

REFORM

CAB and Senate to discuss reform proposal after controversial meeting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

work for CAB."

For others, this concern is outweighed by other values.

"You can never go wrong if you give students more freedom and voice in things that they are concerned about," said senior and Senate President Dana Hamdan. "You can only improve things and open them up."

CAB officers used to be elected, but consistently low interest in elections proved problematic.

"We went to appointments because we couldn't get anyone to run for elected positions," said Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Aaron Fetrow. "There would be maybe a CAB president and no CAB board running, so we'd essentially be appointing them anyway."

Oerther does not believe finding willing candidates will be a problem.

"We could have elections now because of the hard work they've done this year," said Oerther. "Their events improved so much over the past year, and they're a much healthier organization. I think their work enabled the interest for elections."

"There's a real legitimacy to having a democratic election for those positions," said Fetrow. "That's great as long as we have people to run. If we're going to have an election, let's have an election."

CAB's Budget

The resolution also proposes Senate oversight of CAB's budget. Last spring, Senate decided to remove CAB's budget from Senate's oversight. This resolution would undo that decision.

"Last year's Senate decided to remove CAB (from the student organization list) and give it a staff advisor who doesn't have this conflict of interest like a student who wants power and access to the student activity fees," said Fetrow. "Ideally, a staff member wants as many programs that can happen, to happen, and wants CAB to spend effectively and effectively plan programs."

"We realized that we had to stop telling CAB how to do their jobs because it clearly wasn't working," said Kennedy, who was a senator when Senate ceased oversight of CAB's budget. "Senate is a policy-based organization, and CAB is a programming board; we could not tell them how to do their job."

There are now concerns about CAB's independent budget.

"They would be asked to submit a budget proposal in the spring just like any other student organization," said Hamdan. "It would be fair, just and equal to all student organizations. It's basic checks and balances."

Kennedy disagrees.

"By definition, having student organizations have the money split so that Senate isn't the only organization with control of that money is checks and balances," said Kennedy. "Division of power equals checks and balances ... That's what checks and balances are, and that's what we did last year."

Other Senate members see different reasons to give Senate oversight of CAB's budget.

"CAB doesn't provide Senate an opportunity in any place to make a decision on anything about the organization," said senior and Inter-Club Council Chair Alex Knox. "That puts CAB in a dangerously

isolated position."

Director of Student Leadership and Engagement Erin Fox says that in the current system, CAB does make an effort to be accountable to the community.

"CAB has gone to most ICC meetings, they've gone to Senate meetings and they participated in the student organization fair," said Fox. "They've done things to stay involved in those processes. I've encouraged them to do that to support Senate and so that they, as student leaders, are engaged with the other student leaders."

Oerther still believes that Senate oversight would be beneficial, especially during the budget allocation process.

"I think it's really important that we be able to look at the budget holistically in order to be able to balance it consistently," said Oerther. "That's not to say that CAB isn't deserving of a big budget; we just need to have the flexibility to create that budget."

Controversy over Process

Issues surrounding the proposal's creation and presentation accompanied the debate. Senior and CAB President Justin Shreve said that he was not consulted about the proposal until Jan. 21, the Friday before it came to Senate. Some CAB members say that they were not aware of the proposal until a few hours before that meeting began. The proposal was not mentioned in the Community Senate update that week.

"The first time I saw this, I agreed with

the goals: transparency, accountability and serving the community," said Shreve. "We can always be better. But from my perspective, this was brought in a very rushed manner and without our counsel."

Other CAB members saw value in the initial proposal as well.

"The goals I agree with 110 percent," said junior and Specialty Programs Chair Shanon Rule. "We're just not going about it the way they want us to go about it."

For many involved with CAB, the issue was the lack of inclusion during the crafting of the initial proposal.

"I feel like Senate kind of rushed things and it came across as them trying to tell another group of students what to do without their input," said Steve Moran, assistant director of student leadership and engagement and advisor to CAB. "I feel like whenever you have that with two groups, instead of hearing what's happening and trying to find a compromise, instead it kind of puts the other side on the defensive."

"This was presented as CAB reform by an organization that does not have jurisdiction over CAB," said Kennedy. "We want to be active participants in the process, not have a mandate."

Some feel that this created tension, which led to problems moving forward.

"There's so much ability, potential and good intentions from both groups, and I wish that's what we could focus on," said Fox.

"There are so many more positive, influential and widely-beneficial actions both groups could be focusing their energy on."

Fetrow commented that issues between CAB and Senate are not new.

"There has been consistent feuding between CAB and Senate as long as I've been here about who should plan programs and have control," said Fetrow. "It's all about power and control. It's like any organization in any part of the world; people want to control things that have money. CAB has a lot of money ... It's really about that money."

Feb. 2 Meeting

On Feb. 2, Senate continued discussing the proposal. The debate showed a divided room. Hamdan called for consensus to move forward, and a significant portion of those in attendance blocked, meaning they did not feel unified in moving forward.

Hamdan then called for a vote, a decision that upset many in the room.

"The number of people in unity and the number of people who were not were about the same," said Hamdan. "At that point, I thought calling for a vote might help the process move forward. I would never call a vote if the people in the room were not comfortable or clear."

Not enough senators were present to vote, so the vote was set to occur the following Senate meeting. Some senators expressed desire for more formal discussion on the proposal.

"I feel that when people in leadership positions are being faced with a challenge in a very emotional room, there should be a facilitated discussion," said Third-Year Representative Yahya Alazrak. "Process was not lived up to in the best way it could have been."

"The policy is simpler than this meeting made it seem," said Knox. "The lack of unity is a result of people perceiving politics that don't exist. This proposal is not a political proposal; Senate needs to do a better job of making clear the policy."

Future of the Proposal

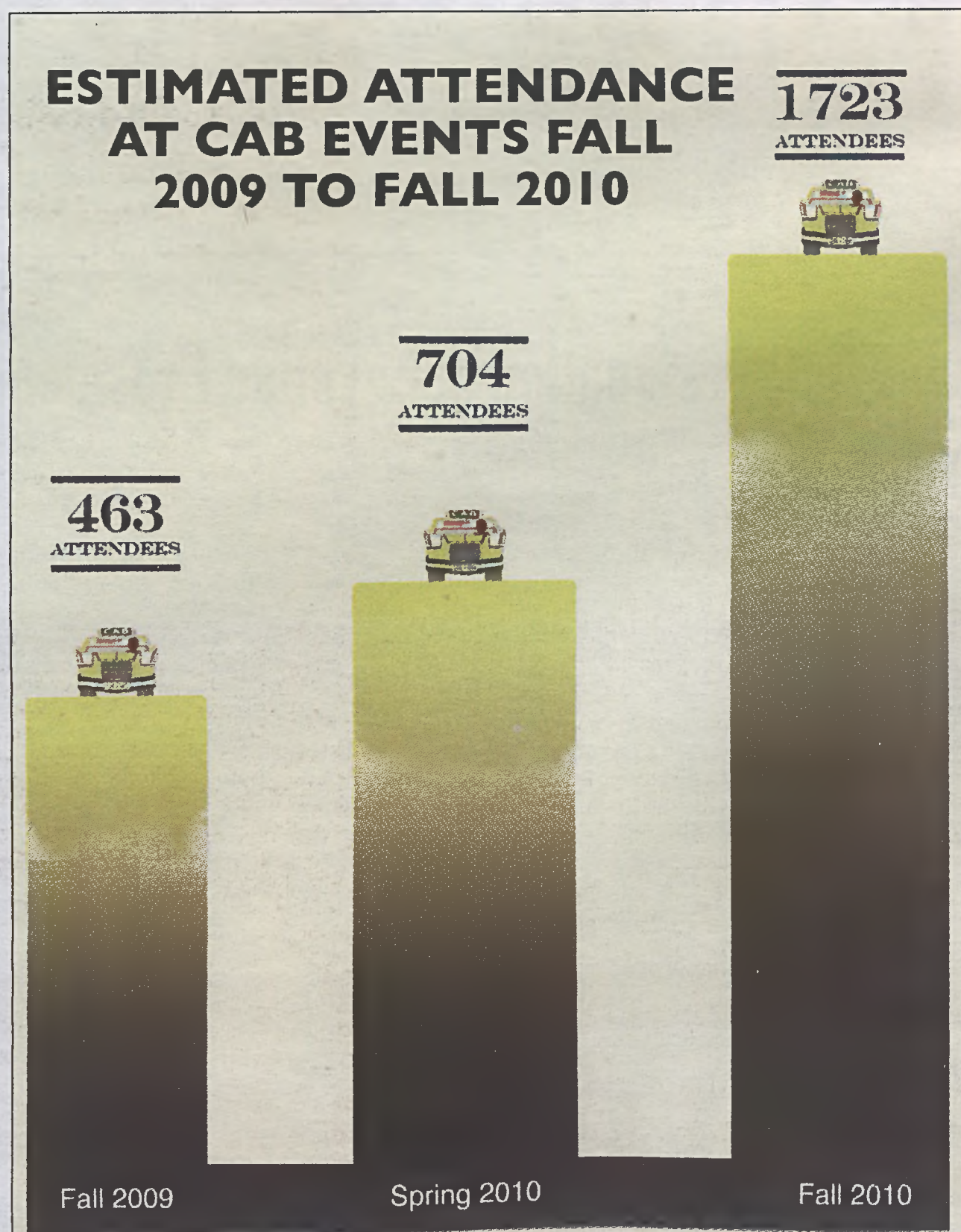
After the initial decision to vote on the proposal, CAB and Steering Committee decided to instead meet outside of Community Senate to work out disagreements over the proposal before ratifying a final version. A meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 13.

"CAB and Senate will meet and produce a united document that will strive to benefit Guilford College," said Hamdan. "As hard as that meeting was, I feel optimistic in way. If we all didn't care about this so much, it would not have had that effect."

"We were all under the presumption that it was going to be arm-twisting on both sides," said Oerther. "It was a bad presumption to go into it, but they gave us reason to have that presumption. That meeting was a good wake-up call for everyone that there needs to be change, and we need to do it together."

Oerther is convinced that a meeting between CAB and Senate will be necessary to move forward. Now, optimism for the future sets the tone.

"What unites us all is our care, compassion and desire to continue working for Guilford," said Hamdan. "Our process and tools might differ, but as long as we work to the same goal, we're doing the right thing. I look forward to CAB and Senate uniting to produce something that will benefit the student body."



Figures provided by OLSE.

GRAPHIC BY JOHNATHAN SMITH