

NOTRE DAME STUDENT SENATE
Executive Summary
April 25, 2007
Notre Dame Room, La Fortune

I) **Opening Business**

- a. Maris called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.
- b. Chris Labadie led the invocation.
- c. Victoria Perez and George Chamberlain absent.

II) **Podium**

- a. State of the Student Union- Address—Liz Brown
 - i. As Student Body President, it is my constitutional duty to address the Student Senate on the State of the Student Union three times throughout the year, and I stand here today to fulfill this duty for the first time. I would like to start with a brief reference to the February elections, because a spectacle like that deserves at least a mention. I will be the first to admit that this year's election for Student Body President and Vice President was truly unlike any other. Between the three rounds of elections and subsequent constitutional controversy, it seemed as though the election would never end. Furthermore, a prolonged impeachment process left some students wondering what Student Government tangibly contributed to student life besides daily Observer articles outlining our dialogue of campus events. Yes, my friends, dialogue. Over and over again, I hear criticism of Student Government's purported preference for dialogue over taking concerted actions to positively affect student life. At this moment, I'd like to take a second to challenge all of you sitting in this room. If this is the current negative stereotype of Student Government, of an organization that prefers to talk rather than aggressively campaign for improvements to student life, than I challenge all of you to work to your fullest capacity to change it. Not by talking about how we can change students' perspectives, but rather by stimulating positive changes that students will have no choice but to notice. Maris and I created a platform that is designed for these exact types of changes that I am referring to. Our platform was divided into five areas of concentration to improve the Notre Dame experience: rethinking community relations, promoting social concerns, improving the academic environment, revamping Student Government, and enhancing student life. These areas are targeted because of their direct impact on students everyday campus experiences. By enacting real changes in each of these areas, Maris and I are confident that Student Government will no longer be known merely for its dialogue. While Maris and I have only officially been in office for a short three and a half weeks, substantial progress has already been made to ensure the realization of a number of our

platform goals. We have met with the staff of the Center for Social Concerns and with VOICE regarding our initiative to increase and promote community-based curriculum, and will establish an action plan over the summer to implement in the fall semester. Using their experience with the currently limited community-based curriculum, we have identified where student influence is needed most, and look forward to improving this valuable educational experience for a wider range of students. In academics, exciting developments are being made on the Faculty-Student Contemporary Issues Debate Series. This debate series will pair a faculty and student against an opposing faculty-student team to debate prominent issues in current affairs, including immigration, stem cell research, and the primary elections. Not only will students benefit from increased interaction with faculty outside of the classroom, but they will also profit from exposure to prominent social issues. By selecting debate issues from a range of subject areas and hosting the event in a prominent public setting, we hope to attract interest from a range of students that previously had limited access to Student Government events. The enhancement of student life is obviously of top concern to the average student, and we have plans to improve students' daily life in substantial ways. After meeting with Dave Prentkowski, the Director of Food Services, the Residence Life Committee is working in collaboration with Food Services to design a student survey to assist in the creation of an effective Guest Meal Exchange Program, where students will be able to exchange unused meals for the use of visiting friends and family members. This progress, in addition to promising technological advancements towards the extension of Domer Dollars in the football stadium and the Joyce Athletic Center, demonstrates our capacity to enact substantial changes in student life given the right mindset and work ethic. Finally, we look forward to working on these issues and others with constant input from the Student Body. The development of a new website over the summer months will create a truly accessible Student Government, and small successes in this area are encouraging for the future. The recent addition of online committee applications doubled last year's number of non-Senate committee members, with the vast majority of these applicants getting involved for the first time. I expect similar simple changes to Student Government procedures to create comparable results, while the creation of online forums and message boards will give students access to Student Government twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In the past three and a half weeks, we have laid the groundwork for what promises to be an extremely productive year. While I have only addressed a limited number of our initiatives for the coming year, the rate of progress in these areas is

reflective of the type of work that I expect from Student Government over the next two semesters. Again, I challenge you to replicate this type of progress in your work over the coming year. Get invested in your committee's current initiatives, or, even better, bring a new issue or concern to the agenda. All of us have the capacity to enact tangible changes in student life, and I am confident that this is the group of people to change students' perception of Student Government. Gone are the days where students only hear about what Student Government talked about in their two hour Senate meetings. Dialogue has a place and purpose in Student Government, but I look forward to a year where students truly believe we can use fruitful conversations as the basis for concrete, positive changes to student life at Notre Dame. I thank you for your time and attention, and am truly excited to be working with all of you in the coming year.

III) **Old Business**

- a. Resolution for the removal of defunct committees in the Constitution.
 - i. Ian presented the amendment and the minor changes in the substitution of small words changes in the amendment. Maris opens the floor for discussion. Opens floor to a vote. With 25 votes and 1 proxy vote *Resolution passes at 6:31pm.*
- b. Virginia Tech Response Update
 - i. Liz discussed the sign posters, passed out ribbons, and the candlelight vigil to commemorate the 32 victims of this tragedy. Sheena will be sending all of the acquired mementos to the Virginia Tech community.

IV) **Officer Reports**

- a. Liz discussed that last week met with forum committee. Tomorrow she and Maris will meet with the alumni association and is looking to the opening of the year mass last year.
- b. Maris discussed meeting with the *Chicago Tribune* and forming a website with the other South bend schools to create a list of restaurants and such. Has met with a representative about "going green" at ND.
- c. Sheena discussed about taking the necessary steps to send the posters too Virginia Tech and a shuttle service from the South Bend airport to ND.
- d. Philip discussed a resolution passed by the faculty senate to promote health care, and ahs taken the necessary steps to create a resolution for the Academic resolutions.

V) **Committee Reports**

- a. Carol discussed the plans of academic affair to promote the CRP during the first week of school next year. Will begin a majors night feedback survey.
- b. Maris discusses community relations, and moving the off campus fair to in front of the bookstore. Discussed website and the things they would like to do with the website and taste of south bend.

- c. Karen, the social chair, informed about the Candlelight Vigil this evening and the Block Party on Friday at field house mall. At last meeting on May 1st looks forward to delegating things for the summer.
- d. Patrick, had the second meeting to brainstorm for the 07-08 agenda. Discussed that there are not that many male representatives on Gender Issues. Wanted to continue with the eating disorders conference, but would like to change the name to make it more gender neutral. Will try to pull in some male athletic celebrity to pull in more males for this event.
- e. Liz brown talks about Gender issues. Committee started talking about eating disorders conference on Sunday.
- f. Mariana Montes talks about Reslife. Brainstormed ideas and she divided those ideas into subcommittees. She is finishing touches on the survey that will be sent out to the student body concerning food services. Wants to take grassroots approach toward ResLife issues. Would like her committee to take an informal survey as to what individuals would like to see from the committee.
- g. Kalie with University affairs has continued work with student faculty debates. Is beginning to revise letters to send out to faculty. Picking the dates for different debates. Would like to get involved with an energy week in the fall and rock the vote.
- h. Mac, with diversity committee. With the university diversity committee, they decided that there was too little progress being done this year and they were looking to disband committee. Would really like to see Martin Luther King Day as a day off of school but one with programming to promote the life of this great man.

VI) **Adjournment**

- a. Maris entertains a motion to adjourn. Rachel motioned. Ian seconded.
April 25, 2007 Senate meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Zaldana