced students into even more secrecy, allowing hazing on students to continue. Administrators are fully aware of this, as mentioned in this meeting and previous meetings, and I'd like to see them take responsibility for our students. Sweeping Greek life under the rug isn't going to protect our students. It just puts them in more danger. Ending the moratorium will give our students a chance at having these organizations in a healthy manner.

I was very frustrated at the meeting we had. There was too much of the discussion was about individuals being associated with this resolution. We even had people leave when it came time to vote. There will be hard decisions like this one but if our senators and administrators are more preoccupied about how these decisions will make them look and not about the impact on students then our organizations need to grow a

backbone. We should be voting on what will benefit students the most and not what will benefit our image. Every single person in that meeting can acknowledge that this moratorium doesn't prevent students from being harmed. Our names and reputations are not more important than the safety of our students.

Nicole Taniguchi

I believe my overall position and intention with this resolution is to let Provost Christy know that USG has a strong stance on this issue. We were, for the most part, unaware of the moratorium coming to end when we campaigned last Spring but have worked diligently to make sure we don't simply ignore this issue.

I believe at the very least the moratorium should not be extended to give the administration, future USG's, and students the opportunity to actively discuss and try to come to compromises on the topic of social Greeks on campus. I don't think burying social fraternities and sororities will solve all the intricacies of the situation.

Erica Yang

When we were first approached by the provost concerning making a decision (as a USG table) about whether we would support extending the moratorium, I began my own research into the issue. From that point forward, I have been in support of ending the moratorium on social Greek life on campus. While I understand that an incredibly tragic event occurred within a social Greek organization, I do not believe that this toxic culture extends to all social Greek life. I do believe that there is a positive in social Greek life. This opinion is also shared among a number of students I have spoken to about the matter.

As of this moment, we do not know what the majority of students feel about social Greek life and whether they would want it to be allowed back on campus.

We may never know what the majority of students think. What we have seen is a sizeable number of students who do want to see social Greek life back on campus. I believe that it is our responsibility to support these students. By lifting the moratorium on social Greek life, we are not immediately [reinstating] every social Greek organization that was on campus before the moratorium. We are simply giving the opportunity for students to be able to gather and approach USG to go through the process of establishing an organization on campus.

I believe that it is wrong to not give students the chance to start a certain organization because of something that occurred before their time here at Baruch. The students who are interested in joining/starting a social Greek organization on campus have the same rights to do so as a student who wants to start a business club on campus.