

USG senators must ask for more data before supporting TAP

As an elected member of the Undergraduate Student Government, I have a duty to represent all undergraduate students of Baruch College to the best of my abilities. For me, doing so includes an explanation of my votes as a representative senator. I believe it is my duty to discuss each decision to its fullest extent in order to make an informed decision that best represents students. I was elected by the students to work for the students. On March 7, at our weekly senate meeting, I was disappointed when the senate voted 11-2-2 in favor of a College Opportunity and Resource Expansion proposal. The senate is the only branch of USG that can vote in support of a proposal, whether it is a campus, nonprofit or university proposal. If a majority of the senate votes in favor of the proposal, our entire student government, and effectively every Baruch student, endorses the proposal. USG President Daniel Dornbaum, on behalf of a CORE representative, introduced the CORE proposal on Feb. 28. The Senate was in agreement that we did not feel comfortable enough to move toward a vote of support because, after debate, there was still a lack of information surrounding the proposal. This was what prompted Dornbaum to bring in the CORE representative at our next meeting on March 7.

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TAP vote in USG Senate meeting needs scrutiny

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The proposal would extend access to the Tuition Assistance Program to undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States before age 16 and have a degree that is at least equivalent to a high school diploma.

Secondly, it laid the groundwork for an increase in TAP awards. This was supposed to be achieved by raising the household income threshold from \$80,000 to \$125,000 and increase the maximum TAP funding award for full-time students from \$5,165 to \$6,500 within two years. The provision would also set the minimum TAP award at \$1,000, change the Students with Disabilities TAP extension to two years and reinstate TAP access for graduate programs.

The proposal also sought to create a zero-interest, \$50 million loan fund for academically qualified college students.

The representative assured us that the proposal would not raise taxes, instead reallocating funds to a special program. However, as long as the concept of scarcity exists, New York state will be working with a finite budget. The only way to increase that budget is through taxes, this program will be funded through a surplus or shifts in current TAP funding. Either way, that money will run out.

The concern is that when money does run out and the program continues, the state will have to raise taxes or worse, borrow—something that the state was planning to do this fiscal year until they “discovered” a surplus.

However, several senate questions over this proposal's numbers could not be answered: How much money will be spent over

time? How many people will benefit from this proposal? Will the program cause taxes or tuition to increase? None of these questions were answered.

The lack of numbers and data resulted in four members refusing to vote for this proposal, which is how the vote came to 11-2-2 in a senate of 15 representatives. We need to make sure these votes do not entangle us in more problems in the future.

Unfortunately, the debate and subsequent vote on the proposal were scheduled for 7:30 p.m. because the representative from CORE was not able to make it earlier. Ordinarily, senate meetings begin at 5:30 p.m. every Tuesday, but because we did not have much to discuss at the Senate meeting, we ended before 7:30 p.m. We voted ourselves into an executive session from 6:21 p.m. to 7:26 p.m.

An executive session is a confidential meeting between the USG senate and executive board, although outside guests have the opportunity to be voted in if they are relevant to the discussion at hand. When the public was allowed back in so we could interview the CORE representative, only two of our constituents were sitting in the audience.

I do not blame anyone for leaving before the scheduled meeting resumed because it is purely how the timing worked out, but I find it unfortunate that most of the public was not able to offer their opinion to us. I implore undergraduate students to reach out to USG and get involved in any way possible.

Andrew Windsor is a USG Representative Senator. His opinion does not necessarily reflect the opinion of USG.